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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
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HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—Mrs. J. Garbutt

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—R. H. Hyde

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
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The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

British Rail (Investment)

1. **Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much British Rail has invested since 1979.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): The British Railways Board's investment in railways has been £3·7 billion at today's prices since 1979.

Mr. Rost: As British Rail seems to be unwilling or unable to prepare adequately and speedily for the opening of the Channel link, will my right hon. Friend assure us that he will do all he can to speed up private sector investment to do the job for British Rail to ensure that it is completed in time, which he has already said he is prepared to encourage?

Mr. Channon: As I am sure my hon. Friend is aware, British Rail is planning to choose the preferred route option by early next year. I welcome that speeding up of the original timetable, which will reduce the effects of blight in Kent. I believe that by early next year BR will also know the result of its approaches to potential private sector partners. Therefore, a lot is going on at the present time.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Secretary of State accept that commuters in Greater Manchester are fed up to the back teeth with the poor service that they are receiving from British Rail? The introduction of the sprinter train has been disastrous. When will the Government ensure that some money is spent in Greater Manchester on improving the services for commuters rather than those for mainline passengers travelling from one part of the country to another? In particular, when will we get the link to the airport?

Mr. Channon: I note what the hon. Gentleman has said. I still want to see considerable improvements in quality in British Rail in general, but British Rail is moving in the right direction in a number of sectors, including punctuality, cancellations and service to customers. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take up the matter of commuter services with British Rail, or, failing that, perhaps he will write to me.

Mr. John Greenway: Can my right hon. Friend tell the House how much British Rail is investing in stations, because it is no good having good railways if the buildings that passengers must use are not adequate? Is he aware that the roof of Filey station has had to be removed and that at present British Rail is not prepared to replace it because of costs? Therefore, that fine Victorian building will be lost to coming generations.

Mr. Channon: I am sorry to learn about Filey station. I hope that my hon. Friend has taken up the matter with British Rail. The total investment of British Rail during the next five years will be some £3·8 billion, with more than £600 million being spent on stations.

Mr. Robert Hughes: If the private capital that the right hon. Gentleman is so keen on is likely to be attracted to British Rail projects because they make money, why, apart from ideological obsession, does he not encourage British Rail to go on with these investments, instead of being so restrictive by his criteria?

Mr. Channon: I do not think that is at all fair. If the hon. Gentleman looks at railway investment in the country at present, which the Opposition continually misrepresent,

he will see that ever since 1970 the highest figure for rail investment is that for the present year, and it will be higher in the future.

Mr. Robert Hughes: It is not.

Mr. Channon: It most certainly is. In real terms, it is the highest figure since 1970 and it is increasing.

North-East (Roads)

2. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans his Department has to develop the road infrastructure of the north-east region.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): The £12 million national contribution of transport supplementary grant is for local authority roads of more than local importance. Spending this year on national schemes will be £50 million. The 18 northern region national schemes will cost £170 million.

Ms. Armstrong: I thank the Minister for his reply, but is he aware of the continuing concern, especially among industrialists, about the state of the A1, which is the major link to the east coast area? With the coming of 1992 and what we shall be discussing later today, it will be even more crucial. The delays on the road are very bad, but, having lived through those delays, we will still end up with a road which it is acknowledged is not adequate to carry the traffic. It will be much overladen, as we shall have nothing more than a two-lane dual carriageway when it is finished. Will the hon. Gentleman give us some hope that there will be more investment and we will have a proper motorway?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, and on my next visit I shall try to spell it out more plainly.

Mr. Holt: Will my hon. Friend thank the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) for becoming a late convert to the Conservative pledge of action on the A1? Is that not in stark contrast to the attitude of the Labour-controlled Cleveland county council, which has refused to put money into a private programme to see whether it is feasible to have a proper motorway to the north-east of England? That council is the backwoodsman which is driving industry away from the north of England. It is the Conservatives who have been after this motorway for a long time. We look to you to do it.

Mr. Bottomley: If I may answer on your behalf, Mr. Speaker, yes, and I do not know.

Driving Test

3. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what initiatives his Department is taking to ensure sufficient availability of driving tests for trainees at transport training centres *(a)* nationally and *(b)* at the transport training centre, Llay, Clwyd.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: All requests for block bookings at Llay are being met. The number of HGV-PSV examiners nationally is being increased by 20 per cent.

Mr. Barry Jones: Does the Minister accept that the work at Llay is extremely important to the economy of north-east Wales? Will he always ensure that there are enough examiners at the right time?

Mr. Bottomley: I agree with the hon. Gentleman on his first point and I shall try to meet his request.

Sir Anthony Grant: Apart from the availability of driving tests, is my hon. Friend satisfied with the standard of the training at the centres? My observation, particularly on the M11 and M25, is that the standard of HGV driving is not improving and is, in many cases, deteriorating.

Mr. Bottomley: We are satisfied with the standard of the test. We are not satisfied, however, with the number of failures, especially car examinees, 50 per cent. of whom fail their tests. I believe that if 20 per cent. of them could hold back and receive proper training it would make it much easier to cut the waiting times and achieve greater safety on our roads. I pay tribute to our examiners who go out with drivers, half of whom they know, in advance, will not be qualified to drive safely.

A13 and A127 (Improvements)

4. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are for improvements to the A13 and A127 during the next three years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Four schemes on the trunked part of the A13 and two on the A127 are planned to start in the period.

Dr. Clark: Is my hon. Friend aware of the hostile reaction from road users on the overcrowded A13 and A127 to his recent comments that money spent on roads in the south-east represents poor value for money because the roads will be used only for commuting into London? Bearing in mind the excessive development that is taking place in the south-east and the large amount of road tax that has been paid over the years by people in that region, does he accept that improvements to the roads that I have mentioned are urgently required?

Mr. Bottomley: The answer to the second part of my hon. Friend's question is obviously yes, because I want my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) to be happy.

I should apologise for my foot-in-the-mouth remarks, which were slightly exaggerated both in the way in which I said them and in the way in which they were reported. Good roads help economic development, help bring environmental relief and help to cut casualties. If we can have the type of development in the rest of the country that we are witnessing in London and the south-east, we shall all benefit. Roads are being built in all parts of the country.

Mr. Tony Banks: I wish to congratulate the Minister on what I thought was his outstanding cheek when he arrived 40 minutes late for a meeting and suggested that traffic congestion was a sign of economic success. If one applies that criteria, one must therefore assume that Calcutta——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about the A13.

Mr. Banks: This is all to do with traffic congestion. The A13 goes right through the London borough of Newham, which I have the honour to represent. I merely wish to point out to the Minister that if congestion on the A13 and elsewhere is a sign of economic success, one can only assume that the homelessness in Newham is a sign of the success of the Government's housing policy and that

people waiting for a hospital bed demonstrate that the Government's health policy is a great success. Where does the Minister stand in respect of road construction in London? He knows that extensive road construction in London is extremely unpopular.

Mr. Bottomley: I thought that the one part of London in which it was not controversial to build better roads was the east end, where people have been looking for better jobs and environmental relief from through traffic for many years. I suggest that if the hon. Gentleman is keenly interested he should change the habits of the past few years and ask to come to see me, when I shall go through the matter with him in person.

EC (Transport)

5. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the European Community Commissioner with responsibility for transport; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Paul Channon: Last Thursday, 20 October, when we discussed aviation matters.

Mr. Jones: In view of the growing importance of the A5 as a major route linking Ireland to Europe and of the fact that the European Commission is more likely to consider joint approaches for funding, will the Secretary of State consider meeting his Irish counterpart to see whether a joint approach could be made to the Commission to improve the A5 through north Wales and parts of north-west England, to link into the M54 and the motorway network?

Mr. Channon: That is an ingenious proposal, and I shall consider it. As it happens, I am seeing the Irish Minister on Wednesday next. Of course, the terms of any new infrastructure spending on roads in the hon. Gentleman's constituency are not yet settled. An application to the European regional development fund is also possible, and no doubt the hon. Gentleman and his council have that in mind.

Mr. Fry: As my right hon. Friend discussed aviation with the Commissioner, can he tell us what progress there has been towards a greater liberalisation of European air services and, particularly, towards a reduction of European air fares, which are much too high?

Mr. Channon: A specific question on air fares appears later on the Order Paper. Perhaps I may deal with the matter then.

We are pressing ahead as fast as possible with air liberalisation in Europe. The next stage will be 1990, when we shall review the progress so far made. One satisfactory thing that I know my hon. Friend will welcome was the general agreement among European Ministers of Transport to a central flow management unit, which will be run on a European basis and will very much help the problems of air traffic congestion.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Minister receive a report of the sinking of the cruise ship Jupiter? Is he aware that the missing teacher, Mr. Bernard Butt, had taught at a school in my constituency—T. P. Riley—since 1970, and that all the reports suggest that he was far more interested in saving as many pupils as possible than in saving his own life? Our deepest sympathy goes to the relatives of Mr. Butt and to the parents of the child who is missing, Vivenne Barley.

Does the Secretary of State agree that much courage was shown by many of the pupils when they were in the water, and that some lives were undoubtedly saved because of their courage? Has he seen the report in this afternoon's newspaper——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know that this is a tragic matter, but it must be related to the European Community Commissioner.

Mr. Winnick: When the right hon. Gentleman has discussions with the EEC Ministers, will he take up the issue of ships' safety? It appears that the Jupiter was 27 years old and not as safe as it should have been. That is apparently to be discussed by the sea authorities. Will the right hon. Gentleman be getting a report on it as quickly as possible?

Mr. Channon: Although this matter will not arise at the meeting with the European Commissioner, I am sure that the whole House agrees with the hon. Gentleman. Our deepest sympathies go out to the families of all involved, British and Greek, especially to the families of Miss Barley and Mr. Butt, whose loved ones are still unaccounted for.

The Greek authorities have begun a full inquiry into this tragic episode. We shall keep in close touch with them, and I take note of what the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. Moate: Is there any pressure on my right hon. Friend, or any desire on his part, in view of the general moves towards harmonisation throughout Europe, to increase maximum permitted lorry weights in this country?

Mr. Channon: There is certainly no desire on my part to do so. Whether the Commission will show any desire to do so remains to be seen. I hope that my hon. Friend, with his usual vigilance, will remain closely in touch with me.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Will the Secretary of State raise with the Commissioner the stability of the class of ferry to which the Jupiter belonged? Will he also raise with him the fact that if the Jupiter had been a roll-on roll-off ferry the number of deaths would almost certainly have been massively higher? Will he also ensure that access to proper representation at any inquiry held in Greece is given to the bereaved families and to those who survived the accident?

Mr. Channon: None of those issues is likely to arise at my meeting with the European Commissioner, but the important points made by the hon. Gentleman about the safety of ships will be considered by the Greek inquiry. As I told the House, I shall remain closely in touch with events. Appearances at inquiries will be a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. The Foreign Office will do all that it can wthin its consular authority, and I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's question to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend.

Computer-controlled Traffic Systems

6. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in introducing computer-controlled traffic systems.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Thirty towns and cities in Britain use SCOOT—split cycle and offset optimisation technique

—which responds to changing traffic. Other British systems are being used and developed on motorways and elsewhere in the interests of safety, the environment and easing congestion.

Mr. Batiste: My hon. Frend may be aware that at the time of the abolition of the West Yorkshire metropolitan county council I expressed the desire that its important pioneering work in the computer control of traffic should be continued and developed. I am delighted to hear thar the work is spreading. Will he confirm and bring to the attention of local authorities the dramatic improvements that can be made to traffic flow in cities that introduce effective computer control of traffic?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes. This is an area in which Britain leads the world. Our system is being used from Canada to China, and I hope that it will be used even more widely in Britain. It is spreading quite quickly.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Minister confirm that if computer control techniques had been used the shaking of the Severn bridge into early senility would not have taken place? Can he confirm what the Secretary of State said, namely, that regardless of future traffic predictions the second Severn crossing will be built in the mid-1990s?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly aware of the position. He should have welcomed my right hon. Friend's statement before the summer recess, which provided the opportunity for the private sector to come forward with proposals. The hon. Gentleman gives the impression of damning the present bridge with faint praise. In terms of axle weights and numbers of vehicles, the bridge carried much more than was expected. It was a great success, and when it has been strengthened it will be even more successful. The whole House looks forward to the opportunity for extra crossing capacity, especially if it can be provided earlier by the private sector.

Air Fares

7. **Sir Peter Emery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent action he has taken to bring about a further reduction of air fares between London and other European centres.

Mr. Channon: We are using the provisions of the European Community fares directive to support United Kingdom airlines in their efforts to introduce lower fares. We have already achieved significant reductions in fares to a number of European destinations, the latest of which is Paris.

Sir Peter Emery: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his success, but does he realise that even the reduced fares are some of the most expensive per passenger mile in the world? One can fly across America for the same price as a ticket to Brussels. That must be nonsense. Is there any support that the House, Committees of the House, the public or institutions can give to my right hon. Friend in asking the Commission to consider the restrictive practices in the pricing policy of European airlines, which it has put off doing for some time?

Mr. Channon: The more pressure there is from passengers throughout the Community, the better. With the help of several other Governments, the United Kingdom Government have been doing their best to persuade European Governments of the advantages of liberalisation. We shall continue to press them, although we have not succeeded in all cases in convincing them. But there have been some encouraging signs, especially in fares to Ireland, Holland and France. We have a long way to go, and we are determined to make progress in this area.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Will the Secretary of State remember that not all European centres lie on the other side of the English Channel, and that there are some north of London? In that context, will he examine the fares policy operating within the United Kingdom? Is he aware that landing charges at Scottish airports are so high that one could have a cheap package holiday for a fortnight in Majorca for the price of the air fare between London and some airports in Scotland? Will he use his powers under the Airports Act 1986 to remedy that?

Mr. Channon: On domestic fares, as opposed to fares to other parts of the Community, of course I cannot force airlines to use their existing rights, but there is competition and there is the prospect of lower fares. I welcome the initiative of the airlines which propose to reduce fares, and I hope that people will press for that to continue. I shall consider the hon. Lady's point about landing charges.

Mr. Colvin: My right hon. Friend mentioned liberalisation. The package introduced in 1983 for the liberalisation of inter-regional air services was welcome, but will he see what can be done to remove the 70-seat, 30-tonne limit on aircraft for those inter-regional services? Encouraging more services must be one way of reducing prices.

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend has put his finger on an extremely important point, which is under discussion at the moment. Talks are going on about liberalising the regional air services agreement and the question of the weight limit is one of the most important matters being considered. I shall bear in mind what he has said. I hope that we shall be able to persuade our European partners to agree with us on that matter.

Channel Tunnel

8. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what meetings his Department has had with outside bodies in the last six months with regard to customs arrangements for the Channel tunnel.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): The Department has been in regular contact with the other Departments concerned with frontier controls for the Channel tunnel, with the corresponding authorities of the French Government, and with Eurotunnel and British Rail.

Mr. Corbett: Does the Minister understand that those who use the high-tech tunnel will expect matching facilities from Customs and Excise? Will he confirm that on-board customs would improve the present inadequate vigilance at ports of entry for drugs, explosives and weapons and would cut journey time?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman is right to stress the controls that will have to remain in place. I emphasise that section 12 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 requires on-train controls for services to points north of London, provided that British Rail can provide acceptable facilities.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend accept that Customs and Excise controls are ineradicably linked with immigration controls and that both take place in much the same situation? Will he confirm to the House that immigration controls in this country are at the frontier, that we do not have internal immigration controls as other Community countries do, and that therefore it is vital that we have a proper and adequate scheme of immigration control at the frontier, whatever other European countries may feel?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is right to say that there are major differences between the systems of different countries. Our controls exist basically at the borders and are not internal controls based on identity cards. Community Governments have adopted a declaration that the Single European Act should not affect the rights of member states to take such measures as they consider necessary to control, among other things, traffic in drugs. There is no difficulty on these matters.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that the worst possible thing would be a clogging up of trade in the vicinity of the entry to the tunnel, and that not only are on-train facilities needed, but that the provision of bonded warehousing away from south-east England and through traffic from the Irish Republic through Wales and England to the tunnel and Europe must be considered? Can he assure the House that all those aspects are being considered?

Mr. Portillo: I can assure the hon. Gentleman about that. He will know that, under section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act, British Rail is obliged to consult the regions on what facilities should be provided for through services. Those consultations are under way and working groups have been established in each region, one for passengers and one for freight. The result of those deliberations will be made known towards the end of next year.

Mr. Snape: Will the Minister confirm that on-train customs and immigration facilities are customary between countries such as East and West Germany, France and Switzerland and, most remarkably, between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic? As those facilities are so widely available, will the Minister and the Secretary of State for Transport do what they can to overcome the Prime Minister's xenophobia and not allow themselves to be distracted by the similar xenophobia of the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow)? Let us have proper facilities for passengers using the tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) made the pertinent point that we have different systems. The balance of probability would seem to be that there will be frontier controls at Waterloo for trains terminating in London and on-train controls for trains going further than London. That has yet to be confirmed, because discussions on that subject are continuing.

British Rail

9. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend the Secretary of State last met the chairman of British Rail on 5 October. A variety of railway matters were discussed, including the Government's approval of investment in new rolling stock.

Mr. Cran: Does my hon. Friend agree that British Rail's cost-efficiency programme appears to have been achieved mainly at the expense of consumers, which is evidenced by poor timekeeping, overcrowding and dirty carriages? In view of that, the deficit that British Rail enjoys and will continue to enjoy, and the fact that British Rail is incapable of providing a decent link between Humberside and London and almost every other part of the United Kingdom, will my hon. Friend tell us when he will bring forward a privatisation programme, because it seems to me that a privatised British Rail could hardly be worse than the one we have?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is a well-known defender of the interests of his constituents, but he should pursue some of those matters with British Rail. The Government have set quality of service targets for punctuality, reliability and cleanliness and InterCity is close to achieving all those objectives. In reply to the last question that he asked, he will know that my right hon. Friend has confirmed that privatisation is an option that we are actively studying.

Mr. Kennedy: Given the front page report in *The Times* today about the five different options which are being considered and which will possibly be outlined by the Secretary of State later this week—or some combination thereof—may I ask whether any discussions have taken place with the chairman of British Rail in advance of that with a view to being able to offer any degree of security to the railway lines in the north and Highlands of Scotland, because many of us with local knowledge find it hard to believe that any system of privatisation would lead to the future security of those vital rail links?

Mr. Portillo: We have given undertakings that we are not looking at a large proposal for the closure of railway lines. I remind the hon. Gentleman that in 1988-89 £609 million was provided in PSO grant, of which £434 million was for provincial services. In 1989-90 the figure will be £533 million, of which £383 million will be for provincial services. The hon. Gentleman is being hasty in jumping to the conclusion that there are any implications in the privatisation discussions for the matter with which he is concerned.

Mr. Burns: Will my hon. Friend draw to the attention of the chairman of British Rail the urgent need for something to be done to stop the disgraceful scenes that have taken place on many evenings at Liverpool street station, where City lager louts are terrorising commuters travelling to Chelmsford and Southend.?

Mr. Portillo: I know that the chairman is extremely concerned about that because he wishes to provide a secure and safe environment for his passengers. It is as well to pay tribute to the British Transport police, who play an important part in controlling such situations at stations.

Mr. Redmond: Does the Minister agree that British Rail provides an excellent service from Doncaster to London and that privatisation could not improve that service? Will he mention that to the knockers behind him?

Mr. Portillo: I hope that the hon. Gentleman, who finds satisfaction with the service, will inform the chairman of British Rail of that, because he receives a lot of complaints and I am sure that he will be pleased to hear that praise.

Mr. McCrindle: Are there any plans to discuss with the chairman of British Rail, and more particularly with the chairman of London Regional Transport, the worrying development of the arrival of the vigilante group, the Guardian Angels? Does my hon. Friend agree with British Transport police that that is a potentially dangerous development and that it would be far better to devote increased resources to the British Transport police, who continue to perform valuable work?

Mr. Portillo: I have already paid tribute to the British Transport police and feel sure that if they feel that there is any constraint on their resources they will find a way of letting the Government know.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Minister understand that constant references to privatisation threaten the integrity of the British Rail system and raise apprehensions about railway lines other than the most profitable? Does he further understand that leaks to the press do nothing for the morale of British Rail and that he is putting a blight on all initiatives from British Rail? If the Minister is to discuss those matters, what about discussing them with the House of Commons instead of with Lobby correspondents?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman could no doubt use an Opposition day to discuss those matters if he wishes. I have every confidence that British Rail is not finding it difficult to pursue its programmes. The management of British Rail has been extremely entrepreneurial, forward-looking and effective, and I have been impressed by it.

Manchester Ship Canal

11. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the making of a harbour revision order for the Manchester ship canal company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Objections to the proposed order have been made by trade union interests and by a group of shareholders. Since the objections have not been withdrawn, a public inquiry will be held, as required by the Harbours Act.

Mr. Butler: Will this be an opportunity for the public to obtain guarantees that the intended owners of the Manchester ship canal company will pay more regard to the environment than the current owners of the company, Manchester city council?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend will know that there is no effect on the ownership of the Manchester ship canal company, although there is a proposal that there should be changes in the board of directors. The effect of the order on the company's policies and activities is likely to be raised at the public inquiry. I hope that my hon. Friend will understand when I tell him that it would therefore be wrong for me to comment on that in detail.

Hull-Teesside (Road Links)

13. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on improving road links between Hull and Teesside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A number primarily seeking an east coast motorway, which is not planned. Schemes in the programme are designed to meet future north-south traffic needs in north-east England.

Mr. Greenway: While I note my hon. Friend's comment that a motorway on the east coast is not planned, does he not agree that such resources as might be available would be better channelled towards improving existing roads throughout north Yorkshire? It is 50 miles from the A1 to the east coast and the continuing growth of housing, commerce, industry and tourism in north Yorkshire demands that the A19 and the north outer ring road at York be improved and dualled.

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, as long as my hon. Friend the Member of Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) is not listening.

Sir Ian Lloyd: In considering the technicalities of improving road links, has my hon. Friend given any thought to the representations that he has received from many of my constituents about the newly completed road link between Emsworth and Chichester——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that the question is about road links between Hull and Teesside.

Mr. Bottomley: Let me say briefly that we shall do the best that we can to make all our roads as effective and quiet as possible.

Civil Aviation Authority and British Airports Authority

14. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority; and what was discussed.

16. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of *(a)* the Civil Aviation Authority and *(b)* British Airports Authority plc; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Channon: I meet the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority and British Airports Authority plc from time to time to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Mr. McCrindle: As it appears that both BAA plc and CAA are now agreed that there is a likelihood that there will be a need for additional runway capacity before the turn of the century, can my right hon. Friend give me any idea whether there is also an agreement between BAA and CAA on whether such additional runway capacity should be situated north or south of the Thames?

Mr. Channon: I should not like to comment now on the views of BAA or CAA on the issue because, as my hon. Friend knows, I am awaiting a report from the CAA on this specific topic, which is extremely important. I hope to receive it in a few months' time. It is important that we look at the future airport and runway needs of the south-east of England. That will be reported to me. As to

where and if a new runway should be provided, the one thing that I should say to my hon. Friend is that the one place where it cannot happen is Gatwick.

Mr. Wilson: When the Minister meets the chairmen of BAA and CAA, does he spin them the same old rubbish that he gave the House earlier this afternoon about domestic air fares having nothing to do with him and competition being the force that somehow controls them? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the return air fare between Glasgow—incidentally, the European city of culture, so cultured that there is not a single Tory Member of Parliament—and London is £152? That is after the privatisation of British Airways and the supposed introduction of competition on that route. Does the right hon. Gentleman say that the free market, or the cartel, is working on such routes?

Mr. Channon: What I accept is that there is continuing need for competition on domestic and, indeed, foreign routes. I am sure that, in the long term, competition will lead to a better service for passengers and that it is more likely that lower fares will be achieved.

Mr. Jessel: Will my right hon. Friend tell both the CAA and BAA that, around Heathrow, there is deep hostility to any increase whatever in airport facilities?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend does not astonish me by his views. I shall bear them in mind. Indeed, they are extremely important. I know the views of my hon. Friend and his colleagues.

Mr. Spearing: When the Secretary of State next meets the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority, will he remind him that two undertakings given by the builders of London City airport about new radar installations and the system of instrument landing were not complied with when the airport was built? Will he get from the chairman of the CAA an undertaking that proper evidence will be taken about short take-off and landing regulations throughout the world and that this evidence will be given to a forthcoming inquiry on an application for the use of jet aircraft?

Mr. Channon: I had better make no comment on a forthcoming application, which will be decided in due course. Of course I shall discuss with the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority the first of the hon. Gentleman's allegations, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has already done that on many occasions.

Metroplitan Line (Uxbridge)

17. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made within the central London rail study which he set up on 25 March; whether the study includes an appraisal of the service on the Metropolitan line serving Uxbridge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: We hope to receive a report from the central London rail study and announce the main findings towards the end of the year. The options being considered include the improvement of Metropolitan line services.

Mr. Shersby: Is my hon. Friend aware that the service on the Metropolitan line to Uxbridge has deteriorated very considerably in recent years because of the very heavy usage of the service? That has necessitated some trains being taken off to allow the signalling procedures to operate properly. Will he look carefuly at this matter and consider what additional resources and facilities can be devoted to rail travel between Uxbridge and central London, as this is of great importance to people living in the area?

Mr. Portillo: I am sorry to hear about my hon. Friend's problems. He has put his finger on the matter of new investment, which may be the key. This year £230 million was invested in London Underground and he will draw considerable comfort from that. That investment is 50 per cent. up on the last year of the GLC.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Social Security Commissioner for Wales

68. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Attorney-General whether he has received any further representations concerning the office of the Social Security Commissioner for Wales in Cardiff.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): Since 1 January 1988 my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor and I have received 22 representations about the closure in August 1986 of this office, of which none have been from appellants.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Solicitor-General aware that there is a strong feeling in Wales that this office should not have been closed? For the sake of convenience, and for hearing cases in the medium of the Welsh language, there should be such a facility in the capital city of Wales because there is such a facility in the capital city of Scotland and, I understand, in Northern Ireland. Will he look at this again, because we had this facility until 1986 and should certainly have it in future?

The Solicitor-General: I understand the feeling, but I must tell the hon. Gentleman that since 1986 nobody has asked for a Welsh-speaking commissioner. Only two or three of the four days available each month have been taken up with oral hearings. Most of the hearings are written, and from representations made to the commissioners many Welsh people in the north seem to find Liverpool or London more convenient than Cardiff.

Director of Public Prosecutions

69. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions; and what matters were discussed.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I last met the Director of Public Prosecutions on Friday 21 October. We discussed matters relating to the Crown Prosecution Service.

Mr. Janner: Having regard to the Government's epic, disgraceful and disastrous mishandling of the "Spycatcher" affair, has the learned Attorney-General discussed with the Director of Public Prosecutions whether there are to be prosecutions under the Official Secrets Act arising out of this or similar matters? If he has discussed

that with the director, what are the results, who is to be prosecuted and what was considered? If he has not discussed those matters, why not?

The Attorney-General: The answer to the first part of the hon. and learned Gentleman's question is no; the second part of the question does not arise; and the answer to the third part is that prosecution decisions are taken in the light of available evidence.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I draw to the attention of the House that the next question is specifically about "Spycatcher"?

Mr. Devlin: When the Attorney-General last spoke to the Director of Public Prosecutions, did he draw his attention to the recent report in *The Northern Echo* to the effect that the defendants pleading not guilty on Teesside have to wait up to 20 weeks for their cases to come before the courts and that this is due to a shortage of magistrates and prosecutors? Did the Attorney-General ask the director when he last spoke to him whether anything would be done to increase the supply of prosecutors in the north-east or to put in a stipendiary magistrate in Teesside?

The Attorney-General: I did not raise the matter with the director when I saw him last on Friday. The availability of magistrates is a matter for my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor, as is the administration of the courts, but as to the availability of prosecutors, I should be surprised if a shortage of prosecutors was responsible for delay in bringing cases to court of anything like the order that my hon. Friend mentioned. However, I shall look into the matter and write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Mullin: Has the Attorney-General any plans to prosecute or investigate those involved in the attempt by the intelligence services to overthrow the elected Government, or am I being naive in asking this?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman is perhaps being engagingly harsh upon himself, and I should not wish to criticise him. However, I draw his attention to a statement by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in May of last year, in which she drew attention to the fact that, over four months, the director general of the security service had investigated the allegations to which the hon. Gentleman has referred and had concluded that there was no evidence to support them, and that, accordingly, no further action was being taken in that regard.

Mr. Holt: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, in the recent correspondence that I have had with the Home Office, it has become clear that large bookmakers, every day, induce people to bet and break the law, and that the Government, through the DPP, have never brought a prosecution against any of these major bookmakers, who daily flout the law of the land? Will my right hon. and learned Friend undertake to speak to the DPP about this scandalous state of affairs?

The Attorney-General: I must gently correct my hon. Friend, who complained that the Government, through the prosecution service, have never brought a prosecution. The Government do not bring prosecutions in these circumstances. This is a matter for the independent prosecution service. I am not familiar with the correspondence to which my hon. Friend refers, but I shall look at it, and, if it seems appropriate to do so—I expect that it is, since my hon. Friend asked me to do so—I shall draw it to the attention of the DPP.

"Spycatcher"

70. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the latest position regarding legal action in the case involving the book "Spycatcher".

The Attorney-General: On 13 October the House of Lords refused permanent injunctions against the relevant newspapers. The Law Lords made it clear that this was solely due to wide publication of the book abroad, constituting, in the words of Lord Keith, the senior Law Lord, heinous treachery by Mr. Wright which would have been restrained by the courts in this country. Holding that a life-long duty of confidentiality bound all members and former members of the security services, and that, save in very exceptional circumstances, newspapers are not free to publish confidential material, the House of Lords established unequivocally the very principles of law for which the Government have always contended, and accordingly entirely vindicated the Government's determined stance.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Attorney-General aware that a victory by the newspapers over the Government in this case is a victory for press freedom and civil liberties? Is any further legal action to be taken against the book being published here? Has not enough money—over £1 million—been wasted in this case? Is it not the case that, under the Government's proposals for changing the Official Secrets Act, it will be virtually impossible for newspapers to give or publish details of alleged wrongdoings and abuses in the security services? Have not newspapers in an open, democratic society a duty and responsibility to reveal such abuses? Are not the Government far more concerned about covering up abuses than about allowing newspapers the freedom that we all cherish?

The Attorney-General: The speeches of the Law Lords about future publication and distribution are publicly available, and it is for all concerned to take their own legal advice. As to the expenditure of public money, it is disgraceful that Mr. Wright's treachery made the expenditure necessary. In this new area for the application of the law relating to confidentiality, important principles, for which the Government have contended, have been established and we shall implacably seek their enforcement and application in any future case. Therefore, it is money well spent.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I am glad that my right hon. and learned Friend conceded that the Government had lost the case. Is he aware that Lord Goff said that this was a misuse of the injunctory procedure? Does that mean that the Government will take on board two of the contentions mentioned in the course of proceedings, the first by Lord Griffiths about the public interest defence and, secondly, the judgments in respect of prior publication? Does that have an implication for the reform of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act, as postulated by the Government in their White Paper?

The Attorney-General: Of course, I and the Government will take on board—to use my hon. Friend's

words—every aspect of every speech in this case and will not seek to put a gloss on them, but, in view of my hon. Friend's implicit criticism, I should draw his attention to the concluding remarks of Lord Keith, the Senior Law Lord. He said:

"In the first place I regard this case as having established that members and former members of the Security Service do have a life-long obligation of confidence owed to the Crown. Those who breach it, such as Mr. Wright, are guilty of treachery just as heinous as that of some of the spies he excoriates in his book. The case has also served a useful purpose in bringing to light the problems which arise when the obligation of confidence is breached by publication abroad."

So far as there may be any implications for the Government's announced reform of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act, that is, of course, a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. John Morris: Will the Attorney-General confirm that it was only because of his inability to prosecute Wright in this country that fruitless and expensive actions in Australia and New Zealand were commenced? Would the advice be the same if the need arose in the future for the same kind of action to be commenced in foreign jurisdictions? Was it because of, or in spite of, the Law Officers' advice that the Wright case was continued right to the bitter end? Once the issue of principle was lost in Australia, why was there the need to continue to try to gag the British press right up to the House of Lords? Is it not time for proper and independent machinery to be set up to supervise the security services—machinery in which we can have confidence—to ensure that, whatever actions Wright and his colleagues took, such an incident will never be repeated?

The Attorney-General: I will answer the questions for which I hold some ministerial responsibility. The absence of Mr. Wright from this jurisdiction made it impossible to bring any prosecution. As to any future publication outside this jurisdiction, the Law Lords have drawn attention to the fact that we cannot look to foreign courts to protect even the publication of very serious secrets. At the end of Lord Keith's judgment he said:

"There is no reason to expect that secrets concerned with matters of great current importance would receive any different treatment"

in foreign courts. He therefore went on to say:

"Consideration should be given to the possibility of some international agreement aimed at reducing the risks to collective security involved in the present state of affairs."

I should have hoped to hear from the right hon. and learned Gentleman and from other Opposition Members some concern for the preservation of the confidentiality of such matters because, in certain circumstances, the preservation of the lives of those people who serve in these services depends on that preservation.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

AIDS

81. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made in his allocations of aid to countries in sub-Saharan Africa of the impact of negative growth in the economically active sections of the populations of those countries consequent upon the AIDS epidemic.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): We have made major financial contributions to help support programmes aimed at combating AIDS. We are providing £5·63 million over five years in support of the World Health Organisation's co-ordinated national AIDS programmes in five African countries. We have contributed £7·75 million to the World Health Organisation's global programme on AIDS, which is working with over 150 countries, including 44 in Africa. In addition, we are supporting research into the long-term demographic, social and economic support of the disease.

Mr. Butler: Does my hon. Friend agree that sub-Saharan African countries should be completely open about the scale of the problems that they face when they make their applications to him?

Mr. Patten: Fortunately, we have found that we have been able to conduct an increasingly open dialogue with sub-Saharan African countries about this problem, which is a global problem, not just one for Africa. We have been helped considerably by operating principally through the World Health Organisation and its admirable special programme on AIDS. I went to Geneva last week to discuss it with the WHO and am extremely impressed by the progress that it has been making.

Sir John Stanley: What steps are the Government taking to try to get a greater international follow-up to the initiative taken and the work started by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer last year to alleviate the debt burden of the sub-Saharan African countries?

Mr. Patten: My right hon. Friend is correct to imply that many of the countries most affected by AIDS are also most afflicted by the burden of debt. I am delighted to say that progress has been made since the Toronto economic summit towards implementing the initiative of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It seems that the first reschedulings under the Paris club should start this month. I am sure that the whole House will want to congratulate my right hon. Friend on the success of the initiative.

British Council

82. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to review the role of the British Council in the administration of Britain's overseas aid programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Overseas Development Administration is currently reviewing arrangements for paying the British Council for the services it provides in administering the aid programme. Reference was made to the plans for this review in the Treasury minute on the 23rd report of the Public Accounts Committee, Session 1987-88.

Mr. Thompson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that the role of the British Council in helping with the overseas aid programme is not sufficiently recognised? Will the review include the books presentation programme and technical co-operation training programme?

Mr. Patten: The review will include those two programmes as well as schemes for providing English language teaching staff, for overseas education seminars and for parts of our technical co-operation projects. I agree with my hon. Friend about the skill of the British Council in administering our programme. I have been most impressed by what I have seen of its operations around the world, but I am sure that there is still scope for making its work even more efficient, effective and economical.

Mr. Cousins: Given the impending visit of Prince Sihanouk to the Prime Minister, does the Minister think that the British Council might be a vehicle through which the Government could assist voluntary agencies such as Oxfam, which is supplying the entire water supply to the city of Phnom Pen?

Mr. Patten: That supplementary question demonstrates considerable ingenuity. I shall be making an announcement tomorrow about the development of the joint funding scheme so that humanitarian work by non-governmental organisations in Cambodia can be carried forward.

Mauritius

83. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what development assistance he is giving to Mauritius; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Gross British bilateral aid to Mauritius in 1987 amounted to some £8 million. As I saw for myself in May, Mauritius makes excellent use of it.

Dr. Twinn: As trading interests are more important than aid for Mauritius and other ACP countries, will my hon. Friend ensure that the interests of these countries are properly looked after in the renegotiation of the Lomé convention?

Mr. Patten: We have been pressing during the discussions on the renegotiations of the Lomé convention for more openness in the trading regime under that convention. It is obviously especially important when export earnings from trade are so much more important to ACP countries than aid flows. We are pressing particularly for the greater liberalisation of trade arangements for items such as sugar, which would be of especial importance to Mauritius.

Mr. Janner: Having regard to the needs of Mauritius, to the excellent relations between the United Kingdom and the island, and perhaps even to its strategic importance, will the Minister give the House an assurance that aid will be increased during 1988?

Mr. Patten: That will depend on a number of issues. First, it will depend on whether we are successful in winning one or two more contracts under the aid and trade provision; secondly, it will depend on the progress that we make in two sectors in discussions with the Mauritian Government—first, in doing more in the environmental sector with them; secondly, in further strengthening our arrangements for helping them with their water supply. There are excellent twinning arrangements with the Severn-Trent water authority, which I wish to see strengthened.

Aid and Trade Provision

84. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many aid and trade provision agreements have been signed in the most recent year for which figures are available; how much aid and trade provision was made available; and what was the total export value.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1987-88, 38 aid and trade provision agreements were signed, involving commitments of £149 million in support of United Kingdom export business worth £429 million.

Mr. Dykes: I thank my hon. Friend for those encouraging figures. Bearing in mind the future importance of China and its development in relation to our trade, do the ATP and soft loans agreements help the Chinese economy, and in what other ways are we helping the Chinese through my hon. Friend's Department?

Mr. Patten: I am delighted to say that we have almost committed all the £300 million soft loan agreement with China that was first signed in 1986. I have just signed a further £300 million soft loan agreement with China, which I think will be more flexible than its predecessor. It will enable us to choose between supporting developmentally sound projects through mixed credits or by through soft loans, and it will help us, I hope, further to strengthen our economic partnership with China.

Miss Lestor: Given the criticism from the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, which called for ATP to be withdrawn from the aid programme and transferred to the Department of Trade and Industry, will the Minister reconsider his Department's refusal to act on that advice? If not, will he at least ensure that the amount is strictly limited to the 5 per cent. as it was under the Labour Government?

Mr. Patten: I think that one needs to be rather flexible about the amount, particularly—and I hope that this will continue to be the case—as more countries become creditworthy while still remaining too poor. In response to the first point, when we responded to the FAC report we made it clear that we did not agree with it about the departmental responsibility for ATP. It is no criticism of my right hon. and Friends in the Department of Trade and Industry to say that if the House is concerned about the developmental soundness of projects supported under ATP, it is not a bad idea to leave responsibility for that programme with the ODA.

Mozambique (Refugees)

85. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance Her Majesty's Government are providing to help the large numbers of Mozambican refugees who have fled to Malawi and neighbouring countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: So far in 1988 we have provided over £4 million for Mozambican refugees in neighbouring countries, of whom there are currently more than 900,000, £3·6 million has been channelled through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and £550,000 given to voluntary agencies for the purchase of blankets, clothing and other relief goods.

Mr. Hanley: That is an excellent and humane response, but how many refugees have entered Malawi? What help are we giving to that beleagured country with its problems?

Mr. Patten: The last count of the number of refugees in Malawi carried out in July suggested that there were 630,000 in Malawi, although refugees were still arriving at the rate of about 15,000 a month. So far we have made £2·6 million available to the UNHCR for programmes in Malawi and nearly £500,000 to provide relief goods for new arrivals. The Government of Malawi deserve our thanks and congratulations on the way in which they have responded to what is a particularly difficult situation.

Sub-Saharan Africa

86. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total British bilateral aid given to the whole of sub-Saharan Africa in 1979, and in the latest year for which figures are available, in constant prices.

Mr. Chris Patten: British bilateral aid to sub-Saharan Africa was £386 million in 1979 and £284 million in 1987 in constant 1987 prices. On the same basis British aid to sub-Saharan Africa channelled through multilateral institutions rose from £161 million in 1980 to £209 million in 1986.

Mr. Lloyd: Does the Minister accept that, given the scale of problems in sub-Saharan Africa—where the position deteriorated considerably over those years—the reduction in real terms in aid—and that is what we are talking about—from the British Government is absolutely outrageous? What does the Minister intend to do about that?

Mr. Patten: There are more than two views on whether the problems have increased in severity in sub-Saharan Africa over that period. Happily, more and more sub-Saharan African countries are embarking on economic reform programmes, with substantial assistance from this country. We have contributed £2·25 billion to aid programmes in sub-Saharan Africa over the past five years. I would envisage an increasing part of our growing aid programme going to support economic reform in sub-Saharan Africa.

Nicaragua (Hurricane)

3.34 pm

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles) *(by private notice):* To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on what aid the Government intend to offer Nicaragua in the aftermath of the recent hurricane.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): Following consultation over the weekend with international relief agencies, I am now making available £250,000 to Nicaragua and other countries in the region affected by Hurricane Joan.

This assistance is in addition to the initial £10,000 I authorised over the weekend for our ambassador as a very first contribution in the form of cash to meet immediate local requirements. This new money will be channelled through international agencies such as the Red Cross and United Nations Disaster Relief Office as well as British voluntary agencies such as Oxfam. The European Community is also providing emergency relief of £430,000 for Costa Rica and Nicaragua—our share of which is some £86,000.

We are now discussing urgently with the agencies the precise allocation of the £250,000 as emergency needs and priorities start to become a little clearer. As I have said, I am ready to respond to requests for assistance from any of the countries, including Nicaragua, that are suffering as a result of this hurricane. As always, we will keep the situation under very close review and do whatever we can to help.

Miss Lestor: I was glad to hear the Minister's announcement, which represented an increase on the figure announced in the press.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) has got the wrong end of the stick.

Miss Lestor: Just a moment. Presumably the figure announced in the press was an initial reaction pending the statement that has been made to the House today. Okay? Is the Minister's friend happy?

Mr. Eggar *indicated assent.*

Miss Lestor: Thank you—then I shall continue.

We also welcome the Minister's statement that the matter is fairly open in respect of any further request that may be made.

As most people are aware, the latest reports are that there are about 50 dead in Nicaragua, that 300,000 more people have been affected, and the Hurricane Joan is moving at a colossal rate, leaving behind a trail of destruction that has devastated timberlands, cattle ranches, rice fields and, as I understand it, most of the coffee harvest. The country is in a very grave state. The British Government made a rapid and generous response after Hurricane Gilbert in Jamaica, although I know that the devastation there was greater than it is at the moment in Nicaragua.

However, I ask the Minister to comment on information I have received, that the Nicaraguan embassy has said that the British Red Cross has a plane loaded with 38 tonnes of emergency aid ready to go to Nicaragua, but that it needs £160,000 to send it there. I understand that a request has been made to the Ministry to fund that exercise. Will he make a favourable response, and include in his statement today an undertaking that he will consider sympathetically any further requests that come his way?

The Minister mentioned the fact that it was recognised that other countries have been affected and are likely to be affected in the future, so I shall not pursue that point. However, I urge the Government to use their good relations with the United States Administration and to advise them to accept the democratically elected Government of Nicaragua. After the 1979 earthquake, the United States-sponsored civil war and Hurricane Joan, the people of Nicaragua need peace now more than ever before. Support for the Contras against the democratically elected Government is totally unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker: Order. These comments are somewhat wide of the question.

Miss Lestor: I accept that they are wide of the question, Mr. Speaker: I was trying to make the point that the hurricane comes on top of all the other disasters that have confronted Nicaragua, and that the things that are now taking place there stand in the way of assistance being used effectively.

Finally, has the Minister considered using the garrison in Belize and whether it has a role to play in the relief effort? Perhaps he will comment on that point.

Mr. Chris Patten: Perhaps I can answer those five questions fairly briefly.

First, the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) was right to say that the £10,000 is what we normally provide immediately to whoever is on the spot so that they can buy medicines and blankets and meet early emergency needs. Perhaps the fact that, unusually, the amount was announced at the weekend gave the hon. Lady the wrong impression about our overall contribution towards dealing with the disaster in Nicaragua, Costa Rica and conceivably elsewhere.

Secondly, the precise scale of the devastation in Nicaragua is not yet clear. It looks as though the hurricane hit the Atlantic coast with particular force and did the greatest damage there: it seems that it did not do as much damage as it moved across the country to the Pacific coast. It has, however, taken off again off the Pacific coast under another name. *[Interruption.]* It would not be tremendously funny if one was living on the Pacific coast of Nicaragua. We shall obviously need to take account of further developments, because we may need to provide more assistance.

Thirdly, we have been in touch with the Red Cross. That is one of the first agencies that we contact in cases such as this. We shall look at the issue mentioned by the hon. Lady of the supplies that may or may not be about to fly with the Red Cross from Heathrow.

Fourthly—this goes slightly wide of my brief and remit—I assure the hon. Lady that the Government, like the rest of the European Community, support the peace process in central America. I am sure that she will have read the exchanges in the House on the subject last week, in which I know that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) played a distinguished traveller's role.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Thank you. At least I have been there.

Mr. Patten: I shall not dwell on the way in which the hon. Gentleman got there.

Finally, we have had no requests about the use of the garrison at Belize, but obviously we deal with any requests for the use of MOD facilities, or our armed forces, as promptly and helpfully as we can.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): In making this welcome contribution to the assistance being given to central America, will my hon. Friend bear in mind our long-standing connection with the Bluefields area through the Mosquito protectorate that this country had with the area some years ago? When considering the distribution of potential additional amounts, will he give some thought to assisting that area and the Caribbean Commonwealth countries to prepare for the all-too-frequent hurricanes that occur there, both with emergency planning and with preparations for future events?

Mr. Patten: I know how much my hon. Friend knows about the region, and the area to which he refers seems to have been the most affected by Hurricane Joan. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs was able to meet a delegation from the area last week, and I am sure that we shall have its needs very much in mind when it comes to the allocation of disaster relief assistance.

The issue of preparedness is of course particularly important, and we have just allocated $250,000 to UNDRO for a study that it is doing on preparedness in the Caribbean. I hope that that will help the countries in the region that are affected so frequently by hurricanes to prepare more adequately for limiting the amount of damage that they do.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): The people of Nicaragua will be grateful for the Minister's prompt response to the disaster. Will he bear in mind, however, that our regular aid programme to Nicaragua has declined considerably from about £400,000 10 years ago to £100,000 now? There is clearly scope for generosity. Will he examine the reports coming in of the economic disaster to the cotton and coffee crops on which Nicaragua depends for her exports, and if necessary give expert as well as cash aid?

Mr. Patten: It is true that our bilateral aid programme to Nicaragua peaked 10 years ago. That, of course, was when the last Labour Administration gave about £400,000 to the Somoza regime—a point which, I am sure, features prominently in the memoirs and the diaries of the period. The main contribution that we now make to Nicaragua is multilaterally, through the European Community.

Altogether, the EC had a programme in 1986, which is the last year for which we have figures, of about $9·2 million, to which we contributed about 20 per cent. In addition, we are supporting about 40 non-governmental organisation projects in Nicaragua.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, whatever the damage caused by this hurricane, it is tiny compared with the economic catastrophe imposed upon the people of Nicaragua by the Marxist economic policies of their Government? If we are to give aid to countries in the Caribbean area, would it not be better to give it to those countries that support pro-Western policies, such as Jamaica, rather than to those that are in thrall to the Eastern bloc, which could support them itself?

Mr. Patten: One can make a valid distinction between humanitarian assistance and long-term development aid. However, I agree with my hon. Friend about the damage done by the economic policies which I believe are now associated with the name of Mr. Ligachev and are not widely regarded as being terribly successful.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): As the Member of Parliament for Lambeth, which is twinned with Bluefields, Nicaragua and which has given a great deal of help already, I ask the Minister if he would consider matching the private contributions made to the disaster relief funds initiated by boroughs such as Lambeth. Secondly, does he appreciate that one of the great problems in Jamaica and in Nicaragua is that a hurricane cuts out income from foreign exchange for tourism and cash crops because of the immediate destruction that it wreaks? Will he consider making sufficient foreign exchange available from this country, or together with other countries, for the immediate import of essentials, such as lumber, zinc and spare parts to make good some of the damage caused by this catastrophe?

Mr. Patten: First, we already match, through our joint funding scheme, on a pound-for-pound basis, and I would be reluctant to extend that principle. The joint funding scheme has been successful, which is why we have increased it by about 200 per cent. in the past two or three years.

Secondly, I believe that foreign exchange is more of a problem for Jamaica, which has a more substantial tourist industry, than for Nicaragua, but, obviously, contributions made in sterling by outside donors are of some help to the foreign exchange position of the assisted countries.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the additional modes of aid that we give to the Caribbean is having a ship always on station from Her Majesty's forces? In fact, I had the honour of being on the Caribbean guard ship HMS Newcastle until a few days ago and I saw the plans being made by the Ministry of Defence to go to the aid of people hit by hurricanes. Does he not agree that it is excellent that, after Hurricane Gilbert, we had a ship in the Cayman Islands the day immediately after the hurricane? It gave immediate aid there and then went on to Jamaica to give continued aid. Does he agree that this form of aid, where Ministry of Defence money is being used for humanitarian reasons, is an excellent way for Britain to play its part in this work?

Mr. Patten: Speaking as the Member for a landlocked Navy city, I am delighted to endorse what my hon. Friend has said. The Navy provided considerable assistance after Hurricane Gilbert, especially to the Caymans and Jaimaica. It does an outstanding job. We also have reason to be pleased about the contribution that the armed forces have made after other emergencies and disasters.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): I visited Bluefields in Nicaragua in May and, speaking to the Minister as a Member of Parliament for the next constituency along from his landlocked one, I remind him that the Atlantic coast region was almost totally devastated by this hurricane. Seventy-five per cent. of Bluefields and 95 per cent. of Corn Island have been completely destroyed. Bluefields, which is a substantial city on the Atlantic coast, and has existed since 1620—its connections with Britain have been stated previously—has

[Ms. Dawn Primarolo]

been destroyed to the extent that it may have to be abandoned as a community. We appreciate that the Government have made an issue—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a private notice Question.

Ms. Primorolo: I was coming to the question, Mr. Speaker, but some of the points have not been made.

Will the Government and the Minister accept that what is needed for Nicaragua is substantial Government aid now? People do not have shelter. I urge the Minister to reconsider so that the Government can make available now massive aid to the Atlantic coast region through the ODA. The Government should consider the use of Belize and the possibility of an emergency unit within ODA to fulfil our obligations.

Mr. Patten: With respect to the hon. Lady, I am not sure whether she has raised any additional points. We are providing immediate emergency assistance and, as I have said, we will keep the situation under urgent review. I am sure—at least, I think I am—that the Opposition would be just as concerned if the hurricane had hit Panama.

Mr. Tony Banks: May I remind the Minister that the greatest damage to Nicaragua has been caused by the state-sponsored terrorism of the Reagan Administration.

Mr. Speaker: Is this about the hurricane?

Mr. Banks: It is about the damage to Nicaragua.

Mr. Speaker: The question should be about the hurricane, please.

Mr. Banks: The amount of money that the Minister has announced this afternoon is pathetic in comparison with the problems that exist. Will the Minister pay a visit to Nicaragua? Perhaps he would take with him the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, who says a great deal about Nicaragua but has never ventured there. If they encounter any difficulties with travelling, I could perhaps have a word with General Noriega and he could take them in his jet.

Mr. Patten: It is conceivable that I tend to be rather choosier than the hon. Gentleman about whom I hitch lifts with.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have had a good run on this private notice question.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the four motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Amendment No. 2) Order 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1314) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Small Claims (Scotland) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Sheriff Courts (Scotland) Act 1971 (Privative Jurisdiction and Summary Cause) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Amendment No. 3) Order 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1675) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Finance) Bill

Considered in Committee.

[SIR PAUL DEAN *in the Chair*]

3.52 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Sir Paul. As always, it is my desire to be helpful. My admiration both for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker and for Mr. Speaker is second to none, as is my admiration for the Clerks' office which does a great deal of preparation for our sessions.

You will be aware, Sir Paul, that the main body of the Bill is divided into two parts. One is about on-going payments to the Community—that is the modern term for it—and the other part is about a special once-for-all intergovernmental agreement or loan to the Community. Since the Bill was first brought forward, we have discovered, fortunately, that the Community has a surplus of funds. That may not have been apparent to the people who have helped you, Sir Paul, to select the amendments to this Bill. Therefore, there is no longer any need for the second part of the Bill.

I believe that an amendment has been tabled to strike out or delete the second part of the Bill; that is, that amendment has not been called for debate, but I ask you, Sir Paul to look at the matter afresh, especially bearing in mind that the money is no longer needed.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Sir Paul. The Bill before us covers two wholly separate issues. There may be many people in the House who would agree to a change in the own resources decision, but would object strongly to making a substantial payment from the United Kingdom for an overspend that appears to be illegal, and is certainly contrary to assurances given to the House. Is there any way that we can have separate votes on new subsections (e) and (f), bearing in mind that they deal with wholly separate issues and that one involves a huge payment from the House of Commons for something which many hon. Members may consider to be wrong and some hon. Members may consider to be illegal?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Sir Paul. Generally speaking, I believe that there should be separate votes. According to the press and statements made on television, during the past two or three weeks the Prime Minister has changed her mind about the Common Market, so why are we proceeding with this Bill? Has No. 10 Downing street made any representations to the Chair in line with what the Prime Minister has been saying while she has ben gallivanting round Europe? Why should we allocate money to the Common Market? We are told that Britain should no longer play any role that will lead towards a federal structure in Europe. If we are to provide the Community with cash, that will help those who want to take that route.

I want to know exactly what representations have been made by the Prime Minister—or is it that she has just been engaging in a bout of hypocrisy in her travels round the world, giving the impression that she is against the Common Market when all the time she is assisting her Ministers, including the chairman of the Tory party, to come to this House and ask us to provide the Community with additional finance? It is high time the Prime Minister spoke with one voice and did not give misleading impressions to the public.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): I am sure that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) realises that that point is not for me. The Bill has had its Second Reading and we are now proceeding to the Committee stage. Great consideration has been given to the selection of amendments, as is always the case, and it is never a straightforward matter on Bills of this sort. I can assure both hon. Gentlemen who raised these points and, indeed, the whole Committee, that a wide debate on clause stand part will be in order and that with a little ingenuity it will be possible to make most of the points which hon. Members wish to make.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Further to the point of order from the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), Sir Paul. Although I can only condemn his aspersions on my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, he is on to a significant argument—that to some extent there has been an important change in Government policy since we first debated the Bill. Will you, Sir Paul, ensure that the Government make a clear statement about why the Bill is needed? I need do no more than refer to the speech of my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General, who on 11 July at column 112 of *Hansard* with great enthusiasm endorsed the notion of the social fund and expenditure on it. Yet the Bruges speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister appeared to condemn all that the social dimension stood for and all on which the social fund was spending the money which is at the heart of this Bill. My point of order in supporting the hon. Gentleman so uncharacteristically is simply to ask you to use your good offices to ensure that the Government make a clear statement of their new European policy.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Sir Paul. You slightly surprised me by suggesting that the Government do not change their mind over an issue. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said, the Prime Minister's speech seems to show a change of policy. I recall that on several occasions the Leader of the House has been to the Table, for example, about the Freedom of Information Bill which the Government allowed through several stages, but which was withdrawn in Committee because of circumstances surrounding Sir Anthony Blunt.

As the Prime Minister's statement appeared critical of the Common Market, the least we can expect of her is that she should send the Leader of the House here to make a statement of policy; otherwise, hon. Members may lay charges of hypocrisy against her, and I am not sure whether that is in order. Unless the Government make a statement about the Bill, the money it provides will go to support strong movements, both in the Assembly and in the Commission, towards a western European united states. That is the main thrust of thought and action in the Assembly of the Common Market.

It seems strange, Sir Paul, that you have heard nothing about such a statement. That is a poor show—the Prime Minister and the Leader of the House are accountable to

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

this House and should be here to make a statement. If they do not come, it cannot be helped if they are labelled hypocrites.

4 pm

The First Deputy Chairman: The two points that have been made are not really matters for the Chair; they are pleas for the Government to make statements. The sooner we get on with the Committee stage, the more likely we are to hear some answers to these points. I hope that we shall hear no more such points, because they are directed much more to the Treasury than to the Chair.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Further to this point of order, Sir Paul. May I, as a compromise, suggest that you call on the Paymaster General at an early stage? I am sure that there is neither populism nor duplicity nor ambiguity in the Prime Minister's position. I have no doubt that the Government will now say that they are opposed to the 80 per cent. increase in the social fund. It is absolutely certain that the Government are not prepared to allow the Labour party to become a Euro-fanatical party, using the social fund to enhance its interventionist and Socialist policies.

I know that the Paymaster General will want to state the Government's position at an early stage. May I therefore respectfully suggest that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, call upon him immediately, thereby avoiding a long debate?

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Some of us have the impression that there was a major change of heart by the Opposition during the summer. So that this affair is kept in balance, could the attention of the Labour Front Bench spokesmen be directed to explaining their conversion to the new policy that has overtaken their party, and could they inform their hon. Friends the Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) about it?

The First Deputy Chairman: It is clear that the suggestions that have been made recently are most helpful. Everyone is anxious to hear what the Paymaster General has to say about the Bill, and I seriously suggest to the Committee that the sooner we start to debate the amendments that have been selected, the sooner we are likely to hear from him.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Further to that point of order, Sir Paul. There has been a singular harmony between the two sides of the Committee. I rise to support the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken).

My point of order is this: since the Bill was given a Second Reading, three dramatic events, both highly relevant to the Bill, have occurred. The first was the speech by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at Bruges, a copy of which even found its way into the hands of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who produced it at the Dispatch Box last week. There was also the rebuke delivered to the Prime Minister by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who is unaccountably not in his place today. If he were here, I am sure he would want to be the lone voice in the House disagreeing with the speech made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

The other event of great importance was the visit of the chairman of the European Commission to the Labour party conference——

Mr. Skinner: As chairman of the Labour party, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that there was no such visit.

Mr. Gow: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. The chairman of the European Commission made a journey to the TUC, not the Labour party.

Taking all these matters together, I wonder whether you, Sir Paul, might exceptionally allow my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General to speak first in the debate? There may be only a few precedents for that, but the exceptional nature of the events since Second Reading of this Bill justify a departure from precedent.

We should also welcome advice from my right hon. Friend upon one other matter. What would happen if the Bill did not receive a Third Reading? I think there is a growing recognition in the Conservative party that we should not continue this open-ended commitment of our taxpayers' money to the extravagances—sometimes quasi-Socialist extravagances—of the European Community. Will you, Sir Paul, allow my right hon. Friend to address the Committee first?

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Further to that point of order, Sir Paul. You will have noticed that there is some confusion in the House. I thought at first that I was the only person who was confused, but it would appear that the confusion is more widespread.

There appears to be a prima facie difference between the remarks made by the Paymaster General last time he addressed the House and the Prime Minister's remarks on her European tour. It sems that she was saying that she is against the effects of the Single European Act—perhaps she did not understand it when she guillotined it through the House. It would be quite wrong and unparliamentary to accuse her of hypocrisy, so we must assume that she meant what she said at Bruges: that she was against a supranational Europe and an integration of British affairs into such a Europe. That being so, she would presumably not support a Bill giving money for the very policies that she opposed at Bruges. All this has caused some confusion, and I, too, am anxious that the Paymaster General should clear it up.

How will the right hon. Gentleman do this? He will not do so by speaking to an amendment. I hope he will make a short ministerial statement to put us all in the picture.

The First Deputy Chairman: This is developing into a debate on the merits and demerits of the European Community and the attitude to it of various political parties. That is not in order under the guise of points of order.

There have been many pleas from both sides of the House for the Paymaster General to make the Government's view clear. Again, I suggest that we are much more likely to get clarification from the Government when we get on to the amendments.

As regards the other point, we should be much wiser to follow normal precedents and get on with the

amendments. As soon as the Paymaster General rises—if he does—to speak to any of the amendments, he will as usual be called by the Chair.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Teddy Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Budgen: Further to these points of order, Sir Paul. May I suggest another compromise to try to encompass the will of the House? It is plain that the House anticipates a significant statement from the Paymaster General. As we have come to expect absolute consistency from the Government, it is obvious that he will make a statement that will transform our relations with the EEC. May I suggest that he be called first to make that statement?

As that is likely to render all the amendments to the Bill completely otiose, you, Sir Paul, may consider adjourning the Committee as soon as the Paymaster General has finished speaking. If it is then thought that he speaks, although with great authority, not with the same authority as the Prime Minister does, that would give the Prime Minister an opportunity to make her statement to the House. Sadly, when she made her Bruges speech she was unable to express her views to the House as well as she was to the popular newspapers.

Perhaps, once the Paymaster General has spoken, all criticism will be silenced, but in the unlikely event of that happening I suggest that it would be the will of the Committee generally that there should be an Adjournment.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Sir Paul. I have looked through the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Bill and I find no explanation of the extent of loss of sovereignty by the House. With the continuing erosion of the powers of the House and the transfer of powers to the bureucrats in Brussels, it would be a great help if you would arrange for a report of these discussions to be brought to the attention of the Procedure Committee. It is about time that Members of the House and the public outside, who have been misled about the reality of the Prime Minister's speech—that sovereignty is being eroded by statutory instruments, by the Single European Act and now by this Bill—knew what was happening.

It would assist the procedures of the House immeasurably if an assessment was made of the loss of sovereignty and either you, Sir Paul, or Mr. Speaker made a statement before we considered such legislation. It is the job of the Chair above all to protect the rights and privileges of the House. Before every stage of a Bill dealing with the Common Market there should be a statement from the Chair. You have seen this afternoon that hon. Members on both sides of the Committee are worried about the matter. The Leader of the House has made no representations to come here. The Prime Minister has made no statement of her views on the Common Market. We know that Ministers are completely subservient to the whims of the Prime Minister, and on any objective assessment it must be vital to have a further examination of the legislation. I should have thought that you, Sir Paul, should undertake that.

It might be better—the suggestion has already been made by a Conservative Member—if the Committee was adjourned so that you, Sir Paul, and Mr. Speaker could consider the matter urgently. The important thing about the House is that it acts as a platform so that people can know what is going on. If matters are cloaked in rhetoric about standing firm against the Common Market, when the House is conceding more money in Bill after Bill, the people outside should have an authoritative assessment of the loss of sovereignty under this legislation. You could give that authoritative assessment from the point of view of protecting the rights and privileges of Parliament which have been built up through blood, sweat and tears over many years.

I have asked you to consider an important task, Sir Paul, and I suggest that we adjourn.

4.15 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Further to that point of order, Sir Paul. Although I have no way of knowing whether the Prime Minister will be voting for or against the Bill in view of her Bruges speech, may I appeal to you, Sir Paul, to give us some idea of what the House should do tonight when voting? Two matters are before us: first, the proposal to give a great deal of cash to the Common Market in all future years; and, secondly, a proposal in new sub-paragraph (f) to pay £765 million immediately to cover overspending in the past. Is there no way in which hon. Members who are against paying that huge additional sum for the overspend will be able to express their views? The House must have a duty to control cash. We talk about child benefit, which involves a much smaller sum. When there is an overspend, which we were assured would not happen, Members of the House should be able to vote for or against it. They should also be able to vote for or against giving much more money to the Common Market for future years.

To take amendment No. 10 as an example, is it not right that we should have the opportunity of saying yes or no to what appear to be two separate decisions taken on two separate occasions by separate bodies in the EC? If the House is to exercise its judgment on financial matters, it must have separate votes. That could be done if one of the amendments that was not selected was reconsidered.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Sir Paul. I agree that the £765 million and the other sums of money should be decided by the House in separate votes. During the past few days I have listened to hon. Members on both sides of the House clamouring for compensation for people who lost considerable amounts with Barlow Clowes. There will be a call from the Opposition for child benefit to be uprated, yet here we are talking about £765 million being thrown down the drain—being allocated to the bureaucrats in Brussels to oil the wheels of the gravy trains. The money would be better given to people with children in Britain. It would be folly indeed if we could not have separate votes on those matters.

This is a discussion about one set of statements made by the Head of Government and another set of statements being made in Parliament. That does not happen often. Parliament is being asked, on behalf of the Prime Minister, to consider proposals that she is purported to be solidly against—certainly in her gallivanting trips round the world. It is high time that we had a statement from the chairman of the Tory party, and as chairman of the

[Mr. Skinner]

Labour party I ask him to make a short statement saying that changes have been made in Government policy since the recess. The Bill should be abandoned and we should have the opportunity in the near future to repeal the Single European Act, which is the mother and father of this sort of legislation.

We cannot have the Prime Minister trotting round saying one thing and then telling Ministers to come to Parliament and do the opposite. The Minister should make it clear today that the Bill will be abandoned and that we shall retrace the steps of Common Market legislation, which has been an unmitigated disaster for the British people.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Sir Paul.

Mr. Aitken: On a point of order, Sir Paul.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The Committee has had a good run on this. No new points have been made that I have not already answered, and it is an abuse of points of order to attempt to debate the merits of the European Community or to go back on a Bill that has received its Second Reading. I have deliberately given the Committee a good run, but it is becoming an abuse of our proceedings. We must get on with the amendments.

Mr. Aitken *rose*——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I call Mr. Aitken.

Mr. Aitken: On a point of order, Sir Paul. May I draw your attention to the Bill, which states that its entire purpose is

"to make payments to finance the Communities' general budget for the financial year 1988",

because on that sentence the entire edifice of the legislation that we are about to discuss is to be debated?

There have been other major events since we began our deliberations on this legislation. During the summer recess, the European Community came up with a new set of figures. To those of us who have followed the simple process of addition and subtraction as conducted by the European Community, it is no surprise to find that once again the Community has got its figures wrong, this time on what might be described as the encouraging side of the balance sheet.

I draw your attention, Sir Paul, to a headline in Saturday's *Financial Times*, which runs:

"EC to save £2·47 bn. on budget".

The article continues by pointing out all the savings that have been made. On the revenue side, the Community is expected to end this year with a 2 billion ecu surplus, which is attributed to factors such as the summer drought in the United States, which has driven down world food prices.

My point of order is that here we are debating legislation to increase by a massive 25 per cent. the resources that are available to the European Community yet the very purpose for which this legislation was introduced has fallen away. The European Community now has plenty of money for the purposes decided. Of course, it now wants to spend the extra money on a range of new policies which, I would suggest, are unacceptable to this House. When my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General makes his statement which, if it is a speech of repentance, will be one of the greatest political spectacles since Cranmer thrust his right hand into the flames, we look forward enormously to having an explanation of how the sums have gone wrong all over again and how we are now voting to the European Community money which is not required. We also want an explanation of what the money is needed for.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. We cannot have interventions in points of order.

The hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) is now anticipating the speech that he would hope to make on clause stand part when we eventually get there. We have had a preview, but we must now get on with the business before the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I rise to support the proposition made by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) that the House should adjourn. The problem is the Single European Act. Hon. Members said that presumably the Prime Minister knew what she was doing when she signed it. I suggest in the light of her Bruges speech that she did not know what she was doing. With due respect, we do not want the monkey, we want the organ grinder so that the confusion can be settled once and for all.

Mr. Budgen: On a new point of order, Sir Paul.

The First Deputy Chairman: I call Mr. Marlow.

Mr. Marlow: I wonder if you can help the House, Sir Paul, by giving two quick rulings? First, if my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General wishes to give a statement, would you agree to his giving a statement because that would clear up a great deal of confusion about the problem that exists at the moment? If you would agree to that, I am sure that my right hon. Friend will be only too happy to do so, so perhaps you could state your view on that when I sit down.

Secondly, Sir Paul, you kindly said—we are very grateful—that under clause stand part you will allow a wide-ranging debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and chairman Dennis, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), have both said that we should be entitled to have separate votes on the two separate issues. Will you allow the Committee the privilege of looking into the recesses of your mind as to whether it is possible to have those two separate votes?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Budgen: On a new point of order, Sir Paul.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The points being raised are not new points of order——

Mr. Budgen: With great respect, you do not know, Sir Paul.

The First Deputy Chairman: These points have been raised before, and I have done my best to answer them. The Committee stage of the Bill is in order; otherwise it would not be set down for debate today and the sooner we get on with the debate, the more likely we are to get the statements from the Government which have been demanded from both sides of the Committee.

As I told the Committee right at the beginning, careful consideration has been given to the selection of amendments. I have listened carefully to what has been said but nothing has been said to alter in any way my judgment about the selection of amendments.

Mr. Budgen: With great respect——

The First Deputy Chairman: I call Mr. Leighton.

Mr. Leighton: My difficulty, which has not been cleared up yet, is that I do not know whether the Prime Minister will vote for the Bill. I do not know whether the Prime Minister supports the Bill. I studied her speech in Bruges carefully—I know that it happened outside the House and that it was in the recess—and I give her the benefit of the doubt and assume that she meant what she said. If she did mean what she said, she will not support the Bill, which puts us in some difficulty if we are to spend our time discussing amendments without knowing whether the First Lord of the Treasury supports the Bill. We have asked for some clarification before we start on the detail of the amendments. We want a simple statement from the incumbent of the Treasury Bench to clear up this matter. Do the Government have a united view? Is what the Paymaster General said the last time he addressed the House the Government's policy, or should the Bruges speech be considered Government policy? We are still in difficulty.

Mr. Budgen: With great respect——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order.

Mr. Budgen: This is a new point of order——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. Committee procedures are well established and I am sure that the whole Committee is eagerly awaiting the speech of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who will move the first group of amendments. The sooner we get on to that——

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The sooner we get on, the sooner we shall hear from the Treasury Bench.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I am not taking any further points of order. I have allowed a good run on points of order.

Mr. Budgen: It is a new point of order.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I have dealt with the points which have been raised.

Clause 1

Extended meaning of "the Treaties" and "the Community Treaties"

Mr. Spearing: I beg to move amendment No. 13, in page 1, line 17, at end insert—

'(2) the terms of the decision of the Council and the undertaking by representatives of governments of 24th June 1988 are as set out in Schedules 1 and 2 respectively to this Act.'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 14 —new schedule—

'SCHEDULE 1

Decision of the Council of the European Communities on the System of the Communities' Own Resources

Luxembourg, 24 June 1988

The Council of the European Communities,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, and in particular Articles 199 and 201 thereof[1],

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community, and in particular Articles 171(1) and 173 thereof[2],

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission[3],

Having regard to the Opinion of the European Parliament[4],

Having regard to the Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee[5],

Whereas Council Decision 85/257/EEC/Euratom of 7 May 1985 on the Communities' system of own resources[6], as last amended by the Single Europan Act, raised to 1·4 per cent. the limit for each Member State on the rate applied to the uniform value added tax (VAT) base previously set at 1 per cent. by the Council Decision of 21 April 1970 on the replacement of financial contributions from Member States by the Communities' own resources[7] hereinafter referred to as "the Decision of 21 April 1970";

Whereas the resources available within the limit of 1·4 per cent. are no longer suffcient to cover the estimates of Community expenditure;

Whereas the Single European Act[8] opens up new possibilities to the Community; whereas Article 8a of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community provides for the completion of the internal market by 31 December 1992;

Whereas the Community must possess stable and guaranteed revenue enabling it to stabilize the present situation and operate common policies; whereas this revenue must be based on the expenditure deemed necessary to this end which was determined in the financial estimates in the Interinstitutional Agreement between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, which will take effect on 1 July 1988;

Whereas the European Council meeting in Brussels on 11, 12 and 13 February 1988 reached certain conclusions;

Whereas, in accordance with these conclusions, the Community will, by 1992, be assigned a maximum amount of own resources corresponding to 1·2 per cent. of the total of the Member States' gross national product for the year at market prices, hereinafter referred to as "GNP";

Whereas observance of this ceiling requires that the total amount of own resources at the Community's disposal for the period 1988 to 1992 does not in any one year exceed a specified percentage of the sum of the Community's GNP for the year in question; whereas that percentage shall correspond to application of the guidelines established for growth in Community expenditure as laid down in the European Council conclusions concerning budgetary discipline and budget management, and a safety margin of 0·03 per cent. of Community GNP aimed at coping with unforeseen expenditure;

Whereas a global ceiling of 1·30 per cent. of the Member States' GNP is set for commitment appropriations; whereas an orderly progression of commitment appropriations and payment appropriations must be ensured;

Whereas these ceilings should remain applicable until this Decision is amended;

Whereas, with a view to matching the resources paid by each Member State more closely with its ability to contribute, the composition of Community own resources should be amended and enlarged: whereas it is necessary for this purpose:

—to fix at 1·4 per cent. the maximum rate to be applied to each Member State's uniform base for value added tax, limited where appropriate to 55 per cent. of its GNP;

—to introduce an additional type of own resource to balance budget revenue and expenditure, based on

[The First Deputy Chairman]

the sum of Member States' GNP; for this purpose, the Council will adopt a Directive on the harmonisation of the compilation of Gross National Product at market prices;

Whereas the customs duties on products coming under the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community[1] should be included in Community own resources;

Whereas the conclusions of the European Council of 25 and 26 June 1984 on the correction of budgetary imbalances continue to apply for the duration of this Decision's validity; whereas the present compensation mechanism must, however, be adjusted to take account of the capping of the VAT base and the introduction of an additional resource and must provide for financing of the correction on the basis of a GNP key; whereas this adjustment should ensure that the VAT share of the United Kingdom is replaced by its share of payments under the third and fourth resources (those provided by VAT and GNP respectively) and that the effect on the United Kingdom, in respect of a given year, of the capping of the VAT base and of the introduction of the fourth resource which is not compensated by this change will be offset by an adjustment to the compensation in respect of that year; whereas the contributions of Spain and Portugal should be reduced in accordance with the rebates provided for in Articles 187 and 374 of the 1985 Act of Accession[2],

Whereas the budgetary imbalances should be corrected in such a way as not to affect the own resources available for the Community's policies;

Whereas the conclusions of the European Council of 11, 12 and 13 February 1988 provided for the creation, in the Community budget, of a monetary reserve, hereinafter referred to as the "EAGGF monetary reserve", to offset the impact of significant and unforseen fluctuations in the ECU/dollar parity on the expenditure under the Guarantee Section of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF); whereas that reserve should be covered by specific provisions;

Whereas provisions must be laid down to cover the changeover from the system introduced by Decision 85/257/EEC/Euratom to that arising from this Decision;

Whereas the European Council of 11, 12 and 13 February 1988 provided that this Decision should take effect on 1 January 1988,

Has laid down these provisions, which it recommends to the Member States for adoption:

ARTICLE 1

The Communities shall be allocated resources of their own in accordance with the following Articles in order to ensure the financing of their budget.

The budget of the Communities shall, irrespective of other revenue, be financed entirely from the Communities' own resources.

ARTICLE 2

1. Revenue from the following shall constitute own resources entered in the budget of the Communities:

(a) levies, premiums, additional or compensatory amounts, additional amounts or factors and other duties established or to be established by the institutions of the Communities in respect of trade with non-member countries within the framework of the common agricultural policy, and also contributions and other duties provided for within the framework of the common organization of the markets in sugar;

(b) Common Customs Tariff duties and other duties established or to be established by the institutions of the Communities in respect of trade with non-member countries and customs duties on products coming under the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community;

(c) the application of a uniform rate valid for all Member States to the VAT assessment base which is determined in a uniform manner for Member States according to Community rules; however, the assessment base for any Member State to be taken into account for the purposes of this Decision shall not exceed 55 per cent. of its GNP;

(d) the application of a rate—to be determined under the budgetary procedure in the light of the total of all other revenue—to the sum of all the Member States' GNP established in accordance with Community rules to be laid down in a Directive adopted under Article 8(2) of this Decision.

2. Revenue deriving from any new charges introduced within the framework of a common policy, in accordance with the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community or the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community, providing the procedure laid down in Article 201 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community or in Article 173 of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community has been followed, shall also constitute own resources entered in the budget of the Communities.

3. Member States shall retain, by way of collection costs, 10 per cent. of the amounts paid under 1(a) and 1(b).

4. the uniform rate referred to in 1(c) shall correspond to the rate resulting from:

(a) the application of 1·4 per cent. to the VAT assessment base for Member States, and

(b) the deduction of the gross amount of the reference compensation referred to in Article 4(2). The gross amount shall be the compensation amount adjusted for the fact that the United Kingdom is not participating in the financing of its own compensation and the Federal Republic of Germany's share is reduced by one third. It shall be calculated as if the reference compensation amount were financed by Member States according to their VAT assessment bases established in accordance with Article 2(1)(c). For 1988, the gross amount of the reference compensation shall be reduced by 780 MECU.

5. The rate fixed under paragraph 1(d) shall apply to the GNP of each Member State.

6. If, at the beginning of the financial year, the budget has not been adopted, the previous uniform VAT rate and rate applicable to Member States' GNP, without prejudice to whatever provisions may be adopted in accordance with Article 8(2) by reason of the entry of an EAGGF monetary reserve in the budget, shall remain applicable until the entry into force of the new rates.

7. By way of derogation from 1(c), if, on 1 January of the financial year in question, the rules for determining the uniform basis for assessing VAT are not yet applied in all the Member States, the financial contribution which a Member State not yet applying this uniform basis is to make to the budget of the Communities in lieu of VAT shall be determined according to the proportion of its gross national product at market prices to the sum total of the gross national product of the Member States at market prices in the first three years of the five-year period preceding the year in question. This derogation shall cease to have effect as soon as the rules for determining the uniform basis for assessing VAT are applied in all Member States.

8. For the purposes of applying this Decision, GNP shall mean gross national product for the year at market prices.

ARTICLE 3

1. The total amount of own resources assigned to the Communities may not exceed 1·20 per cent. of the total GNP of the Community for payment appropriations.

The total amount of own resources assigned to the Communities may not, for any of the years during the 1988-1992 period, exceed the following percentages of the total GNP of the Community for the year in question:

1988 : 1·15
1989 : 1·17
1990 : 1·18
1991 : 1·19
1992 : 1·20

2. The commitment appropriations entered in the general budget of the Communities over the period 1988-1992 must follow an orderly progression resulting in a total amount which does not exceed 1·30 per cent. of the total GNP of the Community in 1992. A precise ratio between commitment appropriations and payment appropriations shall be

maintained to guarantee their compatibility and to enable the ceiling mentioned in paragraph 1 to be observed in subsequent years.

3. The overall ceilings referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 shall continue to apply until such time as this Decision is amended.

ARTICLE 4

The United Kingdom shall be granted a correction in respect of budgetary imbalances. This correction shall consist of a basic amount and an adjustment. The adjustment shall correct the basic amount to a reference compensation amount.

1. The basic amount shall be established by:

(a) calculating the difference, in the preceding financial year, between:

—the percentage share of the United Kingdom in the sum total of the payments referred to in Article 2(1)(c) and (d) made during the financial year, including adjustments at the uniform rate in respect of earlier financial years, and

—the percentage share of the United Kingdom in total allocated expenditure;

(b) applying the difference thus obtained to total allocated expenditure;

(c) multiplying the result by 0·66.

2. The reference compensation shall be the correction resulting from application of (a), (b) and (c) below, corrected by the effects arising for the United Kingdom from the changover to capped VAT and the payments referred to in Article 2(1)(d).

It shall be established by:

(a) calculating the difference, in the preceding financial year, between:

—the percentage share of the United Kingdom in the sum total of VAT payments which would have been made during that financial year, including adjustments in respect of earlier financial years, for the amounts financed by the resources referred to in Article 2(1)(c) and (d) if the uniform VAT rate had been applied to non-capped bases, and

—the percentage share of the United Kingdom in total allocated expenditure;

(b) applying the difference thus obtained to total allocated expenditure;

(c)—multiplying the result by 0·66;

(d)—subtracting the payments by the United Kingdom taken into account in the first indent of 1(a) from those taken into account in the first indent of 2(a);

(e) subtracting the amount calculated at (d) from the amount calculated at (c).

3. The basic amount shall be adjusted in such a way as to correspond to the reference compensation amount.

ARTICLE 5

1. The cost of the correction shall be borne by the other Member States in accordance with the following arrangements:

the distribution of the cost shall first be calculated by reference to each Member State's share of the payments referred to in Article (2)(1)(d), the United Kingdom being excluded; it shall then be adjusted in such a way as to restrict the share of the Federal Republic of Germany to two thirds of the share resulting from this calculation.

2. The correction shall be granted to the United Kingdom by a reduction in its payments resulting from the application of Article 2(1)(c). The costs borne by the other Member States shall be added to their payments resulting from the application for each Member State of Article 2(1)(c) up to a 1·4 per cent. VAT rate and Article 2(1)(d).

3. The Commission shall perform the calculations required for the application of Article 4 and this Article.

4. If, at the beginning of the financial year, the budget has not been adopted, the correction granted to the United Kingdom and the costs borne by the other Member States as entered in the last budget finally adopted shall remain applicable.

ARTICLE 6

The revenue referred to in Article 2 shall be used without distinction to finance all expenditure entered in the budget of the Communities. However, the revenue needed to cover in full or in part the EAGGF monetary reserve, entered in the budget of the Communities, shall not be called up from the Member States until the reserve is implemented. Provisions for the operation of that reserve shall be adopted as necessary in accordance with Article 8(2).

The preceding subparagraph shall be without prejudice to the treatment of contributions by certain Member States to supplementary programmes provided for in Article 130 1 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community.

ARTICLE 7

Any surplus of the Communities' revenue over total actual expenditure during a financial year shall be carried over to the following financial year. However, any surplus generated by a transfer from EAGGF Guarantee chapters to the monetary reserve shall be regarded as constituting own resources.

ARTICLE 8

1. The Community own resources refered to in Article 2(1)(a) and (b) shall be collected by the Member States in accordance with the national provisions imposed by law, regulation or administrative action, which shall, where appropriate, be adapted to meet the requirements of Community rules. The Commission shall examine at regular intervals the national provisions communicated to it by the Member States, transmit to the Member States the adjustments it deems necessary in order to ensure that they comply with Community rules and report to the budget authority. Member states shall make the resources under Article 2(1)(a) to (d) available to the Commission.

2. Without prejudice to the auditing of the accounts and to checks that they are lawful and regular and as laid down in Article 206a of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, such auditing and checks being mainly concerned with the reliability and effectiveness of national systems and procedures for determining the base for own resources accruing from VAT and GNP and without prejudice to the inspection arrangements made pursuant to Article 209(c) of that Treaty, the Council shall, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission and after consulting the European parliament, adopt the provisions necessary to apply this Decision and to make possible the inspection of the collection, the making available to the Commission and payment of the revenue referred to in Article 2 and in Article 5.

ARTICLE 9

The mechanism for the graduated refund of own resources accruing from VAT or GNP-based financial contributions introduced for the Kingdom of Spain and the Portuguese Republic up to 1991 by Articles 187 and 374 of the 1985 Act of Accession shall apply to the own resources accruing from VAT and the GNP-based resource referred to in Article 2(1)(c) and (d) of this Decision. It shall also apply to payments by these two member States in accordance with Article 5(2) of this Decision. In the latter case the rate of refund shall be that applicable for the year in respect of which the correction is granted.

ARTICLE 10

The Commission shall submit, by the end of 1991, a report on the operation of the system, including a re-examination of the correction of budgetary imbalances granted to the United Kingdom, established by this Decision.

ARTICLE 11

1. Member States shall be notified of this Decision by the Secretary-General of the Council of the European Communities; it shall be published in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

Member States shall notify the Secretary-General of the Council of the European Communities without delay of the completion of the procedures for the adoption of this Decision in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements.

This Decision shall enter into force on the first day of the month following receipt of the last of the notifications referred to in the second subparagraph. It shall take effect on 1 January 1988.

2. (a) Subject to (b) and (c), Decision 85/257/EEC/Euratom shall be repealed as of 1 January 1988. Any references to the Decision of 21 April 1970 or to Decision 85/257/EEC/Euratom shall be construed as references to this Decision.

(b) Article 3 of Decision 85/257/EEC/Euratom shall continue to apply to the calculation and adjustment of revenue accruing from the application of rates to

[The First Deputy Chairman]

the uncapped uniform assessment basis for value added tax in 1987 and earlier years. For 1988 the deduction in favour of the United Kingdom in respect of previous financial years shall be calculated in accordance with points (b)(i), (ii) and (iii) of Article 3(3) of the said Decision. The distribution of the cost of financing it shall be calculated in accordance with Article 5(1) of this Decision. The amounts corresponding to the deduction and the distribution of the cost of financing it shall be dealt with in accordance with Article 5(2) of this Decision. When Article 2(7) has to be applied, the value added tax payments shall be replaced by financial contributions in the calculations referred to in this paragraph for any member State concerned; this system shall also apply to the payment of adjustment of corrections for earlier years.

(c) Article 4(2) of Decision 85/257/EEC/Euratom shall continue to apply to the financial contributions needed to finance the completion of the supplementary programme for the operation of the HFR reactor of 1984-1987.

[1] Treaty Series No. 15 (1979), Cmnd. 7460.
[2] Treaty Series No. 17 (1979), Comn. 7462.
[3] OJ No. C 102, 16.4.1988, p.8.
[4] Opinion delivered on 15 June 1988 (not yet published in the Official Journal).
[5] Opinion delivered on 27 April 1988 (not yet published in the Official Journal).
[6] OJ No L 128, 14.5.1985, p. 15
[7] OJ No L 94, 28.4.1970, p.19.
[8] Treaty Series No. 31 (1988), Cm 372.
[9] Treaty Series No. 16 (1979), Cmnd. 7461.
[10] European Communities No. 27 (1985), Cmnd. 9634.'

No. 15—new schedule—

'SCHEDULE 2

UNDERTAKING AS CONFIRMED BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL TO MAKE PAYMENTS TO FINANCE THE COMMUNITIES GENERAL BUDGET FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1988

Luxembourg, 24 June 1988

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT

1. Following the conclusions of the European Council of 11 to 13 February 1988, the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, hereby undertake to pay the Community to balance the 1988 budget an amount which will not exceed

7 113 737 522 ECU.

This amount is distributed among Member States as follows:

	Amounts excluding the monetary reserve	*Amounts in respect of the monetary reserve*	*Total*
Belgium	215 705 631	34 310 784	250 016 415
Denmark	146 490 121	23 329 191	169 819 312
Germany	1 457 922 419	270 763 248	1 728 685 667
Greece	71 115 661	11 517 281	82 632 942
Spain	426 449 594	72 130 322	498 579 916
France	1 228 885 493	209 185 969	1 438 071 462
Ireland	35 684 063	61 60 406	41 844 469
Italy	1 118 527 881	183 312 263	1 371 840 144
Luxembourg	11 962 066	2 062 397	14 024 463
Netherlands	303 793 184	50 461 763	354 254 947
Portugal	53 704 695	8 651 353	62 356 048
United Kingdom	929 066 793	172 544 944	1 101 611 737
TOTAL	6 069 307 601	1 044 429 921	7 113 737 522

2. The amounts paid by each Member State constitute non-repayable advances on the payments due after the entry into force of the Decision on own resources.

3. These amounts shall be paid in monthly instalments. The conversion rate to be applied to these payments shall correspond to that laid down for the payment of own resources originating from VAT.

4. The Representatives of the Governments of the Member States note that the resources necessary to cover additional expenditure of monetary origin (=Monetary reserve) will be payable only after approval of the transfer of appropriations to the operational headings of the EAGGF Guarantee Section affected by the depreciation of the dollar, and will be limited to the amount of the appropriations transferred.

5. The Representatives of the Governments of the Member States note that the payment of amounts pursuant to this undertaking requires certain internal procedures to be completed[1].

[1]Twelve delegations state that "internal procedures" involve parliamentary approval.'

Mr. Spearing: I am in an unaccustomed place in the Chamber because, as hon. Members know, Committee stage is, quite properly, more of an ordered conversation than a grand debate, and being in this place allows the facility.

My thanks go to you, Sir Paul, for selecting this amendment. Although it may have been thought that there would not be any selections in this debate, other than clause stand part, we owe that to one of our esteemed predecessors who, when the European Communities Act 1972 was being debated, allowed no fewer than 14 hours on points of order. As a result, we know something about amendments that are in order and about those that are not in order in respect of deliberately, tightly framed Bills, such as this. Alas——

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Spearing: In a minute.

Alas, because this is a relatively narrow amendment with narrow terms of reference, even if the Paymaster General catches your eye, Sir Paul, I do not think that he will be able to satisfy either my hon. Friends or those Conservative Members who have been asking for a statement.

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Spearing: In a minute.

As I understand it, there is a lacuna in procedure because if we were in Committee and a Minister had made a speech about the Bill then before the Committee which threw a question mark on the purposes and objectives of Her Majesty's Government or on the money that was to be voted for those objectives and purposes, the Government's representatives would have made a statement with alacrity on a point of order at the beginning of the proceedings to clarify matters. I very much regret that that cannot happen until we get to clause stand part, because I think you will agree, Sir Paul, that the subject of my technical but important amendment does not allow such a facility to occur.

Mr. Budgen: Does the hon. Gentleman know whether the Leader of the Opposition proposes to make a speech on clause stand part? It is obvious that the increase in the regional and social fund provides the Labour party with a wonderful opportunity to bring forward proposals for Socialist and interventionist measures that would completely subvert or bypass the will of the nation in electing a Conservative Government. As the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) has now attacked the Conservative Government for being reluctant in Europe, I

expect that he wishes to proclaim his new allegiance to a supernational authority which will prevent the will of the people as expressed in the last general election.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. We must stick to amendment No. 13.

Mr. Spearing: I repeat what you have just said to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), Sir Paul—that that is not within the ambit of my amendment.

4·30 pm

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is describing his difficulties in proceeding on this narrow but important amendment. Does he agree that much of the discussion at the beginning of the debate would have been helped if amendment No. 8 had been selected? We could then have had a discussion. As we have been gagged in seeking to make further points of order, will my hon. Friend consider suggesting to you, Sir Paul, that you have another look at the selection of amendments so that amendment No. 8, which is about sovereignty, is re-examined?

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) will not be tempted along that road and that he will stick to his amendments.

Mr. Spearing: I heed what you say, Sir Paul, and say only that amendment No. 3 attempted to separate two aspects that we shall now debate.

This is a money Bill, for the payment of very substantial sums of money over the next five years, automatically and without further vote. That money will further the aims and purposes of the European Economic Community, including those outlined—and which are controversial—in the Single European Act, which is an amendment to the treaty of Rome. Therefore, the power that is involved is being taken in the Bill, but the amendment relates to the mechanisms and the details of the calculations of that payment. At the moment they have not been made explicit in the Bill.

The Bill attaches two treaties to those listed in the current version of the European Communities Act 1972, in section 2(1). That Act names various treaties that form part of what we now have as the constitution of the European Union. It does so just by naming the treaties which are before us, and which are named in new sub-paragraphs (e) and (f). The first is a decision, which is Cm. 419, a substantial document that outlines the ways in which our contributions to the EEC will be calculated between now and 1992. New sub-paragraph (f) relates to a much thinner, one-page document, Cm. 418, which describes a payment that should or can be made this year.

I think that it is in order to ask the Minister, in view of what he said on Second Reading, whether moneys have already been paid, as he said they may be under the contingencies fund, on the assumption that the Bill would be passed.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman is being unduly modest about the scope of his amendments. He said that he would like the Minister to make a statement early on. In his amendments he seeks to introduce schedules 1 and 2 into the Bill. They are the meat; that is what is going on. Article 3 of schedule 1 refers to increasing the Community's own resources in 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992, by given factors. Schedule 2 refers to the exact amount of money that member states will be liable to pay the Community.

I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is so modest, but his amendments are the guts of the Bill. If my right hon. Friend the Minister wished to make a detailed speech on the Government's philosophy, it would be in order. I am sure that you would have ruled me out of order, Sir Paul, if that were not so.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his compliments, but he has got it slightly wrong. My amendment No. 13 is but a coupling hook to make clear the contents of the two coaches that the Government are to attach to the railway train. I want a little glasnost. All that the Bill does is say that the decision and the undertaking shall be part of the 1972 Act. What the Bill does not say is what is in the contents of that decision and undertaking.

Any hon. Member could go to the Vote Office—hon. Members may have gone last week, for all I know—and ask for those documents. They may or may not have got them. When the Bill is enacted and people want to know under what obligations we stand and what are the calculations and details of the amounts that we have to pay to the European Economic Community, the Bill will not give them a clue. The purpose of my amendment is to insert at the end of the Bill two schedules that are the text of the decision and undertaking respectively. I challenge the Paymaster General to deny what I have said. The amendment will not change one iota the legal impact, significance or outcome of the Bill. All it will do is add to its clarity and to democracy. It will add to what we should have in the House—national glasnost. With the Bill as it stands, we would not have that.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: The hon. Gentleman has obviously done a great deal of work on his amendment. I have studied it and the text carefully. He stated that the text is basically that of the undertaking and decision. However, if the hon. Gentleman looks at his amendment and the Command Paper, he will see that they are not the same. For example, on page 4130 of the Amendment Paper, in lines 6 and 7 of article 11 there are words that do not appear in the Command Paper. There has been either a misprint or a misunderstanding. We cannot continue until that is sorted out. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is probably one of the most serious and conscientious hon. Members and studies European Community documents with great care. Few people have given as much time as he has to debates on the Community in the House. However, the amendment does not simply repeat the words in the Command Paper but two lines are added, which I cannot understand, and I believe that many other hon. Members would not. What is it all about?

Mr. Spearing: I regret that I cannot think quickly enough to reply to the hon. Gentleman's good point, but it does not detract from the thrust of the Bill. If it is a technical imprecision, I have no doubt that the Treasury Bench will tell us. I want the Government to accept the principle that the undertaking and the treaty should be written into the Bill.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: On a point of order, Sir Paul. I do not want to be difficult. The last thing that I want to do is undermine the excellent amendment moved by the hon.

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), but it is not English and not adequate. The two lines to which I referred do not add anything. What is the basis for debating an amendment that contains a sentence that does not have a beginning? What do we do if we have an amendment that does not seem to make sense? I appeal to you, Sir Paul, to look at lines 6 and 7 of article 11 on page 4130. What does it mean? What is the position of the House of Commons when we are debating an amendment that is not English and seems to contain things that do not add up? What are we to do? We cannot debate an amendment that is not English.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. We would do well to let the hon. Gentleman continue to explain his amendment

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Sir Paul. Am I right in understanding that we are debating amendments Nos. 13, 14, and 15 together? If we are doing that, we are not just debating the hon. Gentleman's hook, because we have two fish on the end of the line as well—schedules 1 and 2 which are the guts of the Bill. If this is what we are debating, surely that would entitle my hon. Friend the Minister to make a wide-ranging speech on the Government's current position about the Bill.

The First Deputy Chairman: Perhaps I could help the Committee by reiterating what the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said in moving his amendments, which is that we are also debating amendments Nos. 14 and 15. As the hon. Gentleman made clear, the whole object of the debate, and the only matter that it is in order to speak to, is why these schedules should be in the Bill. That is what the hon. Gentleman is explaining to the Committee.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to you, Sir Paul, for your remarks. I should make it clear that if the Minister wishes to expand on the contents of the schedules or on any printing errors drawn to the attention of the Committee by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), we might deal with the matter in another place. If the Minister can say that he accepts in principle something along the lines of what I am suggesting in the amendment, we could debate the substance of schedules 1 and 2 in the clause stand part debate. If the Minister wishes to do that, I shall be quite happy to listen to what he has to say.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, apart from the enormous amount of verbiage contained in the schedule, for practical purposes the esential question is about the legal effect of the provisions of clause 1? The consequence of doing it in the way provided for by the draftsman effectively means that it has legal effect. Whatever the merits of the issue, does the hon. Gentleman agree that it would be better to add it to the Bill so that it would have legal effect rather than to leave it at large, which would be dangerous? I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not agree if it were done in that way.

Mr. Spearing: I do not think that it would be the same, because the Command Papers could be referred to in conjunction with the Bill and could be looked up by a citizen who would be able to see the text. The Bill is not as clear and full as it deserves to be. I hope that Conservative Members will at least agree with that in principle.

We are dealing with huge sums of money and it is right that our citizens should be able to read in an Act of Parliament how those sums are arrived at. I remind the Committee of the amounts. In 1987 we sent to the EC £1,278 million in customs payments. We contributed £3,053 million in VAT. That is not 1·4 per cent. of the VAT take: it is about 13 per cent. because the 1·4 per cent. is not VAT but a VAT base. Under this proposal, we will top that up with a new GNP contribution, allowance for which is contained in the schedules, and that contribution will be up to a given figure. The total will be more than 25 per cent. of what we contribute at the moment. The way in which this is done—I have outlined it in brief terms—should be contained in the Bill. If the schedules go in, the calculations for the vast figures that I have outlined will be there.

We do not only have the calculations that I have mentioned, because there is a new provision for an agricultural balancing fund, a provision for the rebates to the United Kingdom. There is also provision for an overall envelope about what can be spent in every year up to 1992. These are vast sums, and every year there will be a calculation. As the Bill stands, nobody could find out by looking at it how this is done. The schedules should be included in the Bill and be part of the Act.

4.45 pm

It is right that when legislating on such matters the Committee should include such details in a Bill. After all, that is what schedules are for. That is the principle of good draftsmanship. I am talking about the more technical details which, while not germane to the principle, must be included. Without them the principles cannot be understood. That is what legislation in a democracy is all about. Unless these schedules go in, people might say that the Government are deliberately obscuring the way in which this money is spent.

I remind the Committee again that if the Bill becomes an Act, there will be an automatic payment every year until 1992 and there will not necessarily be a debate in the House, other than a debate on the European Budget as a whole. Therefore, the money will go straight from the Consolidated Fund without debate because it will be authorised by the Act. For that reason this detail should be included in the schedules to the Bill.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend says that there may be no further debates about the allocation of money from Britain to the Common Market. Is he saying that we shall not hear from the Prime Minister on those publicised occasions when she is supposed to be arguing for barrowloads of money for Britain from the Common Market? Despite all the publicity, the Prime Minister has been engaged in a bartering exercise which means that not only have we paid over £5 billion to the Common Market since she became Prime Minister, but that in future the Prime Minister will tell the nation another story. She is now presenting to Parliament a Bill that will not even give the House power to say that it is not prepared to hand over, in this instance, £765 million. Is that what my hon. Friend is saying?

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will resist the temptation to broaden the debate.

Mr. Spearing: I shall attempt to resist that temptation, but I should like to correct my hon. Friend who asked some pertinent questions. As I understand it, it is not a matter of £765 million for the current EEC budget which, we believe, might not even need the money. The Bill authorises much larger sums of between £3,000 and £5,000 million a year for the next five years. The Minister will correct me if I have given the wrong range of figures. Those sums are to be transferred from the Consolidated Fund and will go directly to Brussels without coming through the House, without a motion—and, indeed, without a speech from the Prime Minister. That is what the Bill is about and that is why the Bill is such an important and fundamental financial measure.

Irrespective of the merits of the undertaking and the decision, which we will come to after the next debate, it is essential that the text of the decision and the undertaking be contained in the Bill. Unless that happens, the British people and onlookers from the Soviet Union might say that the Government are deliberately avoiding public accountability by not telling the people what they are doing but covering up by using jargon found in remote Command Papers that may not easily be available when people want to look them up. They should be included in the bound Acts of Parliament which I point out to school parties when I take them through the Lobbies and say, "There is the law of the country." The Bill should include these details; if it does not the Government are reneging on their democratic accountability and responsibility.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I have three short questions to put to the Minister about this narrow amendment. First, can we put right what appears to be a misprint? We appreciate that there was a great rush, because the debate was announced on Thursday and is being held today. What is the procedure about misprints, and can they be dealt with under article 11? Secondly, will there be a difference in the legal position of these undertakings if they are included in the document, as proposed by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing)?

Some of us have become rather mystified about the extent to which EEC documents, undertakings and decisions have no legal backing whatever. My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware, for example, that as a result of one of these documents, we are paying the Community £765 million to cover an overspend in 1987. He will also be aware that we had the most detailed assurances from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in 1985 that such overspending could not take place because of strict budgetary controls, which were binding on the Council. I hope that in dealing with this narrow amendment, my hon. Friend the Minister will say whether it makes a difference in law, and whether any obligations on, or assurances and undertakings by, the EEC count in law.

Thirdly, if the Bill becomes law, will it prevent the Common Market from using the accountancy fiddles that it has used—sadly, with the co-operation of Ministers—time after time at the expense of the taxpayers and people of Britain, to get away from its undertakings? The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and others talk in the House with great authority about the problems facing their constituents and the need for more money for this, that and the other purpose, but the EEC shows no concern about the way in which money is spent.

For example, if this Bill is agreed and becomes the law of the land, will the Community be able to get round the controls again by changing round the financial year to make it a 10-month instead of a 12-month year? My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware that the EEC did not break the budget in 1987, but simply changed the year to one of 10 months by having money paid in a month in advance and paying money out a month late. Would it be possible for this to happen once again, even if we make this Bill law? If it is, what we are doing would be complete nonsense.

Is there not a need to put something more directly related to the EEC obligations into the law? In particular, will my hon. Friend bear in mind the contributions for the current year and the series of statements that the Government have made month after month changing the figures? They started off at £500 million, were changed to £800 million and then to £1,200 million, and now become £1,649 million. If any Labour council in Britain carried on in that way, it would be vigorously attacked by the Government.

Mr. Skinner: That was the point that I wanted to make. Local councils such as Lambeth and Liverpool have been, and other councils will be, threatened with surcharges, as a result of overspending on vital services in the community. Have the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends ever considered the idea of having a Star Chamber to control Common Market money? As we all know, various Ministries are battling to get allocations of funds, and the Secretary of State for Energy is now, as chairman of the Star Chamber, in charge of allocating such money in the event of an impasse. It seems strange—I hope the hon. Gentleman will comment on this—that such are the restrictions imposed by the Star Chamber on spending money on vital necessities that family allowance is frozen, and many other services are cut, but in the Common Market there was £2 billion-worth of fraud last year, but nobody has been picked up for it.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. These wider remarks are much more relevant to the clause stand part debate, which will be the next one. This debate is a comparatively narrow one, on whether the schedules should be in the Bill.

Mr. Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The third point, which I am just trying to get clear in my mind, as I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister is trying to get it clear in his mind, is the point that my hon. Friend is making. Is he saying that if the schedules were included, any British citizen would then be able to take a case before a British court if the rules laid down by the schedule were not obeyed by the European Commissioner and the institutions of the European Community? Is that the question he is asking? If it is, it is an important question, and I am sure that we shall get a clear and precise answer from my hon. Friend.

Mr. Budgen: I wonder whether my hon. Friend——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. We cannot have an intervention in an intervention.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) has asked what I should like to ask the Minister. We have a sensible amendment, tabled by a sensible Member. Whether or not we accept the amendment, the whole thing is a sick fraud.

Mr. Budgen: Is my hon. Friend aware how deeply offensive his remarks are to loyal members of the Conservative party? All of us know that, after the Fontainebleau agreement, all the finances of the EEC were reformed for all time. There can be no overspending after that agreement. We were told that finances were reformed and that there would be no more overspending. It is monstrous that my hon. Friend suggests that there is overspending. It is monstrous that anyone should suggest that there is any more need for any more money. We were told on the highest authority that all is well and, while I recognise my hon. Friend's right to criticise, many people will be deeply affronted by his disloyalty in suggesting that all is not well.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. Let us get back to the amendment.

Mr. Taylor: What my hon. Friend said is relevant to the amendment. However, does the Minister think that the Bill has any importance or any significance? For example, if we made this part of our law, would it have the slightest effect on the Common Market changing the responsibility for expenditure from the EEC to member states? My right hon. Friend the Minister will be aware of an example, and he may wish to comment on it. When the Common Market was bust last year, it decided that it should transfer responsibility for paying for butter dumping from the EEC to member states. That was an interesting proposal because it meant that the Common Market would spend less while member states would spend more, and it would find a way to get round the budget.

The Court of Auditors is meant to represent us, to stop overspending and to try to stop fraud, although it cannot. However, the court said that this practice was unlawful, and it placed before the Council of Ministers a report saying so. My hon. Friend the Minister may recall what happened to that. He may recall that, instead of action being taken and instead of the Council considering how this was unlawful, it decided not to discuss the matter, so that unlawful payment, if it was unlawful, is still being made by the United Kingdom taxpayer.

We know that the Common Market is changing its plan to increase its revenues greatly by using what it calls anti-dumping levies. My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) raised this issue only the other night. The Minister will be aware that, as part of a programme of trying to restrict trade, the Common Market is putting huge levies, of up to 30 per cent. or more, on any product coming from the far east, which is putting many firms in Britain at risk. This move greatly increases revenue, but will it have the slightest effect on improving the position of the British taxpayer?

While we appreciate that there are lots of words in the decisions and the undertakings, and while we appreciate that some words may be changed if the Bill is put into law, could the Minister give us any assurance that the British taxpayer and the British Parliament are affected? We have heard many stories of fraud. We have heard about the Mafia firm which, according to the Court of Auditors, is paid 17 million lira to deliver non-existent fruit juice to NATO headquarters in Palermo. What is happening about that? The answer is, nothing.

Are we not going through a bit of nonsense? Has my right hon. Friend the Minister the slightest assurance that this will make any difference to Common Market control? As my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North has inquired, could a British citizen do anything about it if there were an overspend? I know that the Minister is a serious-minded person, because he would not be appointed chairman of the Conservative party were he not. Will he tell us what protection, if any, is given to the British taxpayer and the British Parliament in consequence of this decision and undertaking, and whether it has been put into law, as has been suggested?

Will the Bill prevent changing round financial years? Will it stop advanced payments or late payments? Will it ensure that budgets have to be kept or that, for example, we stop some of the fiddles on spending that happen year after year? Why are the sums from the Common Market always so hopelessly wrong? Why has our contribution soared from a relatively small sum to this massive £1,649 million? We are entitled to at least that answer from my hon. Friend the Minister tonight. Will this make any difference, does it affect the law in any way, and does it affect British institutions?

5 pm

Mr. Leighton: The Paymaster General will be aware, from what he has heard so far, that he must make a significant statement when he responds to the debate. He must answer the points raised in the points of order and those made in the previous speech. We want to know what guarantees and assurances there are.

The Paymaster General must realise that we are approaching the matter in the light of the Fontainebleau agreement. We have a sense of déjà vu. We were given copper-bottomed guarantees and assurances at the time of the Fontainebleau agreement. He will know that it was agreed at the Fontainebleau summit to increase the VAT take by 40 per cent. That was done on the solemn guarantee that there would be financial discipline. Some of us said at the time that, if we had financial discipline, it would not be necessary to have an increase of 40 per cent., and that it would be far better to approach the problem the other way around and say that we would not keep paying the cheques. Nevertheless, it was done the other way and VAT was increased by 40 per cent. on the promise of financial discipline.

However, that was all nonsense. The measure failed, and we want to know why ministerial promises now will be any better than they were then. The Government have come back to us today with an intergovernmental agreement of about £750 million to pay for the previous mistakes. Under the Bill, they propose to increase the Community budget by 25 per cent. If any of the Paymaster General's colleagues among the spending Ministers who are now negotiating with the Treasury said to the Financial Secretary, "A little while ago I asked for and obtained an increase of 40 per cent. I now want another increase of 25 per cent.," we all know what sort of an answer they would receive from the Treasury.

That money would be for domestic spending on our constituents. That is where the Treasury keeps a tight grip on the purse strings. That is what might be called monetarism or the policy of the Conservative party regarding what the Government spend in this country. However, when it comes to expenditure on the Common Market——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I am finding it difficult to relate the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the

amendment. His comments would fall more appropriately in the clause stand part debate. I am sure that he will relate his comments to the amendment.

Mr. Leighton: I am asking how the Bill and the amendment will give the House guarantees and assurances on which we can rely and which are better and more copper-bottomed than those given at the time of the Fontainebleau agreement. The Paymaster General must understand that we are suspicious and not convinced by the honeyed words of Ministers on the Treasury Bench, having heard those words before. Every time the Government come to us on Common Market matters, it is for more money. The Common Market is putting its hand in our pocket for more money all the time.

Sir Paul, you know that many other countries in the Common Market do not pay anything at all. They are net beneficiaries. They are richer than we are. Their GDP per capita is greater than ours, yet they take money out of the Common Market. This country puts money in and, every time we discuss the matter, it means more money for the Common Market. We are told that there will be assurances and guarantees, but I do not believe those that we are given. The next time the Common Market comes back to us, it will be for even more money. That is the track record.

The Paymaster General has, therefore, a heavy responsibility and we shall commit his words to memory. The words that he utters now will be held against him if he gets it wrong in a year or two years' time. I say that in the most friendly spirit, as he will realise. He has a heavy responsibility to respond to the points that have been raised.

Mr. Cash: I hope that my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General will be good enough to deal with one point that I wish to put to him. I supported the Bill on Second Reading and agree with its main objects. The British people have the opportunity to consider, through a Committee of the whole House, the construction of the measure, which gives legal effect to a Community treaty.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) asked whether the provision would be justiciable before the courts. If the decision had not been given legal effect under the provisions of the Bill, surely there would be no basis upon which the matter could be referred to the courts. It is said, quite rightly, that the decision is directly applicable in the jargon of the European Community and, as I understand it, decisions directly applicable in Community law are also capable of being taken to the courts by individuals, where they can establish a satisfactory suit.

In that case—this seems to be the main object of the Bill—could member states ensure that the financial discipline intended by the provisions of the decision would be sustained, not only in the interinstitutional agreements between member states, but with the additional advantage that, in extremis, the matter could be referred to the Court of Justice? In that case, so far as is conceivably possible and given that there has not been a tremendous record of keeping within the limits previously indicated in other similar exercises, on this occasion the Government and the member states have got it right by requiring that the financial stringency contained in this decision will be adhered to and, in the final analysis, will be capable of being taken to the Court of Justice.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): We certainly understand why the Government have some problems in this matter, many of which have been eloquently put by Conservative Members. There is a contrast between the provisions in the Single European Act and the speech made by the Prime Minister at Bruges. There is also a problem because, not unlike the holy Roman empire, the Single European Act is neither single, nor European, nor an Act. We do not have before us in this House at present a single statement in a recognisable form which the House can amend, approve or disapprove, and which is readily assimilable either by those outside the House or by many inside the House.

In terms of the Act, the Government are very much at sea and it will be interesting to see how the Paymaster General responds to the amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). We certainly support his amendments. They do not in themselves—as you have told the Committee, Sir Paul—raise the occasion for a discussion in Committee of the substantive issues referred to in the schedules concerned. However, their publication is important because it is dificult to follow the argument unless we can see it fully stated.

There is cross-reference in new sub-paragraphs (e) and (f), although we have the Council decision of 7 May, the intergovernmental agreement of April 1985 and the decisions of 24 June 1988. It may be clear to the body concerned what is involved and it may be to some of us, because we have to address these issues. With the co-operation of the Library, we have been able to gain the detailed text. Of course, we may follow these issues for other reasons. However, in our view there should be publication. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South has good reason for tabling the amendments and we support them. We shall be astonished if the Paymaster General does anything other than support them on behalf of the Government.

The Paymaster General (Mr. Peter Brooke): We have had the pleasure of the summer recess since we deliberated on these matters on Second Reading. I would be the first to acknowledge, however, that events occurred duringn the recess, as they always do. Before we embarked upon an interesting debate on the amendments, several hon. Members raised expectations in their points of order that I was about to make a novel statement on behalf of the Government as to their intentions in the context of the Bill. I do not want to arouse great expectations in terms of what I might say subsequently. Modest though my contribution will subsequently be, I can heighten the suspense a little by deferring it until we come to consider whether the clause should stand part of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) explained the amendment with the cogency that we have come to expect from him. I accept the need to keep hon. Members fully informed about all Community legislation, and I hope that the Government have a good record in that regard. Despite the expectation of the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland), I believe that it would be unnecessary to add the new own resources decision and the 1988 intergovernmental agreement as schedules to the Bill.

Both those documents have already been made available to hon. Members and the public at large in the form of Command Papers, as the hon. Member for Newham, South was good enough to say. The new own

[Mr. Peter Brooke]

resources decision was published as Cm. 419 and the 1988 IGA as Cm. 418. Both Commands were issued in July. Copies of the documents were made available in the Vote Office on Second Reading and hon. Members had the opportunity of reading them before voting upon them. The documents were referred to in the business statement of the previous Thursday as being relevant to Second Reading.

We did not attach the 1985 own resources decision or the 1985 IGA as schedules to the European Communities (Finance) Act 1985, for reasons similar to those which I have adduced. I recall that the hon. Member for Newham, South participated in the debates on that measure. The Bill follows the precedent that was set in 1985. I would not want to depart from those arrangements unless there was good reason for doing so. The European Communities Act 1972 did not set out as schedules all the relevant treaties.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) was with us briefly at the Bar of the House earlier in the debate. He did not enter the Chamber to participate in it. He would have been able to confirm the position which I have described in earlier legislation.

Mr. Skinner: The Minister has referred to the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). Is that the same right hon. Member who went to the rostrum at the Tory party conference a few weeks ago to be rubbished by others who were supporting the Prime Minister? Is he the same hon. Member who still embraces the type of legislation to which the Minister has referred? I would like to know what sort of Alice-in-Wonderland world he lives in. A fortnight ago, Conservatives were rubbishing the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup because he had the guts to tell the Prime Minister that she is one of the authors of the Single European Act, and the right hon. Lady is one of the authors of the Bill.

The Minister is now saying in nice tones that my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) would welcome this position. Of course he would. The truth is that the Prime Minister has changed her view to a massive extent, at least on the surface. I want to know how much hypocrisy there is in the series of prime ministerial statements that have been made. The right hon. Lady is telling the world that she has had a change of heart on the Common Market, yet she sends Ministers to the Treasury Bench to say the opposite. She does not have the guts to say that herself. Is the Minister on the Prime Minister's side or that of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup? I want to know.

Mr. Budgen: Would my right hon. Friend allow me——

5.15 pm

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. We cannot have an intervention within an intervention.

Mr. Brooke: I shall give way shortly to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen).

The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) asked whether my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup is the same individual as he who made a certain contribution to a debate at the Conservative party conference. If it is not the same gentleman, someone was exceptionally well disguised. It was an admirable contribution to the debate, but that is not the subject of the amendment.

Mr. Budgen: I am sure that my right hon. Friend, who is a generous-minded person, will apologise to my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) for the way in which he was rubbished at the Tory Party conference. He was supporting exactly this sort of legislation. He was demonstrating his loyalty to the European ideal. It is only we who, sadly, in a perverted way, wish to support the Bruges speech, who are out of step. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will wish to apologise to my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup for the disgraceful way in which he was treated in the recent past.

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend has always had a good turn of phrase. As soon as I read the speech that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister delivered in Bruges, I knew that it was a subject to which my hon. Friend would wish to return on many occasions. He has already done so to my consciousness on several occasions, and I have every confidence that he will do so again on many occasions in future. The speech warrants the amount of critical attention that he gives it.

It may be that the hon. Member for Newham, South tabled the amendment to ensure that the new own resources decision and the 1988 intergovernmental agreement were printed on the Order Paper for the convenience of hon. Members in Committee. In that respect, we are all in his debt. I shall deal in a moment with the misprints to which my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) referred.

The hon. Member for Newham, South asked some specific questions about payments under the IGA. The Commission requested that the first IGA payment for eight twelfths of the total due, or around £500 million, be made on 1 August. Further requests have been made at the beginning of each month since then. The Commission has asked member states that are not in a position to pay their IGA contributions to make available overdraft facilities under article 12(2) of regulation 2891/77. The United Kingdom has not yet made any IGA payments and has therefore granted the Commission overdraft facilities.

The hon. Member for Newham, South asked me about transfers from the Consolidated Fund of £3 billion to £5 billion per annum during 1988-92. That is the gross contribution after abatement, and the figures are expected to lie within that range. The hon. Gentleman was talking about amounts transferred to Brussels, and that is the net contribution. These will be below the £3 billion to £5 billion range which he quoted. A projection will be included in the autumn statement.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend say more about the overdraft facilities? He has said that the Government have paid the money—we are debating whether they should pay it—in the form of an overdraft. Under what legislation are the Government entitled to give loans to organisations such as the EEC, and how far can this facility be made available? What provision is there for repayment?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East, who follows these matters very closely, knows that we treat on these matters frequently. I treat on

them in answer to questions that he puts to me, so they are a familiar instrument within the Community's arrangements and of course they are legal. An overdraft cannot be granted unless it is within the budgetary amounts of the year in question, and of course, under those rules, we have responded.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: My right hon. Friend must accept that we are debating as a Parliament to safeguard the people's money. The Paymaster General just said that he has handed over £765 million to the Common Market as an overdraft because of some apparent relationship with the budget, which he must know is an overspend which we were told would not happen. Under what powers of what law did the Minister give an overdraft facility of £765 million to the Common Market? That is a simple question, and surely it is our job in the House of Commons to raise it.

Mr. Brooke: A moment ago I said, under article 12(2) of regulation 2891/77. I repeat that—article 12(2) of regulation 2891/77. That is an issue to which we have frequently referred, both in evidence before the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service and in debates in this House.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister confirm that that is federal money?

Mr. Teddy Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Brooke: I must clearly develop some instinct for which interventions not to give way to.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Budgen: My right hon. Friend was good enough to say that an overdraft to a certain level is lawful. If for the sake of argument the overdraft was 10 times as large, would that also be lawful? Are we to understand that the Community as authorised by this Parliament has the right to incur an unlimited overdraft?

Mr. Brooke: It may be helpful if I refer to a remark that I made in the debate of 19 May. I said:

"Member states are obliged to comply with overdraft requests by the Commission and article 12(2) of the regulation, provided that these are genuinely needed to cover a prospective cash deficit, and provided that they would not involve exceeding the own resources known to be available for the year. The Government stand ready, therefore, to meet such overdraft requests, before or after adoption of the budget, and before or after final agreement on the IGA, provided that these conditions are fulfilled. We would charge such overdrafts directly against the Consolidated Fund, like all other Community obligations, while keeping the House fully informed."—[*Official Report*, 19 May 1988; Vol. 133, c.1151.]

Mr. Cash: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if it is indeed a regulation, as appears to be the case, under sections 2 and 3 of the European Communities Act 1972, all Community obligations, including in particular regulations, are effective in law? Therefore, if this particular overdraft facility was made available under that regulation, it is already authorised under the Act to which I have referred as a Community obligation.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reinforcing the point that I made earlier.

Mr. Leighton: I am sorry to interrupt the Paymaster General again, but I am certain that he realises that this is an important point and in the interests of clarity we should clear it up. Normally, when one gets an overdraft, it has a limit. I believe the right hon. Gentleman explained that there is a limit. However, will he put a cash figure for the current year on that? What is the overdraft's limit?

Mr. Brooke: If I may, I will deal with the questions as we proceed.

Mr. Teddy Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Brooke: I want to make a little progress and then I will be content to give way. I hope that I can tell my confrère, the chairman of the Labour party, that—*[Interruption.]* The overdraft does not take the place of the IGA. The total amount of the overdraft is restricted to the total own resources under existing arrangements, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) said. Accordingly, we have paid in line with the European Communities Act 1972.

Mr. Skinner: Now what about the ozone layer?

Mr. Brooke: Although there would be circumstances under which I would be grateful for the diversion of the ozone layer, I think that we can continue to make progress on this business.

Mr. Marlow: I have two brief points on which I would be grateful for my right hon. Friend's clarification. First, my hon. Friend said that this is being done in accordance with the regulation. Could my right hon. Friend tell the House when the House debated that regulation and gave its assent to it? Could he also tell the House which Act of Parliament enables the House to make payment? My right hon. Friend also said that an overdraft facility was allowable up to and including the own resources ceiling and also within the budget. Is it not the case that in this case the Community exceeds own resources and that is why the overdraft is being paid?

Mr. Brooke: Would my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) please repeat the first part of his question?

Mr. Marlow: When did the House debate the regulation under which this overdraft facility is being granted, and did it give its assent?

Mr. Brooke: I have held this office for nearly three years, but our history of dealing with these matters goes back before that. So close and so vigilant is the attention that my hon. Friends the Members for Northampton, North and for Southend, East pay to these matters that if we had not been behaving regularly, they would have pointed that out a long time ago.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: The Minister said first of all that he was unable to say under which British law we pay this, but he says that he is obliged by a Community article to make payments to the level of own resources. Surely he accepts that new sub-paragraph (f) does not relate to own resources, but to the fact that the Community has overspent resources in 1987-88. Under what year's own resources is he making the payment? If he is correct in so doing, observing that this does not lead to a payment within existing own resources, is it right in respect of an overspend of own resources?

Mr. Brooke: The payments that we have made, which we have regularly and faithfully reported to the House,

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have been conducted in line with our legal obligations. The Commission asked for overdrafts under article 12(2) of regulation 2891/77 in each month since June. The Commission's overdraft with the United Kingdom currently stands at £17·4 million, having peaked at around £166 million in mid-August. I hesitate to say that, against the kind of figures that were quoted a moment ago.

Mr. Cash: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, on 1 June 1988, the President of the European Parliament signed the budget for this year after there had been a serious dispute? Once he had done so, part of the mechanism required to ensure that it was fully lawful was complied with. In other words, 1 June is important and after that date payments made in accordance with the procedures that have been described are lawful.

5.30 pm

Mr. Brooke: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for that confirmation.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked a series of questions by my right hon. and hon. Friends that I must answer first.

In particular, I was asked whether the overdraft payments that have been made are in effect IGA contributions. The Commission is well aware that payments under the IGA cannot be made until member states have completed their national procedures for approving them, and that that takes time. Meanwhile, as I have said, we have a legal obligation to meet article 12(2) overdraft requests, provided that they are properly drawn up. The sums requested by the Commission as own resources, excluding the IGA, under the new budget are less than the sum that would have been required under provisional twelfths. Looking at the budget as a whole, the Government took the view that it was right to meet the payment requests made by the Commission; not to have done so would have risked court action and the possibility of substantial interest payments.

I turn to the series of questions asked of me by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East. First, he asked whether misprints in the schedules could be put right. Clearly, were the schedules to pass into the legislation, as proposed in the amendment of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), they would need to pass correctly. My hon. Friend is correct in saying that there are misprints, and they would need to be corrected. However, as I said in my initial response, the Government's view is that the new schedules should not be added to the Bill, so the question of correcting the misprints does not arise.

My hon. Friend further asked what legal effect the inclusion of the schedules would have. If they were properly drafted—I am sure he would take that as common ground between us—their inclusion should have no special legal implications. He asked also what would be the effect of including the schedules on what he described as budgetary fiddles, such as the metric year. The Brussels package included changes to budget management that will help to limit artificial devices—such as, for example, limiting legative reserves and reinforcing annuality. However, that would not prevent recourse to another metric year.

While it is true that the Community was only able to respect the old financial guideline for agriculture in 1987 by changing from a system of advance payments to reimbursements, and that that effectively produced a one-off saving of two months' expenditure in 1987, the British Government supported that move not only because of the budgetary constraints at the time, to which my hon. Friend himself alluded, but also—I emphasise this point —because it makes better sense from the point of financial control for agricultural expenditure to be reimbursed like all other Community expenditure.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): My right hon. Friend mentioned that incorporating the schedule in the Bill would not make any difference to legal enforceability. However, we have been assured throughout our debates, on many occasions, that budgetary discipline will now be legally enforceable. Will my right hon. Friend tell the House where in the Bill that legal enforceability is reflected?

Mr. Brooke: Given the fact that the Bill refers by their titles to the items that the hon. Member for Newham, South wishes to include in terms of schedules, the Government have continuously made it clear, throughout the earlier debate that led to the Brussels council's conclusions and in all our subsequent debates, that it was not possible at the Brussels Council itself to put into legal form the particular instruments needed to achieve the objective to which my right hon. Friend refers. However, as he knows, we made it clear that the principle was being established in terms of the Brussels Council.

As he also knows, the new own resources decision was not accepted within the Council for presentation to national Parliaments until 24 June. In the intervening period, between February and June, it was possible for draftsmen to work out the necessary instruments to achieve—for instance, in the context of automatic agricultural stabilisers—the purposes that I know my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) shares.

Mr. Higgins: Perhaps I may press my right hon. Friend on what I am sure we both agree is a most important point. When we discussed this matter on Second Reading, the House was told that there were problems in making the non-obligatory expenditure provisions legally enforceable. That is a point to which we might return when we debate clause stand part. However, we were told that the provisions for limiting obligatory expenditure would be legally enforceable. I must again ask my right hon. Friend where it is that those provisions are to be found which would enable those who wish to ensure that expenditure is legally enforced to do so.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend is familiar with the process by which, as I said a moment ago, there are specific instruments intended to give such provisions legal form. I agree with my right hon. Friend that we are here talking about compulsory expenditure and not DNO, to which we can return, where those instruments have passed through the Council in the form of an extension of the basic principle.

Mr. Budgen: Before the Prime Minister went to the Fontainebleau summit, she said that she wished to achieve legally binding constraints on EEC expenditure. When she returned, she said, "Very sorry—we are not able to get

legally binding constraints on EEC expenditure. That is not technically possible." She now says, "Never mind what happened at Fontainebleau—we have now agreed to have legally binding constraints." What changes have there been in the EEC constitution that now make it possible for legally binding constraints to be introduced?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend knows very well that, in terms of the negotiations into which the British Government entered with their colleagues in the Community that led first to the Copenhagen European Council and then to Brussels, we were making it a sine qua non of our commitment to the agreement that was reached that it would be possible to achieve such legally binding instruments.

Mr. Budgen: Can my right hon. Friend tell the House why that could not have been done at Fontainebleau?

Mr. Brooke: I am not in any way seeking to escape a full and direct answer to that question by saying that I myself was not involved at that stage, but my hon. Friend knows that it was the very fact that we were unable to secure those legally binding instruments at Fontainebleau that made us determined, in the run-up to Copenhagen and Brussels, that we would not reach agreement with our Common Market partners unless such legally binding instruments were secured.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. To whom does the Paymaster General wish to give way?

Mr. Brooke: I believe that I should give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), who has not previously intervened.

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): Is it not a fact that, following the Brussels summit, a series of statements of intent incorporated in that declaration were then translated into specific changes to the agricultural regulations, that they passed in the usual way and were approved by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, and that they now form Community law? Is it not true that, after Fontainebleau, the reforms were limited to a statement of good intentions not translated into regulations? Is it not the case that those reforms, which were known by the codeword "stabilisers", are now incorporated in the regulations and have been applied—notably in the case of oilseed rape, cereals and wine?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for putting much more eloquently than I did my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West, who I see has changed his position in the Chamber.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Brooke: I should be delighted to give way in a moment, but my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing was seeking a more specific response from me.

Essentially, I think that he was asking about the legal text to enforce budget discipline. It is contained in various measures of Community law, in particular the budget discipline decision. That decision does not require approval by national Parliaments as does the own resources decision, but it is Community law, and the own resources sub-ceilings in the own resources decision reinforce budget discipline over total expenditure. I shall return to the inter-institutional agreement in a moment.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Will my right hon. Friend explain why, if the Government are yet again confident about budget discipline—forgetting Fontainebleau and so forth—we cannot incorporate it into British law and thus reaffirm our commitment in the Bill?

Mr. Brooke: I hope that I may give my hon. Friend a longish answer. As I am sure my right hon. and hon. Friends would agree, securing those legally binding instruments was a substantial achievement and to the future good of the Community, but to change the whole structure of Community legislation in relation to this Parliament as well might have been unduly ambitious.

Mr. Cash: Does not the Bill's long title refer to both the decision of 24 June 1988 and the undertaking—namely, the intergovernmental agreement—that the decision should be automatically binding under the European Communities Act 1972, because it is a decision of the Council of Ministers? The undertaking would not necessarily acquire the same legal status, so the Bill effectively combines the two, thus giving full legal effect to the combined provisions of both documents and putting beyond all doubt that the provisions in the Bill are fully effective legally.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. The Minister must have the opportunity to reply to one intervention at a time.

Mr. Brooke: I think that we are drifting some distance from the amendment, but I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford for what he has said.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Is not my right hon. Friend being too apologetic? Was he not right to say what he did just before that last intervention—that the agreement is very satisfactory and is properly legally enshrined in the Bill? Of course, the status and construction of Community law is the same as that of British law. There is no distinction, if we are fully fledged members of the Community. Why does my right hon. Friend not say that, without being so apologetic?

Mr. Brooke: I hasten to say that I was not trying to be apologetic. I have been trying to satisfy the understandable curiosity of a number of my hon. Friends, which I expect to continue for some time to come.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Brooke: I think that if I do not answer the fourth question asked by our mutual hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East, we may all forget that he asked it.

My hon. Friend asked about the projections of our net payments to the Community institutions. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the House on 15 February that the Brussels package would increase our net payments by a maximum of about £300 million a year compared with what might happen with the continuation of the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling, and by about £150 million to £200 million a year in comparison with the underlying level of spending in 1988.

[Mr. Brooke]

That remains our estimate of what the package will cost. A revised forecast of our net payments to Community institutions, taking account of both the Brussels package and all other developments since the public expenditure White Paper was published, will be contained in this year's Autumn Statement, and the House will have to wait for that to find out what the projection will be.

5.45 pm

A forecast of our net contribution to the Community budget in 1988 will be published in the statement on the 1988 Community budget to be published shortly after the Autumn Statement. The delay in the publication of this White Paper arises partly because of the delay in adopting the 1988 budget itself—the budget as amended was adopted on 7 July—and partly because the Community has not yet published all the 1988 budget documents.

It is true—I am now responding to my hon. Friend's point—that over the past two or three years the Government have tended to under-forecast our net payments to Comunity institutions. That is partly because we did not wish to use any assumptions in the forecast, such as an increase in the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling, which could have prejudiced our negotiating position in Brussels on future financing. It is also because of the consistent under-estimation in recent years of United Kingdom VAT receipts, which are used for determining our VAT base for Community purposes. Another important factor is that we have not forecast with complete accuracy the speed of the decline in our share of Community receipts since about 1984.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) warned me that the words that I used today might be taken down and used in evidence against me. As I said earlier, I have now survived this office for approaching three years, and a fair number of quotations from my earlier speeches could therefore be deployed; but I am grateful for his advice, and I shall watch what I say.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall pressed us to accept the amendment. I said that by putting down the amendment the hon. Member for Newham, South had provided the whole Committee with the convenience of having the ORD and the 1988 IGA printed on the amendment paper. I hope, however, that having secured that, and given that historically we have not included such schedules to the legislation, he will not wish to press the amendment to a vote.

Mr. Cryer: I am amazed at the Minister saying that the schedules should not be included because they have not been included before. Is he aware that there is a strong current of dissatisfaction in the country with our membership of the EEC? Part of that current is due to the massive number of regulations and Community instruments which pour out, and which make many of our citizens suspect that the sovereignty of this Parliament is being gradually eroded and shifted to the EEC.

I suspect that a few Euro-fanatic advisers in the Minister's Department have said, "It seems straightforward to accept the amendments." It would not do any harm, because, as the Minister said, the inclusion of the schedules has no special legal implication. What it does is give a pointer to the ordinary citizen who gets hold of a copy of the Bill when it becomes an Act.

Not a huge proportion of our citizens get hold of Acts of Parliament. I suppose that 99 per cent. of the population have never cast their eyes over an Act of Parliament. Therefore, the notion that we are conferring a huge benefit is not true either. Why should concerned citizens have to go to HMSO and pay an extortionate amount for a copy of the Act? The cost of legislation that binds citizens has shot up to an extortionate level under the Government.

Having obtained the Act of Parliament, the citizen has a chat to someone else who might know about such matters, and he is told that there are two EEC documents about agreements that have been reached and those should also be read. The citizen must then find a source for those EEC documents. I am among a tiny privileged minority in Sheffield who knows that there is a regional information centre at Sheffield polytechnic. I do not suppose that there are more than a couple of hundred people throughout the length and breadth of west and south Yorkshire who know that. However, the earnest citizen is now being told by the Minister that he cannot have these extra pages printed in the Bill because it has not been done before. Although the Minister has said that providing the citizen with extra information has no legal consequences, it cannot be done.

It is mean-spirited of the Government to refuse the amendments of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who has tabled them in a helpful spirit. If the Minister had accepted the amendments and then sat down, he would have probably avoided one of the most gruelling half hours at the Dispatch Box. It would have been a double advantage to him. He could have sat down and still had a bit of a reputation left, but now it has gone. He was not able to answer the questions and was helped out by the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), who is a Euro-fanatic and knows his way around the financial institutions of the EEC. However, that is not saying much. Not many people know their way around the EEC because it is so labyrinthine.

As people do not understand the EEC, I believe that it is the duty of the House to explain legislation as clearly as possible. Of course, from the point of view of the Minister's Euro-fanatical advisers, there is a difficulty, because the vast proportion of the population suspect that there has been a large increase in the amount paid by the United Kingdom to the Common Market and, if the agreements are incorporated in the Act, that information might filter through to too many of the population. If there is an Act which is pretty meaningless by itself, and those obscure EEC agreements are kept in isolation, fewer people will know.

Therefore, the Prime Minister can go around the country trying to capture the spirit of widespread dissidence about the Common Market, but at the same time she can put legislation through that is collaborating with the Common Market to provide greater revenue for it, without any approval being required from the House after the Bill has been passed.

The Minister is being churlish in the extreme in not accepting these amendments. It is worth pointing out that the ordinary citizen, having obtained the Bill with the amendments incorporated, could say, "That is a lot of money into the Common Market, would that money not be better spent on research into the depletion of the ozone

layer?", as was suggested in an intervention earlier. Many citizens would say that it was right to do that rather than to fritter the money away on this lavish organisation which has done little for this country. We still have a balance of trade deficit in manufactured goods of more than £10 billion. Since 1984, we have spent nearly £5 billion on the Common Market; indeed, the Minister has said that since 1984 there has been an accelerated decline in Community receipts, which has produced that massive deficit in our financial arrangements with the Common Market.

I suggest that the Minister would not lose anything by allowing these amendments. The citizen would gain some information. Frankly, to maintain the reputation of the House as a source of legislation, we should always have in mind the ordinary citizen and, if something is easier and clearer for him anc. saves him some money in obtaining that information, we should be prepared to legislate for it. It may be that the Euro-fanatics are apprehensive because the Common Market is in such a mess, the agricultural policy is in a mess—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Skinner: Do you mean Dr. Death?

Mr. Cryer: I was just coming to him.

Mr. Skinner: I do not know whether my hon. Friend has noticed, but a lot of the Euro-fanatics have not been here. Dr. Death, who leads the provos, has not been here at all. The Liberals have been represented by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) who has never opened his gullet. Where are they? The Scot Nats, who are converted Euro-fanatics, have not been represented. It is strange that when we are discussing this wonderful institution that has cost Britain about £5,000 million net since the Prime Minister came into power, all the people who used to support it—Shirley Poppins, Roy of the Radicals and all the rest—are not here.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was speaking directly to the amendments before that intervention. I hope that he will continue to do so.

Mr. Cryer: If the people who support the Common Market feel that the inclusion of this information through the approval of amendment Nos. 14 and 15 would be a disadvantage to their cause, why are they not here to point that out? The Minister did not mention that in his speech. He did not say that this would be propaganda for those people who are critical of the Common Market. I believe that the citizen has a right to information, whether it gives him the right to criticise or to support the Common Market. It is for the citizen to make his judgment.

Curiously enough, that is the kind of argument that the Government normally embrace philosophically. They say that we should give the people information and let them make the choice. That is the way in which they talk about privatisation. There have to be two or three buses so that there are two or three choices. All the publicly owned monopolies must be hived off, so that there is a choice of 14 water companies in one street. On this occasion, the citizen will be denied the information in legislation passed by the House. That is quite wrong.

It is not a huge point, but we, as ordinary citizens, have been fortunate enough to be elected as Members, and we should safeguard legislation for the 54 million or 55 million other citizens. We should give them a decent opportunity to look at the legislation and make their own judgment about it, especially when it concerns this wretched organisation—the Common Market.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has just said that since 1979 there has been a net payment of £5 billion to the EEC. I have received a written answer from the Paymaster General, who said that up to 1987 it was £7·5 billion.

Mr. Cryer: The deficit is even worse than was anticipated—£7·5 billion. The point that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was making was that, although this deficit is enormous, and is grist to the mill of the critics of the Common Market, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), the Euro-fanatic par excellence, and the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) are not here to defend it. That critical information is not in amendments Nos. 14 and 15 incorporating the schedules that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South has so prudently decided to table.

The deficit information is not included in the amendments, so it does not provide the anti-Marketeers —there are more of them than the Committee might think and I believe that that was why the Prime Minister was so adamant in her speech at Bruges—with a cause. There is no reason for the Minister to turn down this amendment except that, historically, such a course of action has never been taken.

6 pm

Historically, we did not have an electrified railway line between London and Leeds, but that did not mean that we should not have one. If British Rail had made such an application to the Minister, I am sure that he would have replied, "You want X million pounds to electrify the railway line, but historically there has never been such a line, so we should not have one." One could apply that daft argument to all sorts of things. As it happens, this House is the sort of place where it gains more credence. We still have the leather, the oak and the procedures that have been with us for hundreds of years.

If it is said that, historically, we have always followed one course of action, people tend to suspend their analysis of it. People tend to believe that we should go on as we are, but if a new course of action is intended to improve things for the citizen we should undertake that action.

The Minister has not produced a scintilla of evidence or justification for his obdurate, unhelpful and anti-democratic decision. This is the right context for such an anti-democratic decision because the Common Market is an anti-democratic organisation. To bring us into line, we have to fudge, obscure and pour out documents that have the crucial information buried in paragraphs—by and large, that information is denied to the ordinary citizen.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South is Chairman of the European Legislation Committee and he spends hours burrowing through documents. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), along with one or two other hon. Members, performs a similar job. They burrow through documents to get out the information, because one of the techniques of the Common Market is to bury things deep in obscure paragraphs. When people ask under what authority and under what chapter of

[Mr. Cryer]

English law a certain decision was reached, there is a lot of humming and hawing and, eventually, an obscure instrument is produced.

Regulation 2891/77 is the instrument which authorises much of the money for the European Community from the United Kingdom. I wonder how many citizens in our respective constituencies are busy chattering about it? I do not imagine that it is talked about in Bradford, South.

I believe that, underneath it all, the Minister is a Euro-fanatic. As I recall, he was a Heathite at one stage. I know that that represents the kiss of death in the Tory party these days and that a lot of people want to shake off that image. That streak of Euro-fanaticism, however, is still there and characterises the Minister's attitudes.

Mr. Budgen: The hon. Gentleman is making a splendid speech that will make him extremely popular on the Tory Benches today. We understand, however, that the Labour party has now become committed to the EEC and is particularly anxious to exploit the generosity of the Euro-Socialism that is to be made possible by the extra money that we are discussing. Many of the hon. Gentleman's constituents must be disgusted at the way in which the voters have denied Socialists the opportunity of carrying out their splendid and progressive policies——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I do not believe that we need to go into all of that now. This is an extremely long intervention and the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) should come to his point.

Mr. Budgen: Of course I will.

Given that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is so rude about the absence of Dr. Death and all the rest of them, is there anyone from the Labour party who will explain today how this money will be used to create the Socialists' new Jerusalem?

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) will not do that —he will refer to the amendments before us.

Mr. Cryer: Amendments Nos. 14 and 15 are linked to amendment No. 13 and as you will be aware, Miss Boothroyd, it is not possible to give the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) the necessary explanation. In any case I would not be able to pursue his argument because the resolution at the Labour party conference was not passed by the necessary two thirds majority. Therefore, retaining the right of withdrawal is still there and is still Labour party policy.

We have no control over an Act which enables an increase in revenue for the Common Market. I believe that we shall win the battle of ideas and form the next Government. I do not believe that we can bypass the problems and I do not believe that we shall get things done by going through the European Community. I do not know of many people who have that illusion. The truth of the matter, however, is that, irrespective of the political views of many people in the Common Market, there is one overwhelming unifying principle which is held by those on the extreme Right, by the Christian Democrats and by the Socialist group—excluding the British Labour group who, I am happy to say, do not go along with it—and that is the creation of the united states of western Europe. Some of the money that we are discussing will go towards such a unification.

It is important that amendments 13, 14 and 15 are accepted so that the citizen is able to undertake some sort of examination of where the money goes. I note that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport—a Euro-fanatic—has just entered the Chamber. He is probably here to vote in favour of the Government denying the ordinary citizen the information to which he or she has every right.

It staggers me that the Government, who proclaim freedom of choice for the individual, are denying information and an element of choice to the ordinary citizen. The more people know the true face of Toryism, the more they will set their faces against it.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: The amendments moved so eloquently by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) go far beyond offering instructions or advice to the British people. I believe that they mandate the British Government, under British law, to abide by the financial constraints that the Government have entered into by agreement. From the line that my right hon. Friend has taken, it appears that the Government are nervous of such a situation because it inhibits or restrains their ability to negotiate large sums of money when this agreement falls apart, as many of us believe it inevitably will.

As my right hon. Friend has pointed out, he is an old hand in such debates. He is perfectly well aware that the assurances that the Government have given on a number of occasions have been treated with some scepticism, and no wonder. Every time the Prime Minister goes to Europe and announces that we shall constrain expenditure and bring in decent controls, she then comes back and we pay more. There is a certain other-wordly quality about such an attitude. On the one hand, the Government strike the ground and state that we shall pay less, yet, time after time, we accommodate large increases of expenditure outside the easy review of British law.

The amendments are important because they mandate the Government to abide by British law, which would reinforce all the disciplines that the Government are so confident will be effective. If the Government are so confident that the disciplines that have been entered into will be effective, surely it is an easy thing for the Government to say that they welcome the inclusion, in British statute law, of the new schedules.

The very reluctance of the Government to incorporate such schedules appears to reinforce the argument that the Government are nervous of their incorporation on the basis that revenue increases could be challenged in British law courts by British citizens on the basis of British law.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I feel obliged to say a brief word in defence of the world-weary and indubitably much maligned Minister. I say "brief", despite the fact that long-windedness is clearly the order of the day. The Minister rejected the amendments of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) with the simplest and most proper of reasons—to wit, that they would make no difference whatever to the legal consequence of the Bill. I must say to the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) that Bills are supposed to be, not encyclopaedias of knowledge, but statements of the law. I would have

thought that the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), who has a passing knowledge of the law, would find it desirable that legislation be brief, not long-winded. Therefore, I do not see any point in making the proposed addition.

Mr. Skinner: What about the hon. Gentleman's dead parrot?

Sir Russell Johnston: My dead parrot is dead, and I would be obliged if the hon. Gentleman would not exhume it.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman backed it for 24 hours.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am sure, Miss Boothroyd, that you will protect me.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Certainly against the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Sir Russell Johnston: We have now debated for more than two hours an amendment which would make no difference to the legal consequence of the Bill, and we should now desist. If there is a vote, I shall certainly vote against the amendment.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): I shall make a short point, because this important debate has taken a substantial time.

I am troubled. I ask my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General to consider that this would not be tolerated in the Danish Parliament. In Denmark, Parliament is insistent that maximum information is given to the Danish people on matters such as this. Danish parliamentarians are much better informed about every regulation and decision passed by the Council of Ministers. We already know that this House was unaware of the regulation about the way in which the Council of Ministers could draw on extra funds from the British people and the rest of the Community, to which my right hon. Friend drew our attention. In Denmark there is a willingness, almost an eagerness, on the part of the Danish Government to keep Parliament well informed.

Sir Russell Johnston: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Danish Parliament is elected by proportional representation, so genuinely reflects the views of the Danish people?

Sir Richard Body: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman, for whom I have the greatest regard, intervened in that way. I am trying to make a short point after a long debate and I hope that I may make it without taking up much time. This is an important Bill and there are other amendments which we wish to consider and debate properly. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take part in that and that it is noted outside that he is the only Liberal —or Democrat, or whatever we call them now—to take any interest in this debate.

Why cannot we follow the example of the Danish Parliament and make this information available to the British people? This decision has considerable constitutional consequences, but the British people will be wholly unacquainted with it unless we take steps to acquaint them with it. Yet we are trying to suppress information. That is unsatisfactory, and anyone who wants the EC to succeed will agree that there is no point in suppressing information, unless it is for the reason that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) gave us earlier. The more one reflects on it, the more plausible that explanation seems.

For those reasons, I ask my right hon. Friend to reconsider the matter and concede that what is good enough for the Danish people and the Danish Parliament should be good enough for the British people and the House of Commons.

6.15 pm

Mr. Marlow: I should like to reinforce the point made with great eloquence by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd).

My right hon. Friend the Minister debated the subject of financial control. We know that the Government are deeply concerned about the financial control of Community resources and have not been happy about the way in which that control has been exercised. One of our main duties in Parliament is to ensure proper financial control of taxpayers' money. When the Bill was introduced, the Community had financial problems. It was short of cash. But now we know that its coffers are overflowing. It has not had the expenditure that it expected, so has money in reserve. It has spare cash. The urgency for the Bill is nothing like as great as previously. There is no urgency. We can delay.

My hon. Friend suggested—this should meet with the agreement of my right hon. Friend—that we should add these schedules to the Bill. If we add them, will it weaken the power of our constituents to take a case against the EC for financial imprudence? Should it start spending money which it should not spend? Now it has the problem under control, but should it start being extravagant again? If one of my constituents wanted to take a case against the Community institutions, would he be in a weaker position if we agreed to the schedules? If not, my right hon. Friend, like me, would wish to give my constituents all the power we could. Therefore, I plead with him to agree to the amendments, so eloquently moved by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing).

Mr. Spearing: I rise to reply to this debate, which has taken longer than I expected. Its contents have vindicated the wisdom of Committee procedure because although we have debated whether these two schedules should be included in the Bill, we have, en passant, debated two other important points which otherwise might never have been pinpointed in the clause stand part debate.

The first relates to the undertaking in proposed new schedule 2. Is it necessary? That question has not been fully answered. We extracted from the Financial Secretary the obscure regulation of 1977 under which certain payments have been or are about to be made. The explanation was not entirely convincing, because at one stage—I shall have to read *Hansard* on this—the Minister said that the payments would not exceed resources known to be available.

It is true that resources will be available if the undertaking is ratified by other states, but we cannot assume that. on another occasion he said that the payments would not exceed those which could be made under existing arrangements. Existing arrangements could include the detailed article 12(2) of the 1977 regulation for forward payments. That is still unclear, although we have had something of a question and answer session on it. I

[Mr. Spearing]

must pay tribute to the patience of the Paymaster General, but he must give an answer on financial matters. These are matters not of judgment but of strict financial formulae.

The second point relates to new schedule 1, if it were accepted. What part of the decision set out in new schedule 1 would contain the discipline which we have been promised and assured of? The right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Treasury and Civil Service, asked what part of the new schedule would guarantee that discipline in Community law or United Kingdom law. But answer came there none, apart from a statement that it was contained in other documents about agricultural stabilisers that had subsequently been passed and given legal effect by the European Community.

The hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) knowledgeably underlined that point. However, as I recollect the evidence given by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the Select Committee that I have the honour to chair, there is no certainty in that. Agricultural stabilisers have more to do with hope than certainty.

I pay tribute to the Paymaster General for providing what answers he could, but I discern no mechanism of discipline in new schedule 2 or, for that matter, in the proposed decision before us. This could therefore be classified as a Fontainebleau mark II.

The Minister said, with his customary courtesy, that the amendment was unnecessary, but his remarks showed that to be untrue. He kindly said that the Committee was in our debt for putting the texts on the Order Paper. But if its members, who are a little acquainted with these matters —I put it no higher than that—find it convenient to have these details set out on the Order Paper, a document that we can obtain 10 yards away, so, too, would the people whom we represent.

At this point I want to answer the cogent point made by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston). He was right to say that the amendment neither adds to nor detracts from the legal effect of the Bill, but I am sure that on other occasions, dealing with other matters, he would be the first to criticise a Minister who brought before a Committee a couple of clauses of gobbledegook. If the hon. Gentleman or one of his hon. Friends tabled an alternative form of clause, or an expansion of a clause, making clearer what was involved in it but entailing no legal change, he would be the first to criticise any Government that did not accept such an expansion or clarification. We are as much concerned here with the quality of legislative drafting as with the Bill's contents. All hon. Members can say amen to that, even if the Treasury cannot. To date it has not said amen to it, and I am sorry that it has not. It has been burrowing hard trying to find additional reasons such as those that the right hon. Gentleman gave us why the amendments should not be accepted.

The right hon. Gentleman said that such an inclusion had not been made in 1985 and asked why it should be made now. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) disposed of that with his timely and apposite electrification example: we have not had electrified lines in Bradford and Leeds until now, so why should we have them in future? Yet the Government have paid for that electrification.

I have a better argument still. The Paymaster General said that this had not been done before; no more it had. But the so-called disciplinary mechanisms did not work either last time, and because of that it is all the more important that we should have them this time. I hope the Minister understands that. No doubt the scribes in the Treasury have been working hard on the Minister's reasons and I do not blame him for using them.

The Minister said, that in 1972, when we took on board all the then treaties of the European Community under the European Communities Act, we did not print them, either. I believe I have the advantage of the right hon. Gentleman in having attended those debates, and I can tell hon. Members why the treaties were not printed in the schedules to that Bill—95 treaties were hoisted aboard at that time. I remember going into the public library in Ealing, Acton, which I then represented, with the treaties on my shoulder piled up two feet high. As I remember, none of them was about the obligations of taxation. The money that we paid in then was given under an entirely different formula, not the own resources formula of today.

Now we have a treaty which is, in effect, a taxation instrument, and a member of the Treasury is telling us that, although this is a taxation document, we shall not print it in the Bill. How is that for open government? It is a trend towards authoritarianism. I suggest that the reasons the right hon. Gentleman gave for not including the amendment were not good ones, so his refusal does not carry the weight that his arguments usually do.

This has been a useful debate and in other circumstances we would have pressed it to a——

Mr. Skinner: We will.

Mr. Spearing: I shall explain why I was not going to. If, for the time being, we accept what the Minister has said, we shall always be able to say that the Treasury favours obfuscation and denial of information to the House and the people of this country. The Treasury is doing this in a matter of taxation under a formula that is to be adopted for the next five years. With that wrapped around the Treasury's neck from this evening onward, it might have second thoughts in another place, or later in the Bill's progress. I believe that would be for the best. The Government could never get out of this—but I leave the decision to the will of the Committee. The Government have every reason to accept the amendments, especially after the Prime Minister's speech at Bruges. The spirit in which they are moved is compatible with some of her remarks. I hope that, even at this late stage, the Paymaster General will change his mind.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 106, Noes 284.

Division No. 450] **[6.27pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Armstrong, Hilary	Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Ashton, Joe	Buckley, George J.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Budgen, Nicholas
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Caborn, Richard
Battle, John	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Beckett, Margaret	Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Bell, Stuart	Clay, Bob
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Clelland, David
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Coleman, Donald
Bermingham, Gerald	Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Body, Sir Richard	Corbett, Robin
Boyes, Roland	Cousins, Jim

Crowther, Stan
Cummings, John
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dover, Den
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Marlow, Tony
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Short, Clare
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan

Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

app

Motion made and Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this question it will be convenient to discuss also new clause 3—*Annual Report to Parliament*—

'Each year Her Majesty's Government shall make an annual report to Parliament concerning the operation of the decision in section 1(e) above in respect of the preceding financial year, which shall include:

(a) A general presentation in text and tables of the financing and expenditure of the European Economic Communities in sterling equivalent and any common unit, which shall include comparable tables of income derived from each member state and expenditure therein in respect of each principal category of expenditure;
(b) An account of rebate mechanisms applicable to any member state;
(c) The operation of each article of the decision;
(d) Action taken by Her Majesty's Government in respect of financial discipline;
(e) The operation of that part of the decision referred to as the "EAGGF monetary reserve";
(f) The text of any regulation, directive or financial regulation relating to the operation of the decision to which Her Majesty's Government have given their assent.'.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Miss Boothroyd. I was one of the Tellers and I thought that I caught sight of Tory Whips taking names outside the Aye Lobby. I did not see the documents that they held, but I presume that they were taking the names of Conservative Members who chose to exercise their rights, on behalf of the citizen, to ask for more information to be provided. Can you confirm, Miss Boothroyd, that under Standing Orders hon. Members cannot be intimidated by any clique of Tory Whips into voting one way or another? I should be grateful if you would confirm that.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Of course I can confirm that. I doubt whether there is an hon. Member who allows himself or herself to be intimidated. We shall now continue with clause 1 stand part.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Miss Boothroyd. If I could put the record straight——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I have put the record straight. I call Mr. Holland.

Mr. Holland: It shows how badly we need a debate on the substantive issues raised in the Bill that we have spent so long on the importance——

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Miss Boothroyd. Do I take it that the clause stand part has been moved formally and that we have had no speech from the Paymaster General in moving it?

The Second Deputy Chairman: The procedure is that clause 1 stand part is proposed from the Chair. If the Paymaster General were to rise, I would obviously, out of courtesy, call him first. It seems that the Opposition wish to make the opening remarks, and that is perfectly in order.

Mr. Holland: Whether or not we should add schedules to the Bill, we are debating substantive issues, to which we need to pay considerable attention. It would have helped us a great deal if the schedules had been published as part of the Bill and were to be part of the Act.

Essentially, clause 1 deals with the decision of the Council of the European Communities on own resources, made in Brussels on 7 May 1985 and with the undertaking made in Brussels on 23 and 24 April 1985 by representatives of the Governments of the member states to make payments to the Community. It also deals with the decision of the Council of the European Communities on own resources made in Luxembourg on 24 June 1988 and with the undertaking by representatives of the Governments of the member states, which was confirmed in Luxembourg on 24 June 1988. That means that there has been a shift in the basis of the financing of the Community and that was made explicit in the Luxembourg agreement of 24 June.

Article 2 of our proposed schedule 1 states:

"Revenue from the following shall constitute own resources entered in the budget of the Communities:

(a) levies, premiums, additional or compensatory amounts . . .
(b) Common Customs, Tariff duties . . .
(c) . . . the VAT assessment base . . .
(d) the application of a rate . . . to the sum of all the Member States' GNP established in accordance with Community rules to be laid down in a Directive".

Apparently, a proposal for a directive is to be made.

6.45 pm

Article 3 spells out the significance of what we have to consider. Paragraph 1 states:

"The total amount of own resources assigned to the Communities may not exceed 1·20% of the total GNP . . . for payment appropriations.

The total amount of own resources assigned to the Communities may not . . . exceed"

for the period 1988-92 a range of from 1·15 per cent. in 1988 to 1·20 per cent. in 1992. Therefore, we are debating not only the Community's current budget but its budget up until 1992. I think that you will agree, Miss Boothroyd, that it is therefore appropriate that the House should address the issue of what the Community will be doing with that budget in the period up to 1992 and the way in which the resources will be spent.

Mr. Spearing: As the House is in Committee, Miss Boothroyd, may I make the point for the record that my hon. Friend has rightly referred to a directive which he believes is to come, relating to the definitions of GNP on which the rate to which he has just referred will be applied? It is a significant calculation, because a small difference in the formula could make a difference, over a period, of £1,000 million or more. My recollection was that that directive has already been published. I think that it is 5647/88, which has been referred here for debate by the Select Committee on European Legislation. I hope that it will not be considered as being taken finally today, although it may be considered as having been debated, because I think that it was referred to in an earlier debate. It is not a question of that directive coming; it has come and is available in text form.

Mr. Holland: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I have the text with me although I might not have had. I used the word "proposal" because under the heading "Subject Matter" in the explanatory memorandum, I read the words:

"This is a Commission proposal for a directive on the harmonisation of definitions of GNP."

I was going to come to that a little later, but as my hon. Friend has given me this chance, I should like to say that it is indeed an important issue in as much as VAT contributions can be determined ex post facto in relation to the amount of VAT that has actually been paid in a particular country because one can take *x* per cent. of that.

The definition of GNP is much more complex. I appreciate that definitions of national product or national income are items which pass readily into the library of the great unread, except perhaps for those students of economics who, for a week or two, are supposed to address such issues and grasp their most basic definitions. There are differences in the way in which GNP is assessed and calculated in different Community countries. As I understand it, a committee is to be established. The document that we are considering confirms that there is a proposal under item 4 of the document to provide for an advisory committee, consisting of technical experts from the Commission and member states to assess the quality and comparability of the figures put forward by the different member states.

We also need to make sure that that committee, which presumably will be chaired by a member of the Commission and will, I believe, report to the President of the Commission, will be looking not simply at conventional definitions of GNP but at the means by which we can get greater transparency of the way in which the funds of the Community are being spent and on the way in which the system of aid, whether under structural funds or regional funds, is being operated. It might also look at the effectiveness with which resources within the Community are being used. There is relatively little transparency on those matters in the Community and it is extremely important that the House should be able to gain an effective evaluation of what is happening.

I believe that it is in order to refer also to new clause 3, in the name of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and other of my right hon. and hon. Friends. It states:

"Each year Her Majesty's Government shall make an annual report to Parliament concerning the operation of the decision in section 1(e) above".

That refers to the decisions of May 1985 and June 1988 on the manner in which the contributions from member states to the Community budget are assessed.

We regard it as important that there should be, as the new clause states,

"(a) A general presentation in text and tables . . . in respect of each principal category of expenditure;
(b) An account of rebate mechanisms applicable to any member state".

That is directly relevant to the United Kingdom case. The new clause continues:

"(c) The operation of each article of the decision".

That involves the decision-making procedure within the Community as well as of the Community institutions, in other words the Council, the Parliament, the Commission and other bodies, and the relations between them. Paragraph (d) states:

"Action taken by Her Majesty's Government in respect of financial discipline".

That is a matter on which many contributions have been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House, in relation to stabilisers, destabilisers and guarantees that expenditure under the guidance and guarantee fund will be reduced.

The new clause continues:

"The operation of that part of the decision referred to as the 'EAGGF monetary reserve';
(f) The text of any regulation, directive or financial regulation relating to the operation of the decision to which Her Majesty's Government have given their assent."

I strongly recommend the new clause to the House. I trust that we shall gain a response from Conservative Members on the issue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who is still present, and my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who is not here now, but who has been here for the main part of the debate, have rightly drawn attention to the manner in which Community legislation on the expenditure of public moneys is opaque rather than transparent and does not enable people to see what is being done. Without impugning the integrity of every hon. Member of the House, and whether or not each of us is equally in command of every item and iota of legislation coming from the Community, I believe that it should be incumbent on the House to ensure that the issues concerned and the supporting documentation are presented regularly. In our view, an annual report to Parliament should be a major part of the parliamentary process. Whether it was debated on one day, two days or, several days or spread over a period, it should enable hon. Members to assess, and therefore to approve or disapprove, expenditure undertaken under the new provisions before us.

Several hon. Members are especially concerned about the implications of the provisions in clause 1, in relation to the rights and privileges of the House. The argument is made that we are moving towards a federal system in which the privileges and prerogatives of the House are being undermined. That issue should be addressed by the House. None the less, it is not as straightforward as it may appear. For example, most of the provisions, which include qualified majority voting under the Single European Act, refer to the elimination of certain non-tariff barriers on a series of traded products rather than to wider issues—for example, of social or regional expenditure in the Community.

[Mr. Holland]

Although the words in the Single European Act, the Acte unique or the unique Act, have been applied to the internal market that will be achieved, in a real sense—perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover will agree—1992 is about a free trade area. It is less the start of a new Europe than an effort to restart the old Europe, because the internal free trade area should have been established by the late 1960s. The failure of the Community to move sufficiently fast to establish that free trade area and to grasp and eliminate non-tariff barriers is one of the reasons why we have had to restart the process of trying to achieve a genuinely free trade area within the Community itself.

The measure of a customs union, which is also part of the classic objective of states that are seeking to integrate, has long since been achieved. Through the customs union and quota system, the revenues that I have identified are due to the Commission from levies, especially agricultural levies. Many of us would wish that form of revenue for the Commission to be reduced and finally abolished inasmuch as it is quite iniquitous that the European Community should defend, for example, the production of beet sugar as opposed to the importation of sugar from developing countries. That is a source of Commission revenue that hon. Members on both sides of the House would wish to be reduced or abolished.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it was in the construction of the federal constitution of Germany that the best example of a movement from customs union to ultimate federation was achieved, but it does not necessarily follow by any means that it is a model that should be used for a progression towards a similar federal system in the European Community?

Mr. Holland: I agree very much with the hon. Gentleman. The point is well made and perhaps can be illustrated by the fact that Friedrich List, the ideologue of that customs union, argued the case for freedom to trade in a Germany when there were real barriers to trade. For example, at that time there were chains across the Rhine. It was a near-feudal mosaic rather than an integrated economic area. Anyone in his right mind would argue that chains across a main waterway constitute a barrier to shipping——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): And to trade.

Mr. Holland: —and therefore to trade. My hon. Friend is assisting me.

It is not as clear that we need to proceed to harmonisation of other things inside the European Community to achieve equal conditions for trade. Nor is it as clear—in my view, it is wholly unclear—that we need to proceed to monetary union. One of the striking features of Germany in the 19th century—it had several, some of which were positive and some negative—was that the Zollverein— in other words, the German common market of those formerly independent states—was created without the integration of its currency. It was only after 1871 that the Bismarckian administration introduced a common currency for the countries concerned. Nobody would argue that the Zollverein had not been successful before. Some people might claim that the real industrialisation of the German economy happened in the 1880s and 1890s rather than before 1871. Arguably that followed from Bismarck making a deal with the Liberals and ditching his Junker friends. That allowed goods in from abroad and lowered costs at a time when conditions for capital accumulation were ripe.

7 pm

I do not want to detain the House further with this Zollverein analogy, but it illustrates the need for us to be specific about what the gains or non-gains of a specific kind of European Community are likely to be. I accept that we are talking about Community expenditure up to 1992, and in that context it is relevant to refer to the so-called Cecchini report, which evaluates the costs and advantages or disadvantages of Europe up to 1992. The report, which may not be everybody's bedside reading, has a rather qualified preface by Mr. Jacques Delors which almost suggests the Mr. Delors is not quite so enthusiastic as Lord Cockfield about the internal market being achieved by 1992. He regrets that the social and regional provisions have not been entered in the Single European Act with as much force as the provisions for the liberalisation of trade.

In the Cecchini report we find among other things that there are specific arguments about the savings there will be in the cost of administering the frontier collection of revenues inside the Community,. It is not at all clear to me, but I stand subject to information on the matter, that anybody has evaluated what the reduced cost of provision would be in terms of the Community budget. But as internal customs duties are reduced in the Community, the other provisions, which include VAT and GNP assessments, become yet more important.

The Committee should try to be clear about whether the provisions of the Single European Act and the 1992 proposal mean a move towards federalism. Clearly, it depends on what we mean in the provisions, but much of the decision-making will still be intergovernmental. At present, the qualified majority voting procedure will apply only to certain categories of traded goods and non-tariff barriers.

Mr. Spearing: We should not move too far from the financial provisions before the Committee, but on the definition of the internal market, does my hon. Friend agree that, potentially, the legislation goes much further than that? As he suggests, it is not just a question of removing barriers. As I read the Single European Act group of amendments to the treaty of Rome, centralised legislation on any matter, where there would be different legislation either side of a boundary or across a sea in the Common Market, which affects industry or commerce in almost any respect is permitted. Surely that is a much greater power than many people have yet realised.

Mr. Holland: I appreciate the points that my hon. Friend makes that any tax or legislative provision can be considered indirectly to have an effect on internal markets. It may well be that the European Court will interpret matters in this way, but it is not necessary for us to have this degree of harmonisation in the Community in order to achieve a large internal market. The whole rationale of Lord Cockfield and his directorate general in the Commission has been totally misconceived about this. The European Community is dominated by about 200 companies which now account for about two fifths of its

GDP. Those multinational companies are buying permanent satellite time to monitor the trading of tens of thousands of products worldwide and are adjusting the pricing of those products to suit their own internal transfer pricing requirements. They have to live every minute and every hour of the day with foreign exchange fluctuations by leading and lagging of payments, through hedging and through speculation. Some of those companies have their own foreign exchange divisions.

Those companies can handle that on a permanent basis because they need to take decisions on instantaneous change. Therefore, the idea that a VAT rate of 15 per cent. in one country, 10 per cent. in another or zero in a third country cannot be handled by these companies seems quite meaningless. It seems that it is perfectly all right to harmonise the statutory provisions for rear view mirrors or prophylactics, but one will not give a better interpretation of the past and the other will not generate a future for a new Europe.

We need joint action from Europe in order to address the problems currently facing it. We need not only a budget to be spent by the Commission but a budget that is jointly spent by member Governments. Those joint action budgets may be for recovery programmes to take the strain in the world economy that could be caused by a reduction in the budget deficit in the United States. They could, for example, allow for joint action by Governments on environmental policy,, despite the fact that there may well not be unanimity between member states about whether there should be a Community environmental policy. When nine, 10 or 11 member countries want to proceed on joint provisions for the implementation of such a policy, it should be open to any Government, sensible about a pragmatic approach to international economic co-operation, to proceed with joint programmes of this kind. Joint national budgets of that kind would of course be debated in the House because they would be presented by the Secretary of State for the Environment.

One thing that we do not have in terms of sufficient scrutiny goes beyond the terms of reference of the new clause but not beyond the implications of clause 1. It is the extent to which we can get a relationship between what the European Assembly is considering and what national parliaments are considering. At present, the two seem utterly divorced. Committees of the House monitor Community documents. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said, one could carry piles of documents several feet thick on almost any issue. Upended, the documents behind the Cecchini report would fill the space between these two Dispatch Boxes. I do not know who reads these reports other than their authors, the typesetters and the proof readers.

It is important that we know whether there will be a net gain or a net loss from the creation of a Community Europe and in what sense. The bottom line of the assumptions in the Cecchini report is that greater revenues will be generated for nation states by the stimulus effect of competition in the internal market. I am longer in the tooth than I should like to be, but I can say with at least the partial experience of advancing middle age that I was around when those arguments about the stimulus effect of joining the European Community were made in the 1960s and 1970s.

I can remember very well the answer given to one researcher into these matters, who went to a big multinational company. The researcher, Christopher Layton, now Lord Layton, asked Pilkington Bros what the consequences of joining the Common Market would be for it. The person he asked smiled and replied, "Look, we are in float glass, and in float glass we are the common market."

There are fantasy views of the stimulus effects of the creation of this internal free trade area. Companies have been multinational for 20 or 25 years, have directly invested in other countries and are operating in other countries. Europe is addressing the wrong issues by being so much concerned about harmonisation. Rather than seeking to integrate, Europe should seek to co-operate, and it should set an agenda for feasible co-operation on a range of policies, more on an intergovernmental basis, perhaps with a different kind of majority voting. It could be, for example, an enabling majority vote, whereby if a majority of countries in the Community want to pursue a policy, and two or three do not, those wishing to pursue the policy should get the support of the Community institutions and should be able to have debates in national parliaments.

Mr. Marlow: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the words summing up his policy as he has just put it would be "willing and active co-operation between nation states"?

Mr. Holland: I find myself in the slightly uncomfortable position of being in agreement with the hon. Member. But, as he formulates it, that is my idea—intergovernmental co-operation. That does not have to be ad hoc and does not have to be uninstitutionalised, because we need institutions if we are to promote an argument concerning new forms of co-operation which at present are not on the Community agenda because they are neither in the Rome treaty, nor in the so-called Single European Act, nor in the provisions which the Paymaster General this year has chosen not to publish and put plainly before us.

Sir Russell Johnston: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that from 1957 right on through the 1960s, the initial foundation of the European Community created a dynamic economic effect? Our problem is that we came in too late.

Mr. Holland: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman asked me that question, although I do not agree with him. There was a dynamic effect for the Federal Republic of Germany, and good for it. The effect was hardly so dynamic for Italy and France, which by 1963 found themselves in major balance of payments crises because of the expectations engendered by higher trade and the increased imports to those countries from West Germany, and the lack of any successful return. The result was deflationary packages in both countries in 1963 and again in the late 1960s. Furthermore, neither of those countries can successfully compete with West Germany.

That brings me to another issue, which some hon. Members raised in the debate on the previous amendment. How can any region of the European economy successfully compete against the most successful region in that economy? When, if there were a single European currency, nation states became regions within the integrated area, how could individual parts of the Community compete effectively with West Germany? It may be said that these are specific questions that should be addressed elsewhere

[Mr. Holland]

at some other time, but they are important in the discussions that we shall have before 1992, to which the budgetary provisions before us refer.

We have—I realise that this is not the turn-on of the year—an invitation to join the GDP reassessment committee of the Commission. Some excellent economists, even some former professional colleagues of mine, would no doubt like to join it, and I think that it is important and worth while. However, a longer list of applicants will be queuing to join the advisory committee to the President of the Commission of the European Community on monetary co-operation or monetary integration, because up until 1992, that will be the prime item on the agenda.

I am concerned about whether the House will be able to address these issues effectively over the period up until 1992. If we approve the Bill, we shall, under article 3 of the decision of the Council on 24 June this year, in Luxembourg, be approving the total amount of own resources assigned to the Community for the period from 1988 to 1992. The percentages of GNP are specific. In 1988, it will not be more than 1·15, in 1989 1·17, in 1990 1·18, in 1991 1·19 and in 1992 1·2. What will be left for the House to determine or decide if we decide on Third Reading that that is what the Community budget will be? If we are publicising in advance that the Community budget will be of that order, what accountability to the House of Commons will there be, and how will it scrutinise the use of those funds, without the proposals that we are making in our new clause?

7.15 pm

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend has posed a question —I do not know whether it is meant to be rhetorical or actual. My understanding is that the figure that he quotes, and hence the importance of the formula and of the committee to which he referred, is a maximum envelope, and that it will be used as a maximum precept when the so-called 1·4 per cent. of VAT will not supply the amount. This supplies the deficit. Surely, the control will be in an annual regulation passed by the Council of Ministers, which may determine a precept less than that amount. An amendment has been tabled to new clause 4 which I hope that he can support. I hope that the Treasury can do so also, because it is, I should have thought, in line with its philosophy. At that point, the House controls what Ministers do in Brussels, which determines whether that limit is kept to, or rather the degree to which it is determined inside the topmost limit, to which my hon. Friend has referred. I apologise for the apparent complexity of this, but it illustrates the extreme complexity of financial matters in relation to the EEC budget.

Mr. Holland: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making those useful points. These are the maximum levels of expenditure beyond which one cannot go. But these are phrases that we have heard before. We have seen them overrun, as we did with the Fontainebleau agreement, which ended up being hardly worth the paper on which it was written. We need to know, if a Council regulation is to be made available to us, in what way it will be put before the House for the assessment and the approval of the House. Otherwise, we shall lose transparency and accountability.

I am not one of those who feel that this country has an unadulterated sovereignty which has been untarnished by any international agreement and would be sullied only by agreement with other member countries in the European Community. There is a strong case for effective joint action at the European level on a range of problems which at the moment the Community is hardly addressing. It has been stuck in the mud of the common agricultural policy and has not been able to address major environmental issues, and it should do so. We should seek a net transfer of funds between regions and sectors of the Community, because the competitive process itself equalises opportunities only in form, and not in reality, whether that is between rich and poor regions or between big and small companies.

I should be glad of a reply from the Postmaster General on this, so that the issue of monetary co-operation—I beg the right hon. Gentleman's pardon. I retract that. I am aware that he does far more than post to hon. Members briefs from the Treasury Bench. He is, of course, the Paymaster General. I should be grateful if the Paymaster General will tell us how the Government expect that the House will be able to address the issues raised by European monetary co-operation.

There may be less terror in this than at first appears. For instance, the proposals for monetary co-operation are not part of the Single European Act, but a committee established by the President of the Commission will report on those matters which directly concern the Treasury in a range of ways. There may be less terror in the sense that, just as the achievement of a common internal market will not be the springboard to a federal Europe, nor need monetary co-operation be some kind of sabre-toothed tiger which is about to shred the nation state. We do not need to react in emotive terms to the proposals that have been made.

The observations made on this by Jacques Delors, as President of the Commission, have been very useful. I wish to mention a couple of them because they refer to a European monetary fund which could involve expenditure either from the allocation before us and the Community fund, or other alternative forms of allocation. When it was put to Mr. Delors in an interview in *Le Monde* on 20 July this year—I summarise rather than give a detailed translation—"Well, Mr. Delors, as President of the Commission, you are presumably in favour of a European currency and a European central bank", he replied, "What do you mean by a European currency? Do you mean a European monetary fund, a European reserve currency, a parallel currency to the national currencies or, as some people think, but which is certainly not for now, the abolition of national currencies and the substitution of a Community currency? Do you mean, in effect, a pragmatic move such as a build-up of the ecu as a reserve currency and for use in other international relations?" Mr. Delors also asked what would be the relation between that and economic union and what would be the institutional implications of advancing towards closer European monetary co-operation up to 1992.

Opposition Members would like to know from the Paymaster General precisely how the Government will approach those matters and how the House will be able to address them. Will we find, as in so many other matters before the House, that an intergovernmental decision is taken at a European Council meeting which, months later, is brought to this Chamber for approval? We appreciate

that Governments have to take decisions internationally, but that should be done on guidelines that have been debated in the House. The House does not wish to be taken by surprise by decisions which have been snatched at the 11th hour and the 59th minute or by stopping the clock, whether in Luxembourg, Strasbourg or Brussels, on such important matters as monetary co-operation or monetary integration.

In that respect, we certainly trust that the Paymaster General will do better next time and that, instead of having apologies for unclear decisions which will not even be published and put before the House, we will have clarity, transparency and a chance for the House to express its view and voice.

Mr. Higgins: The atmosphere in these debates has varied considerably over the years. Some hon. Members are still fundamentally opposed to British membership of the EC and others are perhaps too uncritically in favour of it. Between those two extremes are those of us who take the view that our membership is, on balance, beneficial, but it is important that we should continue to scrutinise the way in which the Community develops.

One of the problems is that some power has undoubtedly been transferred from the House to the EC, in its various manifestations, so it is all the more important that we should continue to ensure that all the ways in which that power is in danger of being transferred perhaps too fast or to too great an extent are scrutinised as well as possible. That requires not only much hard work, but also some stamina, because otherwise there is some danger of a feeling of despair that we go on through a series of ritualistic debates without managing to convince the Government of the importance of their own scrutiny being as great as possible.

The Scrutiny Committee, chaired by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and the Treasury and Civil Service Committee, of which I am Chairman, have spent a great deal of time, and continue to do so, on these matters, as do other Committees of the House, but there is now such a plethora of documentation from the EC that we must seriously consider whether the facilities that we have are adequate to deal with that. Much of it may be settled in the course of time and the flood of paperwork, directives and regulations will diminish, but, for the immediate future, we should be on our guard against the sheer weight of documentation and action, particularly leading up to 1992. Given the size of the Civil Service at the centre, it is seriously open to question whether there are the resources to ensure that many absurditites do not creep through simply because we do not have the time and resources to deal with them at the speed with which they are being put forward.

This evening, we come again to what is undoubtedly a tremendously important piece of legislation reminiscent of various occasions in the past when we have increased the Community's resources in exchange for various undertakings about effective budgetary discipline, more effective budgetary discipline and legally enforceable budgetary discipline. As we are in Committee, I wish to put some specific questions to my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General who, as always, is very assiduous and knowledgeable about these matters.

I wish to take up first a point which arose earlier with regard to the provision of overdraft agreements and overdraft facilities to the Community. A number of hon. Members were worried because the Minister said that the overdraft arrangements would be effectively obligatory for the United Kingdom, provided they did not exceed the budget for that year, but he did not make it clear whether that was the situation. Many of us believe that the provisions in this piece of legislation, which extend the limits, would be necessary to justify the budgetary arrangements. If that is so, it is outside the legal framework to which he referred, so I hope that he will begin by clarifying that point.

It is in many ways unfortunate that new sub-paragraphs (e) and (f) do not appear as separate clauses because two very different principles are undoubtedly involved in them—the increase in own resources and the intergovernmental agreement. We debated the intergovernmental agreement at some length earlier, but I want to refer my right hon. Friend to one or two points.

I should stress that the agreement states that it will be an amount

"to balance the 1988 budget an amount which will not exceed"

a certain sum to which I shall refer in a moment. It has been suggested that the need for the agreement has passed because of changes in the financial situation but, none the less, the Government will now go along with it and the money will be spent on something else simply because the budget will be unbalanced again, although we have the sums available to balance it, if they are needed.

I am not sure whether I expressed that clearly. Let me try again. We originally had an amount which was to be provided by the member states to balance the 1988 budget. It is suggested that, since that negotiation, there have been further changes in the revenue and expenditure of the Community so that the full amount was not needed, but, none the less, it appears that we are still going to provide up to that full amount. Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General will clarify the position.

7.30 pm

We are told that the amount in question will not exceed 7,113,737,522 ecu, and I should like to know how that remarkably unround sum was arrived at. I should have thought that a reasonably round sum would have been picked. What was the basis of the calculation? How was it changed by events that took place after 11 and 13 February? The situation cannot have remained the same, so it is rather extraordinary that the amount needed is still 7,113,737,522 ecu.

I was rather worried when my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General said earlier that that sum is the total due. As I understand it, it is not. That is the maximum sum that we may eventually be called upon to pay. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will explain what is now needed.

We know that basically the provisions in the Bill arise from profligate expenditure on agriculture. The United States has suffered a most appalling drought this summer and a great fall in the amount of grain harvested. Surely this is an ideal opportunity to dispose of the grain mountain and to recoup some of the huge sums that we have been spending on storage. This is a factor that should have affected the sum to which I have already referred. Is that the position or it is not?

Much of the provision in the IGA is concerned with a special arrangement for agriculture. The EAGGF guarantee section is affected by the appreciation of the dollar, and I ask a question which I have asked before and

[Mr. Higgins]

to which I have never received an answer. Why should farming be the only industry that is protected against changes in the exchange rate? This protection is not offered to any other sector. Why should we be authorising the Government to go along with an EC proposal that does that? I do not understand why farming should be protected from exchange rate fluctuations when we do not find it necessary to provide that protection anywhere else.

Is the agreement legally binding? There have been many discussions on the issue and we all know that the Fontainebleau agreement, as the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service observed at the time, will not work. I think that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has recognised now that the agreement was a mistake. That being so, is the present agreement legally enforceable? We are incorporating in the Bill the decisions of 7 and 20 May and 24 June, and the IGA, but are we incorporating anything that is legally binding?

In an earlier debate my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General said, in effect, "Don't worry. That is all incorporated in various EC regulations, directives and so on, which will be legally binding." But we know that a huge part of the EC budget is not covered. If the agreement is legally enforceable, by whom is it enforceable? We know from our debates on the Court of Auditors that many operations have been carried out within the EC which the court has said were illegal.

We have gone along with certain VAT adjustments, for example, because we have been bound by the relevant provisions. We have considered ourselves obliged to do so because the European Court has said that we must, but the Government have not pursued the legal sanctions that appear to be available from the reports of the Court of Auditors. If the arrangements are to some extent legally enforceable, by whom are they enforceable? Given the history of Court of Auditors? reports, can we rely on the Government to enforce them?

Mr. Spearing: As the right hon. Gentleman has said, the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service drew attention to the flaw in the Fontainebleau agreement. The Scrutiny Committee, which I have the honour to chair, said that the provisions that we are considering are not treaty-binding. What is the stage that we have reached with the current proposals? It is true that the stabiliser mechanism is legally enforceable, perhaps by the Court of the European Communities, in accordance with the formula laid down therein.

Even if the provisions are enforced, will spending on agriculture be reduced to a level that is beneath the ceilings that are shown in the decision? That is the play on words, and the Government and the Community have not answered the question. Apart from legal enforceability, will expenditure be reduced? Will it be reduced to a sum smaller than that which appears in the documentation? The answer that I have so far is that we do not know.

Mr. Higgins: We are now told that expenditure on agriculture should be steady instead of being a falling proportion of gross national product. I take the hon. Gentleman's point.

It is understandable that Ministers are under great pressure when they engage in negotiations within the EEC. They are frequently heavily outnumbered and they often have to return to the charge time and time again. They eventually do a deal, and they convince themselves that it is the best one that is available, but that may not be so. It may be that they should have continued to say no for longer. In my view, that is the position with the Bill.

It is curious that the agreement has cleared the way for other discussions on 1992 and the other ways in which the Community is to develop. This has raised a number of difficult questions. We were told on Second Reading that the legally binding agreement would apply to obligatory expenditure. We were told also that it could not apply to non-obligatory expenditure, because that would infringe the rights of various Community institutions, including especially the European Parliament.

It is reasonable to ask whether the Bill implements the amendment of the treaties, and my understanding is that it does. It would seem that it is not honest to argue that we could not get a legally binding agreement on non-obligatory expenditure because that would require amendment of the treaties. We need to be clear why it is that we did not go for what we were originally told we would get, which was a legally binding agreement which covered all Community expenditure. We are told that that is no longer obtainable.

I hope that we shall hear satisfactory answers to these questions from my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General. We recognise the basic problems that he faces in all the negotiations and the assiduous way in which he has sought to get the best deal that he can. The scrutiny of these matters is ever more important and I hope that we can continue effectively to scrutinise in this place.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Popular): The new fourth resource is to be based on shares in the gross national product, and the method of measuring GNP is likely to be on traditional lines that do not take into account the vast input of work outside the formal monetary economy that is to be found in every country. The traditional system of national income accounting measures GNP as the sum of income that is created by individuals in a particular country. It is largely a measure of activities that result in monetary transactions. That does not take account of unpaid work that is undertaken by women. Relevant examples are home-makers, mothers bearing and bringing up children, women caring for sick and/or aged people and farmers' wives in rural areas. The examples are manifold. All this work would be included in aggregated national accounts if it were performed by paid workers. Thus the income received by paid nannies, au pairs, child minders and agricultural workers would be included as part of the national income.

The United Nations has done a great deal of work to show how inappropriate are such distinctions in measuring GNP. In 1980 at a conference in Nairobi at the end of the United Nations decade for women, a United Nations document "Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000" was passed by representatives of the assembled Governments and was ratified later that year by the United Nations General Council in New York.

Paragraph 120 of the UN document reads:

"The remunerated and, in particular, the unremunerated contributions of women to all aspects and sectors of development should be recognised, and appropriate efforts should be made to measure and reflect these contributions in national accounts and economic statistics and in the gross

national product. Concrete steps should be taken to quantify the unremunerated contribution of women to agriculture, food production, reproduction and household activities."

In Germany there are many small agricultural holdings whose labour force is confined to unpaid family workers, most of whom are women. Considerable efforts are being made there to quantify their economic contributions. In rural Britain that unremunerated contribution includes tending the household plot, and caring for domestic animals. Unpaid women are small-scale growers, traders, vendors and sellers of handicrafts. They also keep the books. All that time-consuming, back-breaking work is left out of the GNP and thus cannot be covered by economic planning, programming and social welfare services. Women are the forgotten producers and providers of services.

When making comparisons for the purposes of GNP, the unpaid work of women in urban areas has an equally important bearing. Attempts are being made in Holland to assess the effects of including housework and other unwaged activities in the various economic aggregates. That is possible because a comprehensive family budget and time-use survey is carried out in Holland. The United Kingdom has a family expenditure survey, which considers income and expenditure, but does not consider time usage, and no attempt is made to quantify unpaid activities. Women's unpaid work is not counted, but it is certainly counted upon. The Government's initiatives to de-institutionalise health and welfare services and subsequent cuts in paid employment have increased the unwaged work load enormously.

Jacques Delors will chair a committee which will attempt to work out a uniform formula for calculating GNP. The committee should take steps to quantify and count the work of women in GNP, and that can be achieved on a European basis within the Community. It is also important that the United Kingdom Government initiate research into evaluating women's work. Only when the unpaid work of women is included will we see what is really happening in the economy in the United Kingdom and in Europe and make the proper assessment of GNP and the changes necessary to pursue justice for women.

Mr. Marlow: In deference to a long-dead relative of mine who was Archbishop of Canterbury once, and for no other reason, I would like to start with a text if that is all right. The schedule which the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) wishes to add to the Bill entitled:

"Decision of the Council of the European Communities on the System of the Communities' Own Resources"

which was agreed at Luxembourg on 24 June this year states:

"Whereas the resources available within the limit of 1·4 per cent. are no longer sufficient to cover the estimates of Community expenditure; "

There are all sorts of whereases and whereats before the thing starts. The decision is based on the evidence that the 1·4 per cent. limit is no longer enough. That is not the case. That is history. That is water under the bridge. As I am sure all hon. Members will be pleased to hear, we have had a European success. Either through luck or judgment the Community is now awash with funds. It is solvent. It has got the money. It is not short of cash any more.

The Community is not now about the last penny or about cash. If I can share common ground with the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland)—I am sorry he is not in the Chamber at the moment—the Community is now about willing and active co-operation between independent sovereign states. It is not about cash any more. It is not about filthy lucre. The clause that we are debating at the moment is purely about money.

7.45 pm

The pre-Bruges pre-solvency clause seeks to increase the resources available to the Community by £1 for every £4 that is available at the moment. It is not necessary. They do not need it. It also seeks in its second part to provide a loan—an intergovernmental agreement I think is the code word for it—for a debt that does not exist. We are coughing up cash before it is necessary. We are making commitments before we need to.

In the previous debate we had a long discussion about financial discipline. I appreciate that we are all desperately concerned about financial discipline in the Community. We have not got it right yet. When the Bill was brought before the House the new mechanism for dealing with financial disciplines had not been decided. Apparently it has been decided now. Sadly, it is not in the Bill. It has been decided.

Mr. Brooke: I want simply to clarify what my hon. Friend has said because I do not want either of us to mislead the House. When the Council agreed the new own resources decision on 24 June, the various stabilisers—the legal instruments to which I referred in my exchange with my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins)—had all been concluded. When the Council met on 24 June, it was with the full package in being. The full package necessarily was not in being in Brussels in February.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. That is very helpful. However, we have had packages before and they have not worked. We now have a new package and hopefully that new package is going to be effective and successful where others have not been so, but we do not know. We cannot take it on trust.

There was a time, when this Bill was first put forward, when it was essential to the Community or the Community felt that it was essential, that this agreement was reached and that the Bill was on the statute book. It is not essential now. As it is no longer essential, why do we not wait and see how the financial discipline works before we assent to the Bill and make it an Act of Parliament?

We all understand the Government's position. They go to negotiate, come to agreement and have to use their best endeavours to achieve what they first set out to achieve even though the circumstances might well have changed. It is therefore proper that the Government put this measure before the Committee. It is unimaginable that they would not because they are expected to by their Community partners. They cannot avoid it.

Opposition Members may say that the Government could have done better. I am a modest man and I do not believe that I could have done better. I do not believe that my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), who is a great expert on this subject, could have done any better. I am sure that in various ways there are many modest people on the Opposition Benches and I am certain that they would not have done any better. The Luxembourg agreement in the Bill is probably the best that any Government could have got at the time. Having got that agreement, the Government must bring it forward. They are bound to bring it forward.

[Mr. Marlow]

That is the Government, but we are not the Government—we are Parliament. We are all members of political parties and we all accept that unless we are members of political parties, we probably would not get elected to this place. However, we have been elected to this place and we are all individual members of Parliament. The sovereignty of Parliament is entrusted to us. Although the Government have got to come forward with this Bill, it does not mean to say that we have to accept it and agree to it. It may well be that we should do the other thing. It may well be that in the interests of parliamentary control and democracy we should oppose it, and it may also be in the interests of the United Kingdom that we should oppose this clause.

What are we being asked to do? We are being asked first to provide a chunk of cash, an RGA, which is no longer necessary. We are being asked, secondly, to surrender control for ever—in perpetuity—of an additional amount of money to the Community's resources: an amount of money which, mercifully and thankfully, the Community does not need. We are going to surrender that money to Community institutions—when, as my right hon. Friend has said, there is no proper democratic control over those Community institutions.

Some people will say, "Give it to the European Parliament," or "Give it to the Commission." There are problems in that because, as we all know, whatever their good intentions may be, the European Parliament's and the European Commission's overall objective, whatever else they are doing, is a federal united states of Europe. So every decision that they are going to make is not on the basis of whether that money is being spent wisely or correctly but whether that money is leading towards a European federation, so they cannot be trusted. So we are handing over vast sums of the taxpayers' money; I have heard £1·5 billion being mentioned. We are quite rightly concerned at the moment about the balance of trade deficit. That £1,500 million is a very significant figure of cash. That is not trade, that is cash. We are not getting goods for it, and it is going out of this country if we agree to this clause.

I would like my right hon. Friend the Minister, when he makes his reply, to answer a group of questions. What would happen if we did not agree to the clause? What would happen if the Bill fell? The money is not needed now. What would happen if the Bill were to be delayed? The Government can always bring it back at a later date. The Government are in a very powerful position. They have a massive majority. Those on the Government Benches who oppose the Bill realise that there are not enough of them to change the Government's mind. What would happen if we threw the clause out and threw the Bill out?

I understand that a few colleagues have personal ambitions. They have had a little piece of paper from the Whips' Office saying that they are expected to support the Government this evening. They are concerned that if they do not do that, their futures, their careers, might in some respects be jeopardised. I am pleased to see that we have a Whip on the Front Bench at the moment. A Whip knows, as we all know, that, as I said before, we are in a new situation. The Community does not need the cash. The Prime Minister has made a stirring speech about active and willing co-operation between independent sovereign states. It does not say anything about cash. Active and willing co-operation does not need cash. We do not need the Bill any more.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and the Border (Mr. Maclean) will tell the Committee whether any of my other hon. Friends' careers will be put in jeopardy this evening if they oppose this measure. I am sure that he will go to the Dispatch Box now and tell my hon. Friends. No, obviously. It is line with the Bruges speech. It is line with the Prime Minister's policy. Any of my hon. Friends who want to vote against this clause this evening are perfectly entitled to do so. Their careers will not be in hock at all. After Bruges, I would have thought that their careers might be even more secure than they have been.

I put to my right hon. Friend the Minister the subject of European financial control. Why do we not wait until we have just a little bit of evidence that this new formula for financial control is actually successful and operates properly? Why do we not wait? They do not need the money now. When we have that evidence—if we have that evidence—and if the Government then bring this Bill before the House, I promise my right hon. Friend—and I expect that my hon. Friends will promise him—that we shall do everything that we can to pass the Bill just as quickly as he wishes it to be done. Why do we not wait for that evidence? We do not need the Bill today, do we?

Another question that I wish to ask my right hon. Friend concerns Britain within Europe. Does it matter if we do not pass the Bill now? We are good Europeans. We believe, as the Prime Minister believes, and as the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) believes, in willing and active co-operation between independent sovereign states. We do not need the Bill to produce that. What is the implication for Britain in Europe? I would have thought that it would be totally positive, totally in line with what the Prime Minister is trying to secure at the moment.

A final question for my right hon. Friend. If we do not pass the Bill today, what will be the effect on the United Kingdom taxpayer? We pay for the Community in two ways. We pay a net contribution, which is something for which we get nothing. It is our membership fee. If we did not pass the Bill, what would happen to our membership fee? Would it be higher or lower than it is under the existing pre-Bill situation? Also, we have a gross contribution. I like to look upon gross contribution as what we pay for that clutch of policies provided by the Community.

We are suggesting that we should increase our payment for that clutch of policies by one quarter. We are not going to increase Health Service expenditure, education expenditure, child benefit or defence expenditure by one quarter. But for the same clutch of policies within the Community, we are being asked to increase it by one quarter. If we do not agree to the Bill, what will be the effect on the gross contribution that our taxpayers would have to make for what they get from the Community? I feel that it would be significantly lower. I would like to hear the figures from my right hon. Friend.

This is a parliamentary matter. Governments come and Governments go. I believe that this Government will be around for a long time. But it is a parliamentary matter, and it is to do with the sovereignty of this House; to do with the control over taxpayers' money that this House still has at the moment. I hope and believe that many right

hon. and hon. Members will oppose this new clause, so that we can retain a vestige of parliamentary dignity and control over affairs within the Community.

Sir Russell Johnston: I do not agree with the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) in his espousal of the mythical concept of sovereignty. Certainly his idea of what one should do with sovereignty and my idea of what one should do with it are very different and do not easily meld.

It is worth doing something that has not yet been done, which is to read into the record paragraph 7 of the explanatory and financial memoradum of the Bill, which in only five lines sums up what the Bill is about. It states:

"Clause 1 provides that both the new Own Resources Decision and the IGA shall be added to the list of Community treaties in section 1(2) of the European Communities Act 1972, allowing payments under both instruments to be charged directly on the Consolidated Fund under section 2(3) of that Act."

That is very simple and straightforward, and very necessary. It should not have produced all the sound and fury that we have heard.

When we debated the Bill's Second Reading on 11 July, I said:

"I welcome the Bill. It represents an important step forward in the slow but steady integration of the European Community and the development of stable financial arrangements within it. It is very much in line with the views that I and other of my right hon. and hon. Friends have expressed from this Bench over many years."

Later, I said:

"Looking back to the successful Brussels summit in February, the fact is that, when faced with the choice of either jeopardising the achievement of the common internal market or agreeing to a modest and sensible increase in the Community's own resources, the Prime Minister chose the latter."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 62.]

I see no reason to alter anything that I said then.

I refer now to three questions that are integral to the Bill. First, there is the Bill's context. In particular, there is the context of the Brussels Council, which for the first time —and this as has already been said by several right hon. and hon. Members, did not take place at Fontainebleau —set an absolute limit to agricultural expenditure for 1988 of 27·5 billion ecu; in other words, £18,425 million. It provided that thereafter it should grow at no more than 74 per cent. of the rate of growth of Community GNP. That represented a considerable step forward in achieving a degree of budgetary discipline, particularly in this uncontrolled section, and the Government deserve some credit for what they did.

Secondly, the sums agreed in the IGA were fixed in proportion to GNP. That is an argument that I have made from this Bench for most of the past decade, and therefore it is something we much welcome. As everybody keeps going on about how much the British give, it is worth noting, because no one else has yet done so, what level of contributions are being required from each country according to that agreement. The largest contributor is the Federal Republic of Germany, with a contribution of £1,163 million. The second largest is France, with £967 million. The third largest is not the United Kingdom but Italy, with £923 million. The fourth largest is the United Kingdom with £741 million. Judging by how some hon. Members talk, it might be thought that we were carrying the whole weight on our shoulders, like Atlas or Colossus or whoever it was.

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Thirdly, the decision to double structural funds is enormously encouraging. What is most regrettable is the way in which the United Kindom, which should have been in the van in putting this argument, was for most of the time arguing against it. In my view it is an essential element of success within the Community. The trouble is that in the United Kingdom the whole argument about regional funds, and to some degree the social fund, has become mixed up with the Government's ideas of the minimalist state. If there is to be a regional fund, it must operate through some form of Government agency. Yet there are contradictions all the time. At the end of last week, the Government increased notably the funds available to the Scottish Development Agency, a Government agency engaged in regional development. There is not a great deal of consistency.

While we are on the subject of consistency it is perhaps appropriate to refer briefly to Bruges, and the seeming lack of consistency between the Prime Minister's position as set out there and the consequences of the Single European Act —to which she has already acceded and encouraged the House to accede—not to mention the very enlightened British paper presented at Fontainebleau. That paper has seldom seen the air, although I believe that it moulders in the Library. I recommend it to any hon. Member as a good sound indication of the kind of policy that the United Kingdom should follow.

Canute has always been given a bad press. It is forgotten that he did not try to stem the tide, but demonstrated to his sycophantic courtiers that he could not do so. The Prime Minister seems determined to prove Canute wrong, but it is she, I think, who is wrong. She is setting herself against the inevitable movement of history, and against the best interests of the people of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Sir Russell Johnston: I am always only too delighted to give way to the hon. Gentleman, whose brief interventions I welcome greatly.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy and dignity in giving way to me.

The hon. Gentleman is talking about the inevitable movement of history. Would he just look a little further into Europe—he is a keen European—at east Europe, and see what is happening in the Soviet Union, where all the central control is now being discovered to be a mistake and more power is being disseminated to the nations?

Sir Russell Johnston: Some of the remarks that I have to make are directed very much towards the hon. Gentleman's question. I agree with him, but what he has said does not contradict what I have to say.

The word "federal" has bounced lazily around the Chamber during our debate. For some—I suspect that they include the hon. Gentleman—it is an abhorrent concept, a nasty word, part of the bad vocabulary of politics that the hon. Gentleman does not like. I have never understood why that is, but then I must admit that the hon. Gentleman has said many things from time to time that I have found it difficult to understand. That may be a shortcoming on my part.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) asked how the weaker parts of the Community could defend

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their economic interests. How, for that matter, can that be done within the existing nation state? There are only two answers to the question that we know of, and it is a very good question. The fear felt by everyone—not only those who are in favour of the European Community, but certainly those who are concerned about its centrifugal forces—is that everything will be drawn into some great centre from the Ruhr to Paris to London. What are the answers?

As I have said, there are two answers. First, there is a federal structure that acts against centralisation by creating a number of alternative power centres. Why does the Federal Republic of Germany not suffer as Britain and France do from that great overweening centre? An important reason is the way in which the länder structure spreads power and influence throughout the country.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Sir Russell Johnston: If the hon. Gentleman will permit me to make my second point, I shall then give way. Indeed, this may relate to what the hon. Gentleman is about to ask.

The second answer is an effective regional policy pursued from the centre—whether that centre be London, as in the case of the United Kingdom, or Brussels, as in the case of the European Community.

Mr. Cash: First, does the hon. Gentleman agree—as I am sure that he will—that the most important question that we must ask about a federal structure is, which powers are being spread and diversified? Secondly, there is no doubt that the länder have become increasingly concerned about what has been going on in their own country. Furthermore, they have only recently had a first-rate constitutional crisis over the very question of the relations between the federal Government on the one hand, the länder on the other, and the European Community. The question has arisen: what is a member state in that context? That gave rise to some further serious questions that have just been before the federal court. I think that the hon. Gentleman may have got his facts wrong.

Sir Russell Johnston: I do not see how the hon. Gentleman can end up by saying that I have got my facts wrong.

Mr. Cash: He has got his law wrong, then.

Sir Russell Johnston: Or my law, for that matter. I entirely agree that in the examination of any federal structure the important question is which powers should be divided and which should be entrenched. But it is equally true that within federal systems there is a perpetual tension between the central authority and the state—whether we are talking about the Bundesrat to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, or Canada or the United States. There is always tension; there are always periodic crises. There is nothing wrong with crises in politics: they are part of the tension of argument and the pull towards the centre and away. But at least the federal system has a structure that acts as an effective barrier preventing the centre from pulling everything in. In our case that does not really exist.

Mr. Cash: It does exist, in the precise form of the debate that we are now conducting. The very fact that that centrifugal force is to be found in the various national parliaments maintaining the balance of power between themselves and the centre is at the heart of our debate.

Sir Russell Johnston: I do not think that that is very effective. I think that the reality outside the Chamber—which, as in almost all European debates, is sadly not overpopulated—is that things go on and it does not make all that much difference. I do not say that with any great pleasure, but I think it is a fact. I am jumping ahead of myself a bit, but let me say that I would much rather see the existence of effective, entrenched power centres in Scotland, Wales and the regions of England than trust this place to protect them against strong, centralising government.

Let me conclude by making two summing-up points. First, there is no doubt that the European Community has a wide agenda—social, environmental and economic—in which only supranational action, democratically supervised, can be effective and can allow transparent decision making. The hon. Member for Vauxhall referred to the Cecchini report, which again I recommend to hon. Members, although it is a bit dense—I use the word in its proper sense. The argumentation is heavy and closely interrelated.

As the hon. Member for Vauxhall said, the report forecasts a considerable dynamic increase in output following completion of the internal market. Whether or not one can be sure of that, of course, is another big question, but he is right to say it. When I interrupted him and said that there was something to be said for the original European Common Market from 1957 until the 1960s, he said that that was all very well. The Germans certainly benefited, but not so much the republic of France or the republic of Italy. They had to devalue and they did not do as well.

That is one of the things that in these days of artificial sensitivities we sometimes hesitate to say. Certain people are especially good at working. The Germans happen to be people who are especially good at working. They are assiduous, hard-working, competent and in many respects innovative. Perhaps, too, they are more disciplined and organised than some other countries have tended historically to be, if I may put that as gently as I can. However, the hon. Member for Vauxhall did not go on to say that neither France nor Italy made any attempt to leave the European Community because of that experience. On the contrary, they made the necessary adjustments that they felt were needed, and they derived benefit.

Before I leave that point, may I say in brackets—I do not think I have had the opportunity to say this to the House—that I believe that Lord Cockfield was badly treated in being sacked from his position for showing what was no more than diligence, activity and energy. That was unfortunate.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the hon. Gentleman equally agree that the work undertaken during the past four years by Stanley Clinton Davis as the other Commissioner was also not properly recognised in the summary way that he, too, was kicked out? Notwithstanding the fact that he has been replaced by one of my excellent colleagues, being kicked out in a such a way was certainly no recognition of the excellent work that he has done for the past four years.

Sir Russell Johnston: Certainly, Stanley Clinton Davis developed considerably towards the latter end of his period—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Foulkes: Most ungenerous.

Sir Russell Johnston: On the contrary, I think that was very generous.

In addition, I believe that our former Member, Bruce Millan, will be a very good Commissioner and is a good choice.

To return to the question of supranational action, it is not just Jacques Delors and Helmut Kohl and the Italian Prime Minister who talk about the need for a social Europe: it is practically everybody bar our own Prime Minister. The idea that somehow we can achieve a politically acceptable internal market without considerable social and political protection is a mirage. I do not understand why the Prime Minister should continue to propagate it.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman is speaking on an important point, but does he not agree that whatever agreement there may be for what he calls the social dimension, or whatever its merits, it was not part of the Cockfield package? For the hon. Gentleman and his party or anyone else now to suggest that without this dimension there is something wrong is surely inconsistent with an acceptance of the Cockfield package without it. Will the hon. Gentleman comment on that?

Sir Russell Johnston: I never accepted the Cockfield package without the social dimension. We have always said that, for the Cockfield package to be politically acceptable, it requires to have the social element of which I have just spoken. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to dictate these matters—any more than the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is. I have some confidence—the record thus far supports my confidence—that the other members of the European Community will drag our country slowly, reluctantly but inevitably in a social direction, for which I will be grateful.

I return to the question of federalism, because various Members asked what federalism was. I suppose that it is essentially a question of fitting function to geography and community. It is not something to fear, but to welcome and to utilise. Again, there is contradiction in the Prime Minister's position. If one talks to her about devolution of power to Scotland, Wales or the regions of England, she is against it. She does not want power to go down. If one talks to her about her power going up, she does not want it to go up either.

Mr. Foulkes: She wants it all for herself.

Sir Russell Johnston: That rests on the assumption that the status quo is perfect and is the most appropriate structure of government. I do not believe that at all. I believe that it will change because function, power and community are mismatched. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) was quite right to say that what is essential is that, at the same time as we accept that there are certain economic, environmental and political activities that we can only undertake effectively in conjunction with others, we must realise that that is not an argument for centralisation at all, but an argument for effective entrenched devolution—which means federalism.

I believe that the Bill is a small step on the way. It shows the Government's confidence in the future of the European Community, and in that regard I welcome it.

8.15 pm

Mr. Curry: I believe that the theme that has underscored this debate has been that of sovereignty. Quite rightly, it has been more a theme of parliamentary sovereignty than national sovereignty. It is legitimate to draw a distinction between those two. I have always held the view that Governments in the Community have a sort of compact in which they pursue goals which they determine to be in the national interest in return for the pooling of some of their sovereign responsibilities.

In the Community we have a central authority or a Community authority which is facing a fragmented parliamentary authority. I have spent nearly 10 years in the European Parliament and I must say honestly to all my colleagues that I do not think that either Parliament is effectively scrutinising Community legislation. The European Parliament lives to some extent on the aspiration that it may be able to, and occasionally in the House there is some recollection of what it wishes it were able to do. I believe that between the two there is a deficit in sovereignty.

There is a deficit especially in that great mass of secondary and delegated legislation which takes place in Brussels. There is a misunderstanding of what Eurocrats are. The Eurocrats are likely to be national civil servants on a day trip from Gatwick, because they are the people who pack many of the committees that deal with the secondary legislation. I suspect that the problem can only be solved if we recognise that it must be solved on the basis of burden-sharing between that Parliament elected to serve the Community purpose in the sense of monitoring Community institutions and that Parliament that is there to monitor the effects of national government.

When the House gives the impression that the European Parliament is part of a problem and not part of a solution, it does itself a disservice. I believe that there is room for both institutions. They are both indispensible if what we are really concerned about is not exclusively the future of any particular institution but the future of the interest, and that interest is the notion of democratic accountability.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) talked of the success of the Danish Parliament. I agree with the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) that the nature of the democratic process in Denmark has an important influence, because it has a system of proportional representation which is so tortuous that it has the effect of denying almost any Government a stable majority for any issue—not just for a European issue. If we in the House were to vote for proportional representation of that sort of complexity, we could no doubt deny our own executives that sort of authority. In my conversations here I do not detect that readiness to embark upon that particular venture.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), who informed me that he would be leaving, asked what would happen if we did not vote for this measure. The answer is that we would see the independent sovereign states coming into action. What would happen if five independent sovereign states—for example, the

[Mr. Curry]

French, the Germans, the Dutch, the Belgiums and somebody else—said that they would get together and create a central bank and a common currency, and do those things which they think are necessary? We forget that our membership can be a constraint upon as well as a spur to the action of others. If a central bank were formed by other countries, our politics would necessarily be governed by a need to respond to what those countries were doing.

The essential choice is not between membership and non-membership. It is not a choice between an autonomous line of action and one that is purely co-operative. It is a choice between participating in collective decision-making or necessarily finding that our major decisions are dictated by the fact that collective decisions have already been taken. For that reason it is important to recognise that the measure before us is not perfect. The guarantees cannot be absolute, but in terms of improvements and increments it is significantly better than what has gone before.

The history of our membership of the Community has been that we have galloped to catch up. Now we have reached the stage when we can look the other member states in the face and state that we have significantly recovered and improved upon the deficits that were once part of so much of our national life. Now we can participate fully and freely on the same terms as other member states.

Until I heard the previous few speeches, I felt that the debate had been somewhat unreal. Earlier the debate gave the impression that there is still unremitting hostility to our membership of the Community. I do not believe that is the case. I believe that there were significant changes in the summer; the most significant being the change of heart of the Labour party and of the national executive of the trade unions. I believe that those are positive developments. The debate is no longer about whether we should be members of the Community but about what should happen in Europe. When a certain amount of decision-making takes place under the umbrella of the Community it means that the national debate is transposed to the Community level.

It is right that we should argue about the role of the so-called social Europe. I must point out to the Treasury Bench and to the Opposition Front Bench that they have acted as by far the most successful publicity agents for which Jacques Delors could have hoped. Within the political spectrum described by Ministers and Opposition spokesmen, Mr. Delors has been painted in demonic terms. He is only chairman of a large county council and it is wrong to attribute to him all sorts of mystical powers.

It is right that we should discuss whether we want a social Europe and whether we want a Europe that is based on deregulation. It is right to discuss whether Europe should be run on Socialist or free enterprise principles. Europe has characteristics of both systems. The social and regional funds are interventionist and they will remain because of the political bargain at the heart of the Community between the northern states and the southern, less developed states, which perceive their means of advance through such funds and mechanisms. Those states stand to gain most from a deregulated system.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend is conducting himself in the sweetest and most reasonable manner. He is saying some very important and interesting things, not least of which is that Mr. Delors is only in charge of something akin to a county council. I take grave issue with my hon. Friend about that. He should reflect carefully on what he has said because the powers of the Commission are so far removed from the powers of a county council that it is not true.

Mr. Curry: The Commission is not an absolute Government. It is not a Government in exile. Of course it has certain charactieristics of government, but the essential power in the Community at present is the Council of Ministers and the Governments. When a decision is reached in Cabinet it is one step removed from Parliament; when a decision is taken in the Council of Ministers it is two steps removed from Parliament.

The Commission operates largely through management committees and a whole host of sub-structures which are part of the decision-making process. The Governments are significantly represented. It is true that Mr. Delors has delegated responsibility and that, in certain areas, the Commission acts as the executive, for example regarding competition policy. The Commission has intervened of late to use that power and it can also intervene on matters of state aids. I do not deny that my description of the Commission as a county council was exaggerated but it was only exaggerated to draw a contrast with what I believe to be an equal exaggeration regarding the excessive supranational functions of the Commission.

The move towards 1992 is not part of the Brussels bargain, but the single European market would not have been possible if the stage had not been set there. I believe that the Community is profoundly deregulatory in character. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has argued that he dislikes the Community because he believes that Socialism cannot be established within it. In a sense he is right, because the treaty of Rome is framed in liberal market economy manner and the move to 1992 is a thrust in that direction. There is no reason why a social democratic Europe—a Scandinavian Europe—is not feasible. That is what the nature of the debate should be.

Mr. Spearing: I wholeheartedly agree that the treaty of Rome, as drafted, is a laissez-faire document and for that reason is not neutral as between nation states.

Whatever the hon. Gentleman may say, does he not agree that the Commission is extremely important because under the treaty of Rome it originates the legislation that it puts before the Council of Ministers? The Council of Ministers cannot usually act other than on a proposal from the Commission. Therefore the power of the Commission and in particular the power of the President, currently Mr. Delors, is great. The Commission and the President are the guardians of the gate through which legislation can emerge. In Britain we would not agree for one moment that civil servants could suggest the legislation to place before Ministers—indeed, Members of Parliament can do that. I believe that the role of the Commission and its President is more crucial than the hon. Gentleman has tried to suggest.

Mr. Curry: The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is correct that the Commission sets the agenda in the sense that it has the power to initiate legislation, but the Commission cannot pass that legislation into law. There are many stories within the Community of legislation that was proposed decades ago which has not yet got through the decision-making process and has not

reached the Council of Ministers for a final decision. Neither in this House nor in the European Parliament can Community legislation be originated.

Certainly the Commission has the potential to become a more powerful institution but at the moment the balance of power is effectively with the European Governments within the Community acting through the mechanism of the Council of Ministers. The hon. Member for Newham, South demonstrates how important it is that we should get some democratic accountability. That can be done only if it is seen as part of a burden-sharing operation between those people defending democratic interests. Such burden-sharing should not be seen as a competition between the various institutions.

The rendezvous in 1992 is deregulatory, as is the thrust of Brussels policy.

Dame Elaine Kellett Bowman (Lancaster): Does my hon. Friend believe that Mr. Delors' remarks are deregulatory in character?

Mr. Curry: If Mr. Delors had not pushed hard for the package that emerged at Brussels, it would have been much mofe difficult to get that package through. Mr. Delors was a Socialist Minister in a French Government and he would like to see a greater parallel between the Community social policy and the liberation of the market place. I believe that we shall realise the gains of 1992, in so far as we shall manage to emphasise deregulation. We shall not find ourselves trapped in precisely the same web of entangled social regulation that we have tried to escape on a national level.

Too much has been made of the social programme. When one studies it, it is a lukewarm manifesto. The social programme is part of the debate that is now taking place in Europe regarding the policies for which the Community should aim.

Reference has been made to the Community budget and the savings to be realised. It is true that this year there are limited savings largely because of external events. The whole Community budget depends largely on external events—the level of the dollar, the state of the world harvest, world crises and the Chicago board of trade. It will depend increasingly on whether Mr. Gorbachev manages to reform Soviet agriculture successfully. We have a vast vested interest in his failure because if he succeeds, the last major world market will disappear.

8.30 pm

We must also remember that in agriculture the debate has been transposed a step beyond the European level. It is now in GATT. Agriculture will now be subject to constraints imposed by the need for orderly world trading, just as until now its reforms have been the result of budgetary exigencies in the EC.

The Community has a record of poor housekeeping, but the Commission, with all its sins, cannot be accused of responsibility for the American drought, the problems of the Soviet and Chinese harvests or the level of the dollar. Given the pattern of Community policies and the fact that a great deal depends on member states being willing to put regulations into place and to implement policies, there is a necessary imprecision in Community budget-making. We must try to limit it, but if we do not recognise that, we do an injustice to our case.

Any key based on GNP is bound to be better for the United Kingdom than a key based on VAT, especially when we have the 55 per cent. cut-off. The rebate which the United Kingdom has obtained and which we were told years ago we would never get because it was unpopular is enhanced under this document, unlike under the previous system, and it is taken outside the budget, which makes great good sense.

The present mechanisms have a much better chance of being effective than what has gone before. Until now, where they have been implemented, there has been a significant impact on prices. Those who doubt that need only accept my open invitation to come to my constituency, which consists of almost every possible form of agriculture, and listen to what the farmers are saying. Shortly the Council will have before it proposals to reform the sheepmeat and beef regimes and I trust that those who are anxious for continued agricultural reform will not baulk at these reforms on the grounds that they happen to be hitting their farmers rather than others' farmers. We must be consistent in what we do.

The measure is to be welcomed. The Government have brought us forward to a stage where we begin to see some consistency in the budget. The present savings are largely fortuitous. It would be wrong to take them from the capital account and put them into revenue or to assume that the savings would be permanent, just as it was wrong in the past always to apply for money the minute something appeared to be going wrong. The Commission is right to be cautious. Nevertheless, we are on target for a 4 billion ecu overestimation of expenditure next year.

This is a good and necessary measure. There is not an option to say no to it in practical terms because the choice is between taking part fully in Community decision-making, whether to promote or restrain spending, and allowing decisions to be taken only to find that the major parameters of political discussion are covered by decisions already taken by other people.

Mr. Spearing: It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Skipton and Rippon (Mr. Curry). Although I disagree with him, perhaps fundamentally, on many of these issues, he at least has the ability and knowledge always to talk about them interestingly.

That illustrates one of the problems which confronts the House. We have an important international treaty and a Committee stage which involve the expenditure of about £5,000 million a year between now and 1992. Even with the help of eight permanent members of the House of Commons staff I find it increasingly difficult to have some sort of working knowledge, not just of the details but even of the major features of this sphere. I warn the House that we are fast reaching a stage where so few people will feel able to debate or understand this that scrutiny will be at risk—it already is—and power will go from us. However good our scrutiny, if details cannot be presented reasonably, we shall lose power. I challenge any hon. Member now to disagree with that. If hon. Members disagree, they should read the agenda or attend the Select Committee on European Legislation to see what it consists of.

Mr. Curry *indicated assent.*

Mr. Spearing: I am glad to see the hon. Gentleman nodding assent.

My speech on clause 1 stand part is in two parts. The first relates to detailed matters of the articles of the

[Mr. Spearing]

principal document before us, which is the so-called decision, and the second will be a few remarks on the post-Bruges scene.

Several hon. Members have mentioned discipline. I understand—I hope that the Paymaster General will correct me if I am wrong—that we have a binding mechanism for stabilisers which are written into the regulations. We also have an obligation to double the social and regional funds and to create what I call an EAGGF—European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund. It is referred to in the preamble to this decision and it is authorised by virtue of the meeting of the Council of 11 and 12 February. It provides for

"the creation, in the Community budget, of monetary reserve, hereinafter referred to as the EAGGF monetary reserve, to offset the impact of significant and unforeseen fluctuations in the ECU/dollar parity."

We know why that is important. There may be deficits and surpluses over a period of five years. I do not see how any guarantee so far will guarantee a deficit in that fund—therefore, a deficit in the whole of the Community financing outside the envelope limits contained in the decision. Can the Paymaster General throw light on that conundrum?

If we were going through the document, we would take clause stand part article by article, and it deserves that consideration. Article 3(2) authorises commitment appropriations to increase to 1·3 per cent. of total GNP, whereas the payments limit is 1·2 per cent. How is that ratio reached, and how can there be an excess of commitment when the payments are only up to 1·2 per cent.? I suppose that it is hoped to raise those later to pay for commitments made. That would be bad accounting practice and bad for the EEC. Will the Paymaster General comment on that?

My next point relates to amendment No. 4, which was not selected, and the wording of the Bill. Line 14 refers to the undertakings by

"member States, as confirmed at their meeting within the Council."

The words "within the Council" should be deleted because, as it is an intergovernmental undertaking, it is by definition outside the status of the Council, and extra-treaty. The treaty lays down that income and expenditure shall balance year by year. I should not have thought that the Council of Ministers would be competent to produce a draft for such an undertaking. It would be competent for member states meeting in some other forum or for ambassadors to exchange letters and to come to such an undertaking. Perhaps the Paymaster General can explain the phrase "within the Council".

I now draw the House's attention to article 10 of the decision. This follows on from the points made by the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon about the rebate, which was an important feature of the article, as it was of Fontainebleau. Our rebate amounts to about £1 billion, but in spite of it, our overall deficit is still about £1 billion—so the rebate's importance is great. I am sure that the Paymaster General will agree that it is.

Article 10 reads:

"The Commission shall submit, by the end of 1991, a report on the operation of the system, including a re-examination of the correction of budgetary imbalances granted to the United Kingdom, established by this Decision."

When the Prime Minister brought back this draft from Brussels there was a great shout that the rebate was safe—but this is a leasehold of only about two to three years. So there can be no cheers about it from the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon; the Fontainebleau mechanism is only a two-year lease. I do not say that the re-examination will not be successful; it was on the occasion concerned, but it is clearly a matter of some importance in the Community that we maintain the rebate.

As any Minister will confirm, if we are to retain any derogation for the United Kingdom in any matter of policy, we must pay a price by giving way somewhere else.

Mr. Curry *indicated assent.*

Mr. Spearing: I am glad to see the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon nodding his agreement. This is how the Community works. So even if we maintain the derogation in the next cycle—it will come up again within three or four years—something else will have to go, but by the very nature of package bargaining we shall not necessarily know what.

If we had been able to examine the decision itself my points about it might not have been so truncated. I turn now to the post-Bruges situation. Over the past few weeks those of us who are interested in the EEC have read pages of comment in the heavy, informed press. We have listened to talks and interviews on the radio, and read the texts of two or three of the Prime Minister's and M. Delors' speeches. One of the most frightening things about all this is that most of the media commentators have got it either incomplete or wrong, and most of the important features from Bruges have not been dealt with in the articles and comments of otherwise informed commentators.

I shall attempt to prove this charge shortly, but I want to do so without casting aspersions on the leader writers and experts who write articles in the newspapers—or even on some of our senior politicians who make speeches on the subject. They have all sorts of other things to look at and are mainly informed about EEC matters by specialists. That is an example of the problem with which I open my speech: fewer and fewer people have the time or resources to understand what is going on. I hope the Minister will relay my comments to his right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, who is a sponsor of the Bill, and doubtless a representative of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will be present on Third Reading——

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I wonder.

Mr. Spearing: This is a treaty which implements the amendments to the treaty of Rome, commonly known as the Single European Act, which was signed on behalf of this country by the right hon. Lady, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office. She was not a Privy Councillor when she signed it; I wonder whether that was constitutional. But I hope she will be here on Thursday——

Mr. Robertson: I join my hon. Friend in hoping that, but I am sure he will agree that it is significant that, although the Foreign Secretary opened the debate on Second Reading on 11 July, since then we have seen neither hide nor hair of the Foreign Office. The Opposition foreign affairs team has been here in numbers for long periods, and we would have expected at least a nominal Foreign Office presence. The Foreign Office contains a

large number of Ministers, even if they keep changing fast. I am sure the Paymaster General can explain their unavoidable absence.

8.45 pm

Mr. Spearing: Perhaps we shall hear about that in the closing speech.

Now, I face the formidable task of backing up what may have appeared to some hon. Members a rash and exaggerated claim. Let us begin with social Europe. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) has gone. He and I had an interesting exchange, during which he agreed that he would have preferred a social dimension in the Cockfield package, but did not oppose it because it did not contain one. I understand that no formal set of regulations or directives relating to the social dimension or social Europe has been placed before the Council of Ministers by the Commission. Obviously, Mr. Delors has his own ideas, and the Commission may have its.

The former expounded his ideas at length to the TUC. I shall not say whether they are desirable, or whether competence in this area is good or bad, but the idea was clearly a possibility. It was only a possibility, not a certainty like the Cockfield package of about 280 documents, of which we shall receive a progress report sometime between now and Christmas. The only documents about social Europe are some press releases produced by one Commissioner, and a publication officially entitled, "A Commission Working Paper SEC (88) 1148", dated 14 September 1988. It arrived in the Library the day before yesterday.

So the status of this concept, important though it may be, is nothing like as developed as that to which we are committed by 1992 through the Single European Act's amendments, and to suggest that it is immediately on offer is false. There may be a plan or idea of some importance; it may have been given informal approval at informal meetings of certain heads of Government and Ministers; but it is of a different order from the avalanche of legislation which is about to descend on us between now and the end of 1992.

This brings me to the second widespread misapprehension. It is even shared by BBC news bulletins, which usually know better. They speak of 1992 as though it were the equivalent of the big bang in the City, whereas, as the knowledgeable hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon agrees, the legislation is coming through now. By treaty and by regulation, it must be completed by 31 December 1992. Some important legislative measures dealing with public utility contracts and rights of establishment will be here long before that and may be set in concrete.

Whatever scrutiny the House can give to the legislation —the Select Committee has already considered some of it —even if we do not like it, it is still subject to majority voting in the Council of Ministers. Even if the Government and every Member of the House do not like it, it will still be possible for majority voting to make the law for this country. A parliamentary answer to me last week showed that more than 100 pieces of legislation have been given majority assent in the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Recently I attended a conference of the European Medium and Small Businesses Union, which covers 14 countries, and the confusion that the hon. Gentleman describes could not have been more clearly evident. Small and medium-sized businesses have been going along with enormous enthusiasm with proposals to regulate all sorts of matters which, had they not been in the context of forming this great European market, they would have resisted strongly because they would have seen in them exactly the tendencies against which they fight in their own countries. They did not perceive that many of the laws are being implemented as they are passed, not on one great date in 1992. I intervened there to point out to them that the dangers that they were running by not being clear about that point.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for backing what I said. Whatever may be our disagreements on other matters, all hon. Members can agree that public knowledge on this matter is woefully lacking, despite the publicity campaign mounted by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—of whom I shall say no more at the moment.

Mr. Leighton: If it is true that these matters are being decided by a majority vote and the British Parliament has no jurisdiction over them, is not the term "county council" more appropriate for the House? We, not the Commission, are being turned into a county council.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. For the moment, I wish to obtain an agreement across the Committee about the present confusion and difficulty. But that will be the outcome of present events.

Mr. Cash: The analogy of county councils seems to have permeated the debate. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the analogy drawn by the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) is also inaccurate? A county council has powers that are conferred upon it by Parliament, and those parts of the European Communities Act 1972 that we are debating today, and all the other legislation that emanates from that Act, are granted by this Parliament. We must hang on to that central point at all times. It may be a slender thread, but it is critical and we must never forget it.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but I should tell him that the thread is something of an umbilical cord of which the European Communities Act 1972 is one example and the Bill is another. But the nature of that "gossamer thread"—to reactivate a phrase used by a well-known right hon. Gentleman—is such that we do not always recognise its importance when it is going through. The European Communities (Amendment) Act 1986, which authorised the Single European Act, is another example. The hon. Gentleman reminds me that I should have dissented from my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton). The House gives a county council specific powers to operate in a specific area. As I understand it, the treaty of Rome does not give national Governments any specific power.

The hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) made a helpful intervention. Legislation is on flow now, and Command HC 43—one of 32 reports which the Select Committee on European Legislation will have made by the end of the Session—summarises all the legislation.

I draw the attention of the House to article 8A of the treaty of Rome, which the money that we are voting will implement. It states:

[Mr. Spearing]

"The internal market shall comprise an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured in accordance with the provisions of this Treaty."

The definition of "internal frontier" has been largely misunderstood by press commentators. We think of lorries, frontiers and border checks. As I understand it —I am sure that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will correct me if I am wrong—the article concerns not a geographical frontier but an economic, commercial, industrial and competition frontier. If a set of laws that appertains in the United Kingdom is different from that appertaining in Portugal—although goods or services may be exported by sea or wire—and therefore the law relating to that internal market differs significantly from one part to another, an internal frontier exists.

As that frontier exists, it has to be eliminated by article 8A, a very important amendment that was brought about by the Single European Act. That presupposes that legislation that differs from one territory to another is to be harmonised, and that in turn presupposes a centralised legislative authority—the Commission and the Council working in tandem, as we discussed earlier.

Mr. Cryer: I have no doubt that my hon. Friend has seen the Press Association report that Lord Cockfield has asserted today that a united states of western Europe is inevitable, complete with a central bank and a common currency. Although he was displaced for embarrassing the Government over the harmonisation of VAT, it is worth recalling that he held those views when he was appointed by the present Government. He is still asserting that union is inevitable.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving us that information. Some of us have been sitting here since 3.30 pm and we have not had that particular information. I am not surprised by what Lord Cockfield has said. Anyone who heard him perform before the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service—the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), whom I am glad to see in his place, was in the Chair—will know what I mean. For reasons that I shall discuss in a minute, Lord Cockfield is almost certainly correct.

I have tried to explain what I understand article 8A to mean and the obligation on the central legislative authority to legislate not only on significant matters but on matters that are judged to affect significantly the internal market and which exist either side of a frontier.

Mr. Rowe *rose*——

Mr. Spearing: I shall give way in a moment.

That point highlights the importance of the new article 100A. I have read only one document that mentioned article 100A in the plethora of documents that we have received in the past three weeks. It is important because it establishes qualified majority voting in any matter relating to article 8A—the creation of the single market by a single legislative authority. Where does that definition finish? What does majority voting cover? What is the scope of legislation covered by article 100A? I have to tell you, Sir Paul, that the Select Committee on European Legislation does not know the answer.

One could think of 10,000 factors that allegedly affect the internal market, such as any piece of legislation that is passed by a nation relating to commercial, industrial, economic or regulatory matters—regulatory matters include safety provisions and provisions for other purposes. Who will be the judge of whether it is a matter for the internal market? The court will decide and the Select Committee is now taking evidence on the use and scope of article 100A. We have not reached a conclusion or a report.

If any hon. Member thinks that he or she knows the margins and the legal limits of article 100A, let them stand up and speak. Let the Attorney-General or anybody else say that they know where it ends—I do not know. I challenge anybody to say that they do——

Several hon. Members *rose*——

9 pm

Mr. Spearing: I shall now give way on that point to four hon. Gentlemen.

Mr. Cash: I would not presume to suggest the ambit or limits of article 100A. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I serve with him on the Select Committee on European Legislation. Does he not agree that, despite the fact that we had an opportunity to hear views on our suspicions about the misuse of article 100A, which goes to the heart of some of the questions that we have been discussing today—such as the manner in which the Commission or other organs of the Community may wish to extend and enlarge the competence of the Community—we had scant replies to satisfy us that there was not a misuse? In other words, we have real grounds for being concerned about the desire of people to use article 100A to get more majority voting or to get more things through in the way that the hon. Gentleman described.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for confirming my point. The question arises, where does one use article 100A instead of other articles? I shall wait for the report before I go into some of those points. That question has been reintroduced on a subject which, today of all days, is topical—the future of summer time. Originally it was to be promulgated under article 100A. There has been some back-pedalling since then, but at least one could argue that summer time is primarily a commercial and market matter and therefore comes with in the ambit of article 100A. Other people would say no. There is some debate and, I believe, some inconsistency within the Government, about which I shall say no more.

However, that issue illustrates the difficulty that we shall face about determining limits. I think that they are deliberately set very wide. If somebody challenged whether the Commission should use article 100 or article 100A—of course, the Council can question treaty bases unanimously of the Commission and change them if it wishes—he would find that a political issue on its own. We should look to the preamble of the Single European Act for some guidance. I suggest that we look there for guidance because that is where the European Court would look. Although the preamble is not part of the treaty, it counts as far as the European Court is concerned when relating to purpose.

The third paragraph of the preamble to the Single European Act states:

"Resolved to implement this European Union".

The last paragraph reads:

"Determined to improve the economic and social situation by extending common policies and pursuing new objectives, and to ensure a smoother functioning of the Communities by enabling the Institutions to excercise their powers under conditions most in keeping with Community interests.

Whereas at their Conference in Paris from 19 to 21 October 1972 the Heads of State or of Government approved the objective of progressive realization of Economic and Monetary Union".

That is part of the preamble to the Single European Act, which at last some Conservative Members voted through in 1986 on a guillotine and which was given full support by the Prime Minister, who also made the Bruges speech. There is some inconsistency between her comments in Bruges and the preamble to the Single European Act.

However, it is not just the Single European Act that we must look at in this regard. The Stuttgart declaration, which is entitled "Solemn Declaration on European Union", states:

"The heads of State and Government of the Member States of the European Community signed the following Solemn Declaration on European Union at the conclusion of the meeting of the European Council in Stuttgart on 19 June 1983".

Paragraph 8 of the preamble states:

"determined to achieve a comprehensive and coherent common political approach and reaffirming their will to transform the whole complex of relations between their States into a European Union."

All those quotations back up the report that we have had—my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) spoke of it—of Lord Cockfield claiming that European union is an inevitability. I should not necessarily agree that that is so, but I agree that the documents suggest that it is. If we take the creeping legislative competence of the Council and the Commission under article 100A, it is clear that a great deal of that legislation will displace or be capable of displacing any legislation produced by any Parliament of any member state. Therefore, there will be no element of federalism.

Today and in previous debates hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber have used the word "federalism", but it does not exist. The treaty of Rome does not have any element of genuine federalism in it that I can see. It has a great big dose of movement towards a single European union, with a single legislative centre and institutions that mirror those found in every sovereign nation state—a legislature, an Executive, a Parliament and a court. It is all there. Therefore, the threat is not one of federalism or a united states of Europe, or vague comparisons with that nation, but the development of a unitary form of government and of legislation.

The Bill will provide the money and the steam for that development. I do not expect the Paymaster General to comment too much on the last part of my speech and what I have called the post-Bruges round-up. The right hon. Gentleman may wish to leave that until Thursday. However, if anyone who, by chance, has been listening to what I have said disagrees with the facts that I have conveyed to the House or with my pessimistic interpretation of their significance, I hope that he will let me know before Thursday because, if I am fortunate enough to be chosen to speak, I have several other points to add. I believe that the British public and the House, in the post-Bruges era, have got so many things wrong that we are in great danger of not understanding the essential issues that so far I have neither read in the press nor heard on the media.

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): I hope that the Government recognise that the anxiety about the clause and the Bill is not confined to those who will vote against them. Four years ago the House was assured that the Fontainebleau agreement had at last provided an effective mechanism for restraining the juggernaut of agriculture spending, but we all know what happened. Agricultural spending resumed its profligate lurch onwards, the mechanism to restrain that spending simply buckled and the agreement came unstuck. Now, in this Bill, we face yet again a demand for more money accompanied by the self-same promises of future rectitude that were heard four years ago, laced with renewed assurances that all will now be well and that restraint will hereafter be the order of the day.

Two considerations in particular stick in my throat. The first is the rather disingenuous way in which exchange rate fluctuations are put forward as an excuse for the gross agriculture overspending that has taken place. Exchange rate fluctuations are inconvenient and often uncomfortable, but they are part of the commercial facts of life.

Several companies in my constituency have suffered considerably in recent years because of the weakness of the American dollar. I am sure that there are many such companies in the constituencies of other hon. Members. What has happened? Those companies have had to adapt and adjust. They are not able to go to the Government with a begging bowl. There is no soft option for them. Other industries have to take difficult decisions and have to adjust, reshape and adapt, but it appears that agriculture does not have to do that. It seems that at all costs spending on agriculture must be maintained and that agriculture must be protected from the reality that less privileged sectors of the economy are forced to face.

The second consideration that sticks in my throat is what I see as perhaps the fundamental flaw in EC decisions about the level of spending. Only three of the 12 member countries of the EC are regular net contributors. Because of occasional fluctuations there is sometimes a fourth net contributor. The two main net contributors are West Germany and ourselves. Most of the other member countries are net beneficiaries. Therefore they have an interest in weak budgetary control. Of course they are disinclined to submit to financial discipline and are happy to let the minority of net contributors take the strain. That is simply a recipe for weakness and financial indiscipline.

Four years after Fontainebleau should we say that enough is enough? Should we plunge the Community into a major crisis by refusing to pass the Bill? I confess that I have been sorely tempted to make cause on this issue with my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and his fellow rebels. On reflection, because of the crisis that would follow if the Bill were rejected and because in the EC there must be considerable give and take, it seems to me right that we should allow the powers that be one further chance. However, the Government should be aware that the patience of the House is wearing thin and that there is a limit. We will not for ever put up with lax control on spending and in particular burgeoning spending on agriculture. We shall not submit indefinitely to the financial indiscipline that has characterised EC expenditure in recent years. We must have stringent scrutiny and financial discipline. We look to the Government to persuade our European partners to accept such scrutiny and discipline.

Mr. Leighton: It is a pleasure to follow the speech of the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine). I agree with everything that he said, except his conclusion that we should give the Government one more chance.

We have been over this ground several times and each time it has cost us more money. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the Fontainebleau agreement. Many re-assurances and guarantees were given at that time and we agreed to a 40 per cent. increase in the VAT take. The other side of the deal was that there would be financial discipline.

Some of us, including, I think, the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, said that if we refused to vote the extra money there would be financial discipline. If there were discipline there would be no need to vote extra money. The extra money was approved and we know what happened. The EC is coming once again and putting its hand in our pocket and asking us to approve more money. This time there is an intergovernmental agreement and £650 million is to be given just like that. There is to be another 25 per cent. increase in the Community budget.

The Ministers are in the middle of their spending round. I wonder what would happen if a Minister came along to the Treasury and said, "I increased my demand last time by 40 per cent., you were good enough to give it to me and now I am back again and I want a cash handout urgently and another 25 per cent. on my budget." We all know what the Treasury would say about that.

9.15 pm

Our net payment into the Community budget is about £1·5 billion. That is enough money to solve all the immediate problems of the National Health Service, and the problems of the universities, but we do not use it for that purpose. The Treasury is severe. It keeps a tight grip on the strings of the public purse at home. We have to have proper accounting and prudence, but not for the Common Market. The Common Market has an open cheque, and it does not matter what it spends. Parliament is being asked to agree to that, as the hon. Member for Ipswich said. The majority of the countries in the Common Market pay nothing net into the Community. Many countries that are richer than us, with a higher GDP per capita, take payments out of the budget while we, one of the poorer countries, are a paymaster.

Sometimes I hear people talking about the money that we get from the social fund as though that were a good thing, but it is only a fraction of our own money coming back. Money goes from the British taxpayer to Brussels, is translated into 10 languages, some of it stays there to pay for the bureaucracy and a fraction of it comes back. What can Brussels do with our money that we could not do better ourselves?

During the recess, the Prime Minister went to Bruges and made that famous speech. I do not know whether she will vote for the Bill. However, in her Bruges speech, she said that she is against the supranational Europe. I agree with much that she said, but the difficulty is that she voted for the Single European Act, which gave the Common market powers to do what she does not like. Some of us voted against it. Some Conservative Members voted against it, but she guillotined the Bill through. I do not know whether she has had a change of view. Perhaps she did not realise what she was doing when she forced the Single European Act through the House.

What will she do now? Are the words at Bruges empty? I suspect that they are. Our experience of the Prime Minister is that she is all bluff and bluster before she goes along to these summits and then, when it comes to the crunch, she gives way. That is what happened over the budget last time and that is what happened over the limit of £160 million on the cereals target.

Now we have the Single European Act, and several hon. Members have spoken about articles 100 and 100A. Under article 100A, which provides for majority voting, it does not matter what the Prime Minister or the House says; these changes will come into existence because we have temporarily given our powers away. Under article 100, the Prime Minister is in a difficult position. She cannot always be in a minority of one. Eventually, she has to give way. One of the reasons why she has to give way is that the rebates are guaranteed only for two years. Therefore, if she does not give way, she could lose the rebates. The Common Market has her in a sensitive spot. It has her by the rebates, so she has to be extremely careful.

When we had a referendum about staying in the Common Market, the Government issued a manifesto which said:

"The Minister representing Britain can veto any proposal for a new law or a new tax if he considers it to be against British interests."

That was the basis on which we voted to stay in the Common Market. That basis has gone. The voters have been cheated by the Single European Act and do not have the slightest clue that that basis has gone.

I refer the House to the remarks of Wilfried Martens, who has been Prime Minister of Belgium for as long as the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) has been Prime Minister here. I refer to a recent newspaper article in which he is quoted as saying:

"the EEC should move from economic to full political union, where 'common sovereignty' covered foreign policy, defence and security, as well as monetary, economic, environmental and social policy."

If the EC is to have jurisdiction over all that, what is left? Jacques Delors has reiterated his view that 80 per cent. will be administered by the Common Market. The machinery of the Commission, the Council and the Parliament is already imposing measures on us that we do not want. We know that in relation to taxes. Taxes have been put on spectacles and hearing aids. I do not think that any hon. Members wanted tax levied on those items. Taxes have been levied on the construction of buildings for industrial and commercial use, water and sewerage services to industry, the supply of new services to commerce and industry, the supply of fuel and power to industry and even on protective boots and helmets supplied by employers. I do not think that any hon. Members wanted that. I do not think that the British Government wanted that, but it was foisted upon us.

We saw what happened about Austin Rover. The Government said that they had stitched up a wonderful deal between British Aerospace and Austin Rover. Then we did not hear anything about it for some months, because Commissioner Sutherland had to consider the deal, but who is Commissioner Sutherland? Who elected him? If we do not like what he is doing, how do we democratically get rid of him? He then said that he would not accept the deal, despite the fact the British Parliament and the Government had a majority in favour of it. He said that it could not be allowed because the Government were writing off too much of the debt. Then we had the spectacle

of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster coming to the Dispatch Box and saying, "I can't give my announcement because British Aerospace has had second thoughts. It doesn't know whether it can accept the deal."

I also say to my own Front Bench that if, under the present Common Market administration, the Conservative Government cannot implement their industrial policy, what chance has the Labour party of implementing its industrial policy under the laissez-faire treaty of Rome?

Mr. Holland: That issue has run for a considerable time, but we must recognise that although the provisions before us concern, under the Single European Act, the proposal to harmonise bidding on public sector contracts, they do not make it impossible for a country to pursue a policy of industrial intervention which it wishes to pursue.

The French are currently on their 10th medium-term plan. They were able to nationalise broad sectors of industry within the European Community without being stopped by the treaty of Rome and, in the early 1980s, more than half of the investment undertaken in France came through the public sector. The French have also been able to adopt planning measures directly with big business, gaining the accountability in the opening of the books on big business through the programme contract system which, as with similar policies in Belgium and Italy, were the basis for our planning proposals.

Although I agree with much of what my hon. Friend says, in this respect, I must point out that the treaty of Rome does not stop a country doing what it wants to do. I should like to see us joining other Community Governments to gain greater accountability from big business in the Community and greater leverage for public intervention.

Mr. Leighton: I welcome my hon. Friend's confidence. He mentioned France, and I remember that when Mr. Mitterrand first came to power he launched a policy of great expansion. He immediately ran into balance of payments problems, which he was unable to rectify by the taking of national steps. As France was a member of the EMS, he was unable to devalue the franc. The only alternative was to put on the brakes.

I do not want to prolong the debate with my hon. Friend, but it is wise and prudent for us all to realise that there are limitations and constraints on our national freedom to run our countries in our own way while we labour on under the present regime. If Mr. Mitterrand had the difficulties which I have described and if the present Conservative Government are not able to implement their industrial policy under Common Market regulations and the present policy of the Commission, we must realise that a Labour Government will have difficulties and problems. We must understand also that after 1992 there will be a capitalist free-for-all. That is the policy that is being developed. There are many who support the idea of the Common Market because they see it preventing a Labour Government introducing Socialist measures in the United Kingdom. I am advancing this argument to sound a warning. There are difficulties that must be borne in mind by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Holland: I do not seek to detain the Committee. My hon. Friend was not correct when he said that the French did not devalue. In fact, they devalued twice, in 1981 and 1983. It was not the EMS that prevented devaluation. The EMS, as it happened, enabled a more orderly management of it. As for this Government not being able to implement their industrial policy because of Community legislation, my hon. Friend will have to enlighten me. I was not aware that the Government had an industrial policy, or that they had been restrained by the Community in any specific respect.

We must make these things clear. The reason why the French Government expanded and the reason why they could not sustain that expansion was that the rest of the OECD had confidently said that it would expand and then did not do so. It is beggar-thy-neighbour deflation by Governments in Europe that has penalised countries that want to expand, and not the EMS mechanism as such.

I am not making an argument for the EMS per se. Monetary co-operation is not neutral; it can be either deflationary or expansionary. Any Government in their right mind who are members of the EMS should proceed on the conditions that Mr. Giscard D'Estaing set when he once supported President de Gaulle. In effect, he said, "Yes, but . . ." That meant, "Yes, we shall support monetary co-operation if it is expansionary. If it is not, that system should not be supported."

Mr. Leighton: I do not think that you, Sir Paul, would wish me to continue the private debate that I am having with my hon. Friend. I look forward to continuing the debate with him on future occasions.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): I have listened with considerable fascination to the topical little private debate to which my hon. Friend has referred. He will be aware that the Government have a policy of privatisation, and one of the undertakings that they have allegedly being trying to privatise is British Shipbuilders. The last remaining substantial merchant shipyards that remain are run by North-East Shipbuilders Ltd., which is in my constituency. On 30 September, the deadline closed for bids from those wishing to take over these public assets. Four bids were received and we are expecting an announcement in the House at any moment.

It is speculated in the press that the announcement will be made that none of the bids is acceptable to the Government and that the yards will have to close. I am hearing from civil servants and those who are close to them that none of the bids is acceptable—if one were accepted it would keep the last merchant shipyards open in the area which I represent—because the Government could not get a bid through the Commission. If the Government cannot even privatise with a bit of state intervention, what chance would a Labour Government have of intervening in the way that we would want? It seems that the chance would be pretty slim.

Mr. Leighton: There is no doubt that we are no longer masters of our own house in these matters. That is absolutely clear. If the Government's deal between British Aerospace and the Rover Group could not go through unmolested, it is wise to take on board the fact that a Labour Government would have similar problems and I put it no higher than that.

9.30 pm

The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), in his discussion of whether we were a county council, said that we had given those powers in the European Communities

[Mr. Leighton]

Act 1972, but that we could take them back. That is true. I quote the manifesto issued by the Government at the time of the referendum:

"The British Parliament in Westminster retains the final right to repeal the Act which took us into the Market on 1 January 1973. Thus our continued membership will depend on the continuing assent of Parliament."

There is no doubt that we could repeal section 2 of the 1972 Act. We could repeal the Act itself.

I believe that parliamentary sovereignty is valuable. I am not one of those people who believe that it is a reactionary idea. After all, when we gave sovereignty to the former colonies of the British empire everyone thought that that was an extremely progressive thing to do. Democratic self-government is extremely valuable. As the shoe pinches more and more and as the powers and prerogatives of the EEC take powers away from us, there will be more and more resentment in this Parliament. I will never reconcile myself to the loss of self-government by this Parliament and I look forward to the repeal of the 1972 Act.

Mr. Foulkes: As you may have appreciated, Miss Boothroyd, when you were in the Chair earlier, this has been a familiar debate with some familiar faces. However, there are two very important differences since we discussed the issue on Second Reading and before. We are now witnessing the unusual spectacle of the European Community budget moving into surplus. A number of my hon. Friends and others have said that the debate is taking place post-Bruges—a watershed which for one reason or another we shall all have reason never to forget.

It has been an interesting debate because within the general debate about the European Community's finances we have had discussions about federalism in which the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) played a large part. We have also had discussions about the political nature of Europe. When the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) talks about the European Community as a Socialist conspiracy he encourages me to advocate it even more enthusiastically. However, that is a concept or perception that some of my hon. Friends do not share. We have also had a debate in the sub-theme of democratic accountability.

I want to refer to three issues and I shall be very brief in the few moments that are left. First of all, as we know, the change that will take place if the Bill is enacted will alter the nature of the funding of the European Community. One of the central bases of the funding will still be value added tax. Although that is based on a notional rate, Opposition Members and people outside the House are conscious that an intensifying pressure from the European Community will follow to harmonise VAT in the Community.

I hope that the Paymaster General will pay attention to me. We know that the Government have given a pledge in relation to VAT on children's clothes and food. However, it would be useful to have that pledge repeated tonight and a sign that the Government will in no way resile from their commitment to veto any proposal from the Community to harmonise VAT on children's clothes and food. We have not been given a pledge of the same intensity in relation to books, magazines and newspapers. Right hon. and hon. Members from all parts of the Committee have been under continuing pressure from various campaigns, whether they be opposing a tax on reading or on learning, and aimed at persuading the Government to give the same kind of assurance in respect of books, magazines and newspapers.

We took some hope from the definitive statement made by the Prime Minister. I do not mean her statement made in Bruges but the answer that she gave to the great interrogator of Prime Ministers, Jimmy Young, on the Jimmy Young radio programme, when she made it clear that harmonisation of value added tax was not in any way a requirement and that she would continue to oppose that. She said:

"Do you know they do not have all the same taxes in every state in America? They have different taxes according to their different requirements and their different history, so we do not go in to have a standardised Europe."

The United States has a common currency but it still has throughout its states different levels of value added tax. We need a restatement of the commitment concerning value added tax on children's clothing and food, and in relation to the other areas.

My second point concerns the comments made by several right hon. and hon. Members about the budget going into surplus. Community spending has increased by 150 per cent. in the past seven years. As has been said during this debate, the 1988 budget represents a 20 per cent. increase over 1987. The proposal made tonight by a number of right hon. and hon. Members, and particularly eloquently by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), represents a 25 per cent. increase. I believe that it was the hon. Member for Northampton, North who first asked whether we could not use that money to make sure that child benefit is indexed and not frozen, as seems to be the Government's current intention. Hon. Members in other parts of the Committee have raised the question whether that money could not be used for funding the Health Service. There are many other areas that one could suggest.

The fundamental question to which the Minister should address himself when replying is why we need such an increase. If effective control of the common agricultural policy has been achieved, why do we need another increase —albeit, in this case, through a change in the funding mechanism? Will there be a substantial increase in the structural funds? We are told that the structural funds are to double, but, as they currently represent only a small proportion of the Community budget, there does not need to be a huge 25 per cent. increase to double them.

If we take the Prime Minister at her word, in respect of the antagonism that she poured out at Bruges and on other occasions towards the social fund, which is an integral and important part of the structural funds, it is evident that she will not approve any substantial increases. That is despite the fact that it is concerned with vital areas such as youth retraining and assistance for the long-term unemployed. As the United Kingdom's regional policy has also been abandoned, it does not seem to us likely that the Prime Minister will support any substantial increase in that direction. Given the increases that have taken place and the increase that is proposed, we need to know exactly what the money will be used for. Where will it go, if agricultural spending is under control and there is not to be the spending on social Europe that the Prime Minister has apparently vetoed?

I know that the Minister wants adequate time to deal with all the points that have been raised. My third and final point relates to social Europe. I am not sure why my hon.

Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) has passed me a note, but I shall try to incorporate it in my remarks. I think that he is pointing out that some hon. Members who have managed to vote with their conscience and according to their own beliefs in past debates on this subject will not be able to do so tonight, because the Prime Minister has appointed them to posts of responsibility in government. But I shall not develop that theme.

The Prime Minister's attitude towards social Europe shows her real view about the Community, and the hopes that we have of seeing the Community develop. It is notable that Members of the European Parliament—some of whom are still here among us, no doubt for only a short time—have attacked the Prime Minister for her stance at Bruges. It is also interesting that the German Chancellor, a Conservative, has attacked her stance on social Europe. It is suggested in private briefings that even members of the Cabinet are critical of it.

Mr. Marlow: They keep it quiet.

Mr. Foulkes: Of course they keep it quiet, as the hon. Gentleman rightly says.

The purpose of social Europe is to protect workers' standards of living and rights hard won over the years, and to cushion them through what will otherwise be a harsh transition in the run-up to what is now commonly described as "1992". We can understand why the Prime Minister takes the approach that she does, given her attitude to the trade unions and the workers. But, as the hon. Member for Northampton, North has said, this is not just a matter for Government but one on which this Parliament shall ultimately decide, and Opposition Members hope that Parliament will take a much more enlightened view.

That may be a forlorn hope. We have heard brave speeches from the hon. Members for Northampton, North, for Southend, East and for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken). We are constantly told that hon. Members will flock through the Lobby to vote against the Government, that Parliament is supreme and that at the end of the day Governments, propose but Parliament disposes. We are told that it does not matter whether the Bill has the approval of Government; it need not have the approval of Parliament. Increasing ranks on the Conservative Benches will support the Opposition in their criticism of the Bill.

In this clause stand part debate, which relates to the essential part of the Bill, we are providing that opportunity yet again. We challenge Conservative Members who constantly speak brave words in the House to match them with brave actions, and to join us in the Lobby to oppose the clause.

The Paymaster General: As so often on these occasions, we have had a vigorous debate. I shall try to respond to it briefly and to meet the deadline imposed on the House.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) raised a number of points when he opened the debate on new clause 3. For instance, he mentioned the effect of 1992 on the Community budget. Those effects are likely to be fairly small. If member states import more from other member states and less from "third countries", fewer levies and duties will be collected, but if—as we suspect—the Community is more prosperous, Community GNP will be higher, giving more resources within the new 1·2 per cent. GNP ceiling.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall paraded his familiar King Charles's head of the multinational company. He made some remarks about my noble Friend, Lord Cockfield. I did not detect a marked difference of opinion between the spokesmen for the Front Benches on either side of the Committee about our attitudes to Lord Cockfield's proposals for harmonisation.

9.45 pm

The hon. Member for Vauxhall said that Fontainebleau was not worth the paper on which it was written. As it has produced £3 billion in abatements during the past three years and a further £1·6 billion this year, the hon. Gentleman uses very expensive writing paper.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall raised a number of questions about how the House would deal with the issue of European monetary union. Article 102A of the treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act, makes clear that further developments in the sector of economic and monetary union necessitating institutional changes, such as the introduction of a European central bank, would require further amendment of the treaty of Rome. That in turn would require the calling of an intergovernmental conference, the unanimous agreement of all member states and approval by all national parliaments. Thus, no institutional changes will be possible without the approval of the House. Although in the past both Labour and Conservative Governments have agreed to political declarations about the desirability of the ultimate objective of European monetary union, neither the treaty of Rome nor the Single European Act nor any other Community treaty imposes an obligation upon the Community to introduce European monetary union.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) asked me a series of questions. First, he asked me what is the limit on overdrafts under article 12(2). I must make it clear that the purpose of overdrafts under article 12(2) is to enable the Commission to meet cash flow problems and not to finance a surplus of expenditure over revenue. The scale of overdrafts is restricted to the amount of revenue remaining under the own resources decision. In 1988, therefore, overdrafts have not anticipated either the own resources decision or the IGA that are the subject of the Bill. The overdrafts have been limited to the amounts available under the pre-existing 1985 own resources decision. On that basis, the Government have made overdraft facilities available under article 2(3) of the European Communities Act 1972.

My right hon. Friend also asked whether, if there is an underspend in 1988 and the entire IGA is paid, this would allow further unplanned expenditure elsewhere. The short answer is no. The underspending in 1988 will result in a budget surplus that the Commission rightly proposes should be carried forward to 1989. The effect of that would be to reduce the level of member states' contributions in 1989 by comparison with what otherwise would have been the case.

My right hon. Friend raised the question of the amount of the IGA seeming oddly precise for a sum intended to be a maximum figure to balance the budget. The size of the IGA was determined in the light of the expenditure decisions taken line by line on the 1988 budget by the budgetary authority. It is, therefore, rightly a precise

[The Paymaster General]

extra expenditure on agriculture may not be called up. In fact, we now know that it is unlikely to be so. The amounts payable under the IGA, apart from contributions to the monetary reserve, can be precisely stated in advance.

My right hon. Friend asked what action the Commission proposes to take account of the effect of the United States drought on Community expenditure. The Commission has announced that it intends to bring forward an amending letter to the 1989 budget which will, among other things, take account of the prospective surplus in 1988. Although the figures have not been finalised, the Commission's current estimate is for a surplus of 2,000 mecu, comprising an increase in receipts of 700 mecu and reduced expenditure of 1,300 mecu, of which approximately 1,000 mecu would be in agriculture.

For 1989 the Commission has proposed a reduction in the FEOGA guarantee of almost 1·46 ecu to allow for the effects of the United States drought on world agricultral prices.

My right hon. Friend asked why farming should be protected from the effects of exchange rate changes, which is a question that he has asked before. I am not sure that we can give a full explanation of why agriculture has a special place in the treaty of Rome, but it clearly does. For example, article 39 gives the objectives of the CAP. It includes the need to stabilise markets and to ensure reasonable prices.

The Government support the need to open up the agricultural sector so that it is more responsive to market forces. They also support the Commission's aims to phase out MCAs by 1992. As to who enforces regulations as 2891/77 the answer is the European Court of Justice, to which, of course, individual plaintiffs could take cases.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) said that the Bill amends the treaty of Rome and asked why we do not amend it to restrict the rights of the Parliament. I am afraid that the Bill does not do that, and without amending the treaty of Rome we cannot infringe upon the treaty rights of the parliament over DNO. The way in which the own resources decision reinforces budget discipline is by limiting the amount of total resources available for all types of expenditure. I am perfectly happy to enter into a dialogue with my right hon. Friend on that issue.

The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) asked about the committee to be set up under the directive on GNP. The hon. Member for Vauxhall asked whether the committee would consider the way in which the budget is spent. The answer is no. Its role will be to help to ensure that data provided by member states on their respective GNPs are compiled in a comparable manner and provided in an orderly way to the Commission. That is an important role given the increased importance to be given to GNP when calculating contributions to the Community budget.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) asked what would happen if the Bill failed and what would be the effect on the United Kingdom's net and gross contributions. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) asked a similar question during the points of order raised earlier. If that happened I would certainly find myself leaving Her Majesty's Government and, without consulting the Patronage Secretary, I have a feeling that he might too.

Of course it is open to the House to reject the Bill if it sees fit, but the consequences would be extremely damaging for the United Kingdom and for Europe. The February European Council agreement was a package achieved after long and difficult negotiations. In that package we secured a legally binding budget discipline, important reforms of the CAP, in particular the introduction of stabilisers, and we preserved the Fontainebleau abatement. All that would be thrown back into the melting pot if we failed to implement the package.

The question that my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North put about our contribution is purely hypothetical. On 15 February the Prime Minister told the House that the Brussels package would increase the United Kingdom's net payment by a maximum of about £300 million a year compared with what might have happened with the continuation of the 1·4 per cent. ceiling. That remains our best estimate and a revised forecast will appear in this year's Autumn Statement.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) raised a series of questions relating to why there was a ceiling on commitments of 1·3 per cent. of Community GNP. The 1·3 per cent. ceiling on commitments is in article 3 of the own resources decision, the purpose of which is to ensure an orderly relationship between commitments and payments. Such a relationship will help us to avoid the problems of the mid-1980s, when commitments grew much faster than payments—the so-called cost of the past. The commitment ceiling of 1·3 per cent. of GNP is above the payment ceiling of 1·2 per cent. In a situation where expenditure is growing, it is natural for commitments to exceed payments. Commitments cover payments for future years as well as payments for the year in which they are entered into the budget.

The hon. Member for Newham, South asked about decisions made within the Council. He is perfectly correct to draw a distinction between agreements of the Council and agreements between member states. The distinction is clear in the Bill as it is now worded. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall not allow that distinction to be blurred.

From time to time member states meet within the framework of the Council and reach conclusions that are not Council conclusions, but rather conclusions of the member states. That is the case with the 1988 intergovernmental agreement. It is accurate to refer to the IGA as an agreement between member states confirmed at their meeting within the Council.

The hon. Member for Newham, South congratulated my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) on what I thought was an extremely thoughtful speech. The hon. Member for Newham, South went on to ask questions relating to what he described as the "post-Bruges" situation. He asked a question about the "leasehold" on the rebate, but I remind him that that is an unfair comment. The new abatement system is not limited in any way. It will last as long as the new own resources decision. It can be changed only by the unanimous agreement of all member states and after approval by all national parliaments. Exactly the same was true during the post-Fontainebleau period, although there was a de novo examination by the Commission.

Various Opposition Members mentioned the absence of the Foreign Secretary, who was present on Second Reading, when the shadow Foreign Secretary was

noticeably absent. It is a sign of the unfamiliarity of the Opposition Front Bench with what goes on in Europe that they are unaware that there is a Foreign Affairs Council today at which my right hon. and my right hon. and learned Friend are present.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) asked about the qualified majority voting now applying to taxation, but that is not true. Under article 99, all tax proposals demand unanimity whether or not they are part of the internal market programme. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) for giving the Government the benefit of the doubt.

That brings me to new clause 3, which the hon. Member for Vauxhall moved. His concern for what he described as an exercise in transparency is the first evidence that I have seen of the Opposition Front Bench taking an interest in these matters. I would give them the benefit of the doubt that they have a continuing interest in it. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the matters that he wants to see in his report are amply covered in the information which the Government already make available to the House.

Mr. Holland: Sometimes one wonders how much attention the Paymaster General pays to our points. If he looks at the *Hansards* of our previous debates, he will find that I constantly push the theme of transparency. On the earlier matter that he raised, he should be re-advised by the Treasury Bench. If there are increased imports to the Community, revenues will rise, not fall.

Mr. Brooke: I spoke of fewer imports. The hon. Gentleman rehearsed several areas where he would like to see improvements and I am happy to write to him to show him where he can find them. These subjects are already adequately covered.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) asked where the increase in the budget was to go. For the first time, the Community has a five-year spending plan, the so-called financial perspective, which shows precisely where the additional resources might be spent. I commend to him the inter-institutional agreement, to which the perspectives are annexed. He asked, most extraordinarily and late at night on a wholly different debate, for a restatement of the Government's commitment on VAT. He knows perfectly well what our commitments are and he ran over the familiar subjects—for example, food, children's clothes and domestic fuel.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Brooke: I am dealing with the subject of this clause, Miss Boothby—*[Laughter.]* Miss Boothroyd. I am trying to finish by an agreed time.

Clause 1 contains prudent measures secured by hard negotiation. This is a pragmatic Government who respond to the circumstances of the various matters on which we must negotiate. I am proud to put this clause before the House and I share with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister the collective responsibility of the whole Government. Her speech in Bruges admirably made clear where the Government stand.

Mr. Spearing: As you know, Miss Boothroyd, this is exempted business, so the haste with which the Paymaster General has uncharacteristically completed his speech must have something to do with an understanding between Front Bench spokesmen—but nothing to do with Back Benchers.

10 pm

Why will the right hon. Gentleman not accept new clause 3? Will he consider taking the Bill no further tonight, because if we continue until later we may encroach on the time for a prayer which, as he knows, is time-limited?

Mr. Brooke: As I said, we shall not accept new clause 3 because the things it asks for are adequately covered in other Government publications, notices and statements, which are issued throughout the year.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend said that if the clause were defeated tonight he would feel that he had to resign. We should all be sorry——

It being Ten o'clock, The Second Deputy Chairman left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.

Committee report Progress.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the European Communities (Finance) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

European Communities (Finance) Bill

Again considered in Committee.

Question again proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Marlow: We should not want my right hon. Friend to resign, but the reason that he gave for having to was that the Government gave a commitment. But the Government gave a commitment about the Bill before Bruges, at a time when the Community was running out of funds. Now that the Community has money there is no need to pass the Bill, because it is not short of funds. I assure my right hon. Friend that we shall not require his resignation if the Government lose the clause this evening. So perhaps he will change his mind, and then we may get financial discipline in the Community.

Question put, That the Clause stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 290, Noes 157.

Division 451] **[10.01 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Benyon, W.
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Bevan, David Gilroy
Allason, Rupert	Biffen, Rt Hon John
Amess, David	Blackburn, Dr John G.
Amos, Alan	Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Arbuthnot, James	Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Boscawen, Hon Robert
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Boswell, Tim
Ashby, David	Bottomley, Peter
Ashdown, Paddy	Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Aspinwall, Jack	Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Atkinson, David	Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Bowis, John
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Baldry, Tony	Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Brazier, Julian
Batiste, Spencer	Bright, Graham
Beith, A. J.	Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Bellingham, Henry	Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Bendall, Vivian	Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Browne, John *(Winchester)*

Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr Michael Neubert

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank

Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Alun Michael.

Question accordingly agreed to.

10.15 pm

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Miss Boothroyd. I think that the next matter that the Committee will decide is whether to divide on new clause 3. If not, it will be new clause 4.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. We have moved to the Question on clause 2, which I shall now put.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Miss Boothroyd. Had I or my hon. Friends wished to divide on new clause 3, which had been selected, there would now be another Division, taking approximately 15 minutes. You will know, Miss Boothroyd, because you were in the Chair at the time, that the business motion was passed at 10 o'clock. You will also notice on the Order Paper that the business after the Committee has decided to finish is a prayer. No penalty time is available, so that debate must finish at 11.30 pm, come what may. Therefore, any time taken now in any Division, such as a Division on new clause 3, and any debate or Division on new clause 4 will automatically reduce the time available to Her Majesty's Opposition in debating the prayer.

I am willing to believe that that is an unusual circumstance that has come about through inadvertence, but I hope that you, Miss Boothroyd, will confirm that what I have said is correct and that others who are listening may take note of this so that it does not happen again because it may be said to restrict unduly the freedom of speech, which the Government are beginning to do in several different ways.

The Second Deputy Chairman: No request has been made for a Division on new clause 3. What the hon. Gentleman says is absolutely correct. We must now move to new clause 4.

New clause 4

HOUSE OF COMMONS APPROVAL OF SUBORDINATE ACTION

'No Minister of the Crown shall give assent to any Regulation, Directive or other instrument relating to the operation of the Decision named in section 1(e) unless the text of that instrument has been approved by a Resolution of the House of Commons.'.—*[Mr. Spearing.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Spearing: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I am grateful for your confirmation of the point that I made, Miss Boothroyd, because, in effect, the House has been prevented from having a Division on a rather important piece of glasnost. The Paymaster General said that all these things are available in different Government publications. I am not sure whether that is correct.

We have now moved from new clause 3 to new clause 4, in my name, which would require the Government to bring before the House any directive or regulation from Brussels in pursuance of the document that we are discussing, the decision for future taxation of the Community—*[Interruption.]*

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. May we have a little more order in the Chamber? It is difficult for the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) to be heard.

Mr. Spearing: I am obliged to you, Miss Boothroyd. New clause 4 reads:

'No Minister of the Crown shall give assent to any Regulation, Directive or other instrument relating to the operation of the Decision named in section 1(e) unless the text of that instrument has been approved by a Resolution of the House of Commons.'.

We are always told that the power of the House lies in its power to approve money and expenditure. That is an underlying constitutional matter that has been assumed not only in the House, but in the country since 1688. Those of us who attended the great ceremony in Westminster Hall not long ago will not be unaware of that fact. At this time the importance of that cannot be over-emphasised. *[Interruption.]*

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I have already appealed for order in the Chamber. I should be most grateful if those hon. Members who wish to carry on conversations would do so behind the swing doors.

Mr. Spearing: The matter that I wish to advance is of considerable constitutional importance. In effect, it has been on the Order Paper for only a few hours because, although it appeared on Friday, we all know what happens on Fridays and hon. Members who did not arrive early

[Mr. Spearing]

today may not have had an opportunity to study it and understand its full import. Partly because of that and because of the constraints of time, my speech will be brief and probing. Any hon. Member who is not interested in the powers of the House and who does not wish to stay until the end of the debate is not constrained by any Whippery so to do.

In the previous debate, we talked a great deal about scrutiny and about the power of Ministers in Brussels to do this, that or the other. Under the Single European Act, their powers have been greatly reduced. In Brussels, there is now majority voting on a vast range of legislation, but we still have some control over money. In the previous debate, the Paymaster General, wagging his finger metaphorically at some of my hon. Friends, said that anything to do with taxation was still unanimous. Of course, in that respect he is defending Treasury rights.

Hon. Members should bear in mind the rights of the House. The Paymaster General knows, and the Prime Minister has emphasised, that she cannot get public expenditure through or reduce it unless the House permits. By our decision on Thursday, we shall hand over to the Commission vast areas of choice or discretion on expenditure. Following that decision, directives and regulations, including the annual budget and the annual increase in ratios, will be produced year on year.

The Bill is the outer envelope, and if, as we have heard, the Community is flush with money, it may not be necessary to go to the limits of legal expenditure, and regulations and budgets will show ratios and figures to delineate the amount. Year by year, the Scrutiny Committee and the House will receive financial regulations and directives. When those come before the Council of Ministers, the Paymaster General or some other Minister from the Treasury will go to Brussels to argue, bargain and put the Treasury point of view. On behalf of the United Kingdom, that Minister will agree disagree to a proposal from the Commission.

I hope that if I have said anything wrong the Paymaster General will briefly intervene. He has argued our case in Brussels for many years and is a most experienced operator, whereas I am not even allowed into the room to hear what will happen. That is one of the engines of authoritarianism as we know it in Brussels. The Paymaster General is our agent in Brussels doing his best for Britain. When he has agreed the document, it will come here for debate but probably not even approval. In many cases the decision will be made after an advisory debate in the Chamber probably brought about by the resolution of 30 October 1980 which says that if the Scrutiny Committee says that there will be a debate prior to a decision in Brussels, there will be a debate in the House.

The House will not have any control. It will have a preliminary and advisory debate and the Minister, who may not be the effective and efficient Paymaster General, will go to Brussels to do what he can and will then return to tell us what he has done. He may do things that are contrary to the will of the House, and the only penalty for that is in the hands of the House. Even if he resigns, what is done in Brussels is done, and the House has lost control of that financial part of its powers that stems from the envelope created by this decision. We call it a decision, but it is a package of many, varied and complex financial arrangements.

I believe that the Committee, on second thoughts, would not wish that arrangement to carry on for very much longer, if only because the discipline we were promised at Fontainebleau, and which was advertised as being promised in this decision, has not worked. Judging by the exchanges tonight, particularly between the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), the Minister and myself, it does not look as if it will work in the future. In that case, the Committee will want to have the control of these matters that it does not have at the moment. The only way that the Committee can do that effectively is to pass an amendment on the lines of my new clause, so that it says to a Minister or a Government, "Bring us a proposal that the Commission has on the table, and if we approve it, go away and approve that," or, "Put it on the table here and we can give you on a motion or a resolution some sort of limits within which you can work. Go away to Brussels and negotiate within those limits."

Unless and until such a motion is carried by the Committee, either as a free-standing resolution or as an amendment, the Minister is not properly responsible to the Committee. He can come and tell us what he has done. He is accountable in a verbal sense for what he has done, but he is doing it as a representative and the Committee has not the same sort of control that it would have if we had a period of debate on estimates, as we do for domestic expenditure. Therefore, there is an entirely different procedure relating to the £3,000 million or £4,000 million that automatically goes direct to Brussels, when compared to what comes to us in domestic expenditure.

Unless we have some control over the Minister in the way that I have outlined, the House will lose control not just over legislation, as we have already, particularly through article 100A, but over what its own Government and Ministers do and approve in Brussels. That is a fundamental breach of the 300-year-old principle that alone gives this House power and authority to tax and to decide how money shall be spent. The new envelope of GNP will make good the deficit in existing own resources. The House decided that it would supply the deficit in the Crown's lack of money after its own revenues and resources had been taken into account. This is the deep constitutional principle on which the power of the House rests, and we should look at it most carefully.

I am opening a debate that needs much more time and much more internal discussion among hon. Members than we can give it tonight. It has been before us for only a few hours, and it is of fundamental importance.

If it is not done properly in the Bill, which is what I should like to see, it should come in another time. The Prime Minister has set the scene because in her speech in Luxembourg—the second in her Bruges series—she said something about being accountable to Parliament. "Accountable" is a financial term.

I put it to the Committee and to the Paymaster General that that accountability can be discharged only if the House decides what taxation moneys shall be sent to Brussels. If it is decided by the Executive in Whitehall, then it is entirely within the Euro-United Kingdom executive area. The legislature has lost its control, and that control must be reasserted. Because of the slippage of discipline

and the 25 per cent. additional moneys being provided for the next five years under this decision, it is high time that that was done.

I hope that the Paymaster General will briefly tell us if he is against the general outline proposition that I am making—it is only an outline, but a fundamental one—why he is against it. I do not believe that the Government's stance, even as a loyal member of the European Community, will work. Any hon. Member who believes wholeheartedly in that institution should support my new clause, because without it, the mechanism will not work properly as it is intended to. Therefore, I look forward, in this introductory debate, to hearing what the Paymaster General has to say on both factual and constitutional grounds.

10.30 pm

Mr. Brooke: With slightly more time than on the previous occasion, let me apologise for the way that I addressed you, Miss Boothroyd, on the previous occasion.

The number of hon. Members in the Chamber exceeds the number who were present for the majority of the debate, but I realise that they are not necessarily here to hear the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and me, and I shall therefore be brief.

I owe an apology to the hon. Member for Newham, South, because he takes a keen interest in these matters, and the hon. Member for Vauxhall in that, to try to meet an artificial deadline in terms of winding up the previous debate, I did not speak at fully appropriate length on new clause 3. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman, as an olive branch in respect of these proceedings, with a copy to the hon. Member for Vauxhall, setting out at greater length the case that I have sought to put.

I fully accept the need for the Government to take careful note of the views of the House whenever possible before agreeing directives or regulations linked to the new own resources decision, but—I do not intend the next remark ironically, although it may be so taken—I nevertheless urge hon. Members to reject the new clause as it would impose an excessive and unnecessary constraint on the Government's freedom of action.

There may be occasions when the Government have to move quickly and agree to a directive or regulation linked to the new ORD when it has not proved possible to secure the assent of the House by way of a resolution. The hon. Member for Vauxhall quoted one such example in his opening speech in the clause 1 stand part debate, in which his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South intervened on the subject of the GNP directive. I shall not rehearse the whole narrative relating to the GNP directive, but the hon. Member for Newham, South made the point in his intervention about the circumstances of that particular case and the timetable with which we were all confronted at the time.

However, even leaving aside the special circumstances, such as the GNP directive, I am still not persuaded that it would be right to require a resolution of the House before a directive or regulation linked to the new ORD might be adopted. There are two other reasons for that. The existing scrutiny arrangements work well. Under those arrangements, proposals for new directives or regulations linked to the ORD are submitted to the Scrutiny Committee which can then recommend them for debate, if that would be appropriate. Unless there are special circumstances, the Government will not adopt the directive or regulation concerned until the debate has taken place. I was certainly not aware that there were any serious shortcomings in those arrangements.

The hon. Member for Newham, South referred to me as an agent of the House in terms of what goes in Brussels. One's negotiating freedom would be severely constrained if all one's proposals were publicly stated in advance. I also commend to the House the fact that Mr. Delors, who was quoted earlier, went out of his way in the famous speech in Strasbourg on 6 July, to which so much attention has been paid, to draw attention to the amount of attention that this House and the Bundestag in Bonn pay to Community legislation by comparison with the other 10 member states.

If we were to agree to a provision such as is outlined in the new clause, we would thereby set a precedent for the handling of other types of Community legislation. In other words, the repercussions would go very wide indeed. The new clause would represent the thin end of a very important wedge. It would be wrong to prejudice the general discussion of scrutiny procedures by introducing special arrangements for one small class of Community legislation in the way proposed in the new clause. On those grounds, I hope that the hon. Member for Newham, South will not press his new clause. If he does, I recommend my hon. Friends to reject it.

Mr. Cryer: The House is crowded because many hon. Members are here to vote and then leave; they are not interested in the Bill. That is not good enough. The proposed legislation is eroding the sovereignty of this place, and the erosion has continued for too long and has been allowed to go too far.

What is wrong with the Minister getting, as the new clause suggests, some sort of approval from the House before negotiations are entered into? It would be a strengthening measure. The Minister could argue with the strength and support of the House behind him, if that were the decision, or use the decision of the House as a bargaining counter in negotiations in the EEC.

There are those who imagine that the EEC is a sort of western European fraternal gathering, but it is not like that. It is a number of nation states that argue together so that they can obtain the best possible advantage. Britain nearly always loses out. We go to the negotiations and we are

"full of sound and fury",

but that signifies little. We nearly always leave the negotiations in a worse position and with the obligation to pay more. The EEC is not a fraternal body of harmony and light in Western Europe.

The new clause would strengthen the Minister's hand because the British Parliament would constitute a considerable force and view. If the nation felt that we were being too abrasive towards the Common Market, to use the words of the Prime Minister—that is the accusation that she made against the Government of Lord Callaghan, as he now is—it would have the opportunity to make changes at the next general election. We always claim that there is democratic accountability. That being so, why cannot the Minister accept the new clause and accept that if the House makes judgments that those outside do not like, they are in a position to change the composition of the House? There is nothing wrong with that.

[Mr. Cryer]

Democratic accountability provides a backstop. It ensures that we shall remain in some degree of harmony with the nations that we represent in the Chamber. It would be a backstop if the nations felt that we were being too harsh or not harsh enough. There is nothing wrong with that.

The Minister wishes to throw out the new clause, and he argues that he must have freedom to manoeuvre. That freedom means that a Conservative Minister travels to the EEC after a Cabinet decision to give way yet again. He arrives at a deal, having come under pressure from other EEC Ministers. He returns to the House and makes a statement that, for example, regulation 2891/77 will allow the Common Market to have overdraft facilities with our national funds. It is a fait accompli. The regulation does not have to be debated by the House because it is a part of Common Market legislation that is directly applicable. In that way the matter is done and dusted. Of course, there might be a debate. The matter might be raised during a debate on the European Community, when we have about 25 documents before the House, most of them about half the size of the Bible and about as incomprehensible as the Bible written in Sanskrit. It is possible that someone might drag the issue into such a debate.

We are proposing that there should be some scrutiny before the negotiations are presented to the House as an accomplished fact. It is appalling that the Minister is rejecting the proposal, but it is not unusual for Governments, following advice from civil servants, to take such a view. It is more convenient not to bother too much with the House. The previous Labour Government took much the same attitude. I thought that it was the wrong one then and I think that it is wrong now.

I genuinely believe, not simply as a point of view held while in opposition, that the Government should be more accountable. If the ideas are strong enough and can be presented satisfactorily they may convince the Committee that new clause 4 should be passed.

New Clause 4 seems to have much merit and is a test of the Government's earnestness when they claim that the position of Parliament will be retained. Clearly it has not been retained. The Minister mentioned Jacques Delors. Jacques Delors meant what he said when he claimed that 80 per cent. of all legislation will emanate from Brussels after the next 10 years. Some hon. Members may accept that, and want to make themselves redundant and subordinate themselves to some kind of parish council function. I do not.

Let me make it absolutely clear. Jacques Delors is a former chairman of the institutional affairs committee of the EEC Assembly. As such, he was a supporter of Altiero Spinelli, who was the moving figure behind the Single European Act and regarded it as a crushing blow to his aspirations of federalism for western Europe and the creation of a western European united states. That is Jacques Delors's aim and the aim of the majority of the Commissioners. It is certainly the aim of the majority of the Assembly although fortunately not of all of it. However, there is a comfortable majority.

It is up to the Government, if they are serious about retaining some power and preventing the slide towards political union—which I guess the majority of hon. Members would reject if the issue was presented to them clearly—to show some spirit and accept proposals such as new clause 4.

The trouble is that the Government proclaim that they are not in favour of European union and she who must be obeyed by the Conservatives has already said that she does not favour it. However, she has allowed this legislation to come before the House. It has not been withdrawn. I do not know whether the Cabinet has discussed the bones of the Bill and decided that there would be no amendments and the whole Bill would be pushed through. That is the likely suspicion bearing in mind the drafting nature of the Bill. It appears likely that someone has said, "How can we draft a Bill that gives all the powers that we want to subordinate our position even further in the Common Market and is the most difficult form of words to allow amendments to be selected?"

We have a bare bones of a Bill. A new clause has been proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). The Minister has an opportunity, but he has had his instructions to reject anything that modifies or changes the Bill. The Prime Minister's speech in Bruges was simply propaganda. It had no basis in truth. If there was any basis in truth in that speech, she would have given instructions to get the new clause agreed, as, indeed, the earlier new clauses should have been agreed. However, she did not do that. That is a sign that the Bruges speech is propaganda and has no basis in truth and that the country is sliding—although not inexorably—towards the European and western united states that the majority of our citizens do not seek. They accept the trading arrangements to some degree, but they do not accept the omnipotence of Brussels and nor should we.

Mr. Higgins: I presume that my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General will have given considerable thought to whether any regulations, directives or instruments relating to the operation of the decision covered by the clause will be necessary. If he has given careful thought to that, he will be able to tell the Committee whether he expects that there will be any such regulations, directives or other instruments. He could help the Committee by telling us whether that is so.

Mr. Brooke: It is necessarily the case, as emerged in the earlier dialogue, that there are issues that might arise and I cited the GNP directive as an example. In the normal course of events, there would be an opportunity for them to be debated in the House.

10.45 pm

Mr. Spearing: Those brief exchanges have been a very useful opener to what I believe is a profound constitutional issue. If we have a Paymaster General coming to the Dispatch Box—I know why—and speaking of this "small class" of legislation when talking about money Bills, it shows the extent to which our minds have either been distorted or our perspectives skewed. The First Lord of the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer would, I believe, agree with my observations. I do not blame the Paymaster General for that slip of the tongue, but it illustrates the almost looking-glass land in which we are working.

I commend the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) concerning European union. That is not a figment of the imagination. If right

hon. and hon. Members will read my speech in the debate before the last Division, they will find my comment that European union is not just on the cards but is with us now. It has been assented to by the Prime Minister and by the House in various international treaties. It is an objective, even though we may be reaching it slowly and reluctantly. Therefore, we must assert the powers of this House over expenditure, because we have no other powers left.

The Government may say, "We want room to manoeuvre." I heard that said before, 10 years ago, when debating this matter with my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). That may apply to legislation, but can it really apply to taxation? Or should it apply to this "small class" of expenditure? Of course not, because it is final and quantitative.

The right hon. Gentleman said that the Government must have room to manoeuvre. Perhaps he is unaware that nearly three years ago, the Prime Minister said, "We do not want to change the treaties, and I am against changing the treaty of Rome." They were able to change it only by using article 236, and that had to be by unanimity. Therefore, we had foisted upon us—I am not going into the merits, although obviously it is a controversial subject —all the amendments to the treaty of Rome, encompassed in the so-called Single European Act.

The Community negotiated with us so that even the Prime Minister had to accept what the Foreign Office probably said was the best of a bad deal. If a United Kingdom Government can force a Bill through the House under a guillotine that has resulted in the Single European Act bunch of amendments, which will cause a lot of trouble, against their own express will, we can see the downside of future negotiations. I leave the Committee with those thoughts, because they are factual. Nobody can controvert them.

I did say that this was in the nature of a probing amendment. I hope that it will prove to be the short opening debate in a very long and fundamental debate that will take place not just across the Floor of the Committee but throughout the nation and in all our political parties, whatever may have been their former stance. We are talking about the ability of the House, and of the United Kingdom Government, to determine what shall happen within this country. That is an issue that we should all address with the greatest seriousness at our command. It is too late to go on now, so I beg to ask leave to withdraw the new clause.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Bill reported, without amendment; to be read the Third time tomorrow.

Local Government

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Local Government (Prescribed Expenditure) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1534), dated 6th September 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 9th September, be annulled.—*[Mr. Allen McKay.]*

10.49 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): What is happening in local government is very important, and it is rather a pity that we have not the time needed to discuss such important regulations. They are intended to replace the regulations formerly made following the Secretary of State's announcement on 9 March that he intended to apply a further stranglehold to local government. This further tightening of the restrictions was to amend the definition of prescribed capital expenditure. When the Secretary of State foolishly made that statement on 9 March he had no idea what he was doing or what was going on, and it is because we in the Labour party realise that the Secretary of State lacks a sense of judgment that I support the motion tonight.

The Secretary of State's lack of judgment was made clear in his admission to the House on 25 April, when he said:

"I did not know what was going on".—[*Official Report*, 25 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 105.]

Yet well before 9 March, agreements were made between local authorities and the private sector, taking place with the advice and guidance of the Department of the Environment. It is also clear following his statement on 25 April that the Secretary of State took his action on 9 March without realising the full implications of his action for the position of local authorities.

Too often the House is subjected to Dispatch Box policies when major changes are made in some announcement from the Dispatch Box. On the occasion of the 9 March statement, those major changes put in jeopardy local authorities' capital investment throughout the country. Capital schemes involving the private sector were to provide houses and sheltered accommodation for the elderly, badly needed leisure centres in the communities, town and city redevelopments, harbour improvements and the dredging of docks, the building of marinas—particularly by coastal towns—the building of car parks and arrangements with housing associations to build houses and bungalows for the elderly. There were also plans by local authorities to provide extra accommodation for the staff needed to apply the poll tax next year.

There was no doubt in the minds of those who defended local government that those were the kind of schemes being programmed by the vast majority of local authorities. It is significant to note what happened following the Secretary of State's backdown, when he had to admit on 25 April that he had made a "cock-up" of his ill-considered statement. He did not know what was going on: that is what he told the House. Because of the devastating circumstances involving hundreds of local authorities, he agreed to consider the capital schemes that were in the process of going forward, so that he could issue further capital allowances. Suffice to say that over 400 applications have been received by the Department, just over half of which have been acted upon.

I ask the Minister to inform the House how many applications for additional capital allowance have been made to the Department, and how many of those have been agreed. It would be of interest to local authorities and to the House to know the total number of additional allocations made and the criteria which he has adopted in considering those further bids. We must know in which order the Department is dealing with the requests for additional capital allocations. Is there an order and, if so, is it alphabetical or is it based on the date of application? That must be answered, as some schemes were well advanced before 9 March, but were caught up in the new policies announced by the Secretary of State. We demand to know how and in what order those delayed schemes are being considered by the Secretary of State.

I shall give an illustration. The scheme planned by the Wakefield metropolitan district council for the development of the Castleford town centre has been in the pipeline for six or seven years. A series of obstacles had to be overcome by that authority, including compulsory purchase orders, the application to the Secretary of State for the urban development grant and the acquisition by the council of the freehold on the new development in exchange for the old part of the town to the developers.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Is my hon. Friend aware that the request for the urban development grant for Castleford town centre and the Pontefract development has now been on the Minister's desk for about two years? In that area £4 million a week have been taken away from local people's spending power since the miners' strike and the local business people have had a traumatic experience. Now, local businesses are about to close and become bankrupt, purely because they cannot go any further with the development scheme until they know whether they have obtained the urban development grant.

Mr. O'Brien: My hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) is correct to support the point I have made, because the Secretary of State has been involved with that planned inner-town development for some time. He has been responsible for delays before and since 9 March. When will the people of Castleford be allowed to see their town centre improved and developed? I hope that the Secretary of State will address his remarks to that question. What number does that development rank in the 450 or so applications before the Secretary of State? What considerations must be undertaken before the additional capital allowance is made? We would like some answers to those serious questions.

The Wakefield metropolitan district council is also waiting for a decision on the Headlands development in the centre of Pontefract. Again, that programme was in the pipeline well before 9 March. That involves a commercial development by a private developer in partnership with the local authority and involves the building of a new school for the Church of England, substantial improvements to roads and car parking and a general inner-town redevelopment. All those proposals are in line with Government policies, but they were dramatically stopped by the Secretary of State, and one has to ask why.

There are many other schemes at risk, because of the inadequate decision of the Secretary of State and the uncertainties following his promise to consider further capital allocations for schemes submitted by local authorities. Newcastle is waiting for a decision on the provision of a multi-storey car park that involves sector finance. Westminster is waiting for a decision on a multi-million pound scheme to replace depot facilities, to renovate and repair two large housing estates and to replace a Victorian hostel for homeless men. All those plans involve private sector finance.

Greenwich has arrangements with a housing association to build 300 homes to accommodate some of the 15,000 households that are on its waiting list. Lewisham is planning a two-hall extension to accommodate the additional staff needed to implement the poll tax and the necessary additional education staff required after the abolition of the Inner London education authority. Doncaster has plans to provide offices for an additional 100 staff needed to administer the poll tax.

The Secretary of State promised that there would be consultation with the local authorities about the Government's earlier proposals, after which the new regulations would be introduced. What was the form of those consultations? If the new regulations are those now before the House, they will do nothing to help local government. They do little more than clarify the uncertainties of the earlier regulations and do not address the concerns of local government.

During the consultations, the Association of Metropolitan authorities made it clear that the proposals will result in a reduction in private sector investment in inner-city areas. Lease and leaseback schemes have been the favoured means of encouraging joint venture projects between local authorities and private developers. Such schemes have, in the main, been accepted by the Secretary of State. They are not at risk. I hope that the Minister will explain what came out of the negotiations. It would appear that no meaningful discussions took place.

Local authorities have made it clear that the implementation of the poll tax will mean that more offices will be needed to accommodate additional staff. They have stated that to reduce leasing arrangements on buildings from 20 years to three years will have a devastating effect on their ability to provide such offices. It is also clear that the additional allowance of £25 million in 1988-89 is far from adequate to compensate for the change in the regulations. How did the Government arrive at that figure? We have a maze of regulations before us that are extremely complex and difficult to interpret. We believe that the regulations provide the background to the Government's intention to change the capital control system for England and Wales in 1990-91.

Does the Minister confirm that the consultation paper, "Capital expenditure and Finance" published in July, has particular relevance to the regulations? Does he accept that the new system of regulations will enable the Secretary of State to exercise stricter controls on borrowing and expenditure through annual credit approvals?

The explanatory note on the regulations before us refers to capital receipts. Is it the Government's intention to restrict local authority use of capital receipts? At present local authorities can use all their capital receipts to finance additional expenditure. Do the Government intend to restrict local authorities' use of capital receipts for housing and other projects, arising from the July consultation paper?

Finally, will there be any new method of debt repayment by local authorities? Is the Minister aware that the new proposals in the July circular will add £800 million to local authority costs in the first year of a 100 per cent. increase to the latest poll tax figures issued by the Government?

In view of the mismatch of these regulations and the fact that there is little change from the previous regulations, I ask the Minister to withdraw paper No. 1534.

11.5 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The Social and Liberal Democrats are opposed to the statutory instrument and support the prayer against it. It must be recognised that many local authorities have been forced into some form of creative accounting because of the Government's system of capital controls. We accept, and have always accepted, that there must be a top limit on borrowing, but Government policy is too unfair and too impractical, particularly in this statutory instrument. I shall focus on the role of private enterprise, which is apparently close to the hearts of Tory Members.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West) *rose*——

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman should allow me to elaborate. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] I shall not give way, so the hon. Gentleman can sit down and bide his time. He can hear what I have to say before he comes back and he might find it instructive.

In the 1987 manifesto, the Conservatives said:

"For the sake of those living in our inner cities we must remove the barriers against private investment."

Many authorities see this prescribed expenditure amendment as just such a barrier to private investment because many authorities have undoubtedly kept to the required principles on capital expenditure, but believe that the best service for local people will result from leaseback deals with commercial companies. In that sense we are tonight debating a prime example of Conservative party double-speak, welcoming the combined efforts of private enterprise and local government on the one hand and blocking it on the other.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities is concerned that the proposals will result in a reduction in private sector investment in inner-city areas. What assurances can the Minister give that that is not the case? The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors is

"concerned that a whole range of perfectly legitimate transactions could be adversely affected. Similar transactions have been a staple element of efficient property management for many years and it is important that they should not be needlessly hindered."

It also states:

"Restrictions on leasing arrangements will also have a highly adverse effect on the leasing market and investment market generally."

The Audit Commission has advised the Government that in the interests of sound estate management and to enable authorities to rationalise their property holdings, capital expenditure controls should be relaxed. It would be interesting to hear from the Minister by what means he encourages such joint venture projects between local authorities and private developers.

[Mr. Taylor]

As a result of these new regulations many worthwhile projects have been abandoned, despite local authorities, with the private sector, undertaking the sort of enterprises that the Government say they want authorities to do. My first example concerns an excellent project to alleviate the housing crisis in Tower Hamlets. Some families have to stay in bed-and-breakfast accommodation for as long as three or four years because of the shortage of housing stock. In an effort to alleviate this, Tower Hamlets combined with private finance to provide temporary accommodation outside the borough. It would have involved a total of 2,400 people. That project has now had to be abandoned.

In Tower Hamlets, a project for 800 homes for shared ownership schemes over three years and 300 to 400 ordinary rented homes for people in Tower Hamlets provides another example. The sites were to be sold to housing associations in Globe Town. The project has now been abandoned. Both examples were genuine and enterprising ways of raising private capital to cope with the crisis of homelessness in the inner city. Both were cancelled by a Conservative Government who claim private enterprise as their own——

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Were those the plans that the Liberal council had to abandon because they were racist?

Mr. Taylor: It would be hard to describe as racist providing people with accommodation, thereby allowing them to leave bed-and-breakfast accommodation. It is hard to describe as racist giving people the chance to own their homes—a chance that is not available to them now. That was all to be done with the aid of private enterprise in a way that the hon. Gentleman and Government Front Bench spokesmen would support.

Whatever local authorities do to comply with the new regulations, their efforts to encourage private enterprise are being undermined and thwarted by the Department of the Environment and its Ministers. Apart from the regulations, the DoE has another failure to account for: its incompetence and inability to deal with the huge amounts of direction and control it has taken on itself have resulted in delays which are also causing projects not to happen.

The last time this subject was debated in this place, my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) mentioned a scheme in Tower Hamlets which was effectively outlawed in February 1987. On 13 February of that year, Tower Hamlets wrote seeking an exemption, and, apart from the odd holding letter from the Department, having chased the application and sent a delegation, the council had waited for 14 months for a response from the DoE by the time my hon. Friend spoke. During the previous debate, the Under-Secretary of State agreed to look into the matter. I checked with Tower Hamlets today; it has still heard nothing. The council has now been waiting for 20 months for action from the Department.

This is a scheme that would house between 300 and 400 people and would save the council £7 million in bed-and-breakfast payments, yet the Government are either sitting on their backsides unwilling to act, or they cannot cope—I suspect the latter explanation is the true one—because they are so determined to control everything councils do that they cannot do the job they have set themselves.

My local authority, Carrick, as a result of stopping barter and leaseback schemes, had to revise its proposals for Truro city hall. The council made every effort to comply with the new regulations. After a meeting with the Minister we sent in the application on 9 July, the closing date for applying for an exemption. We heard nothing. In late August, the council chased up the application, only to be told that the DoE had never received it. Naturally, the council immediately sent a duplicate copy, but even as it was sent off, the council received a note from the DoE acknowledging the earlier application that had supposedly never been received.

The application had not even been processed within a reasonable time. Now my council is awaiting approval of an application made in July which will clearly fail, not by being ruled out by Government regulations, but because the Government can no longer process the applications for all the things they have decided to assume control of. I am sure there are many more examples of that. The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) listed a large number of them.

The Government's actions are ill thought out and ill judged, and will wreck the ability of properly elected local government bodies which are determined to serve local residents and meet the needs that they elect them to meet. The Government are stopping them fulfilling those functions. No private company could operate like this, or be expected to put up with these sorts of delays. It would knock on the door of local government claiming back the expenses it had been put to. I remind Conservative Members that most of these schemes involve reputable sources of finance—building societies, housing associations and even large developers such as Barratt. It is not a stop on the lunatic Left. It is a stop that is immediately affecting sensible councils across the country——

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Taylor: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to defend that, of course I shall give way.

Mr. McLoughlin: On behalf of his party—whichever one he speaks for tonight—will the hon. Gentleman say whether it is his intention to have no controls on local government? Would he allow all local authorities, regardless of how reckless, stupid and idiotic they may be, to carry on with their policies and expect the Government of the day to take no action? Is that the policy that he is advocating?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman may recall that I opened my remarks by saying that we need some controls, but not these. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Department of the Environment issued a circular listing the councils that were involved in lease and leaseback deals which was so inaccurate, poorly judged and misinformed that on 14 April the Department had to write to the office of my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey to disassociate itself from the justifications for its actions. It was not thought through properly then, and it still has not been thought through. The Government would do better to withdraw the ban now and admit that they got it wrong than to pursue it further.

11.15 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The regulations relate to the statement made by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 9 March that made all leaseback arrangements illegal. After he had finished making his statement, at about five o'clock, I quickly faxed the statement to the borough treasurer in my area—at a cost of £20 to myself—because I knew that housing projects in my borough would be affected, as would the opportunity to effect vital housing improvements. But it was impossible to avoid the block, which was to apply from midnight that day. It is a ridiculous way to govern—to announce the block in the House and to implement it from midnight without consultation. It was a scandal.

The ban scuppered the plans of local authorities to build thousands of homes, especially in London where many people are homeless and low paid and many families live in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. The ban was especially savage in London, because thousands of new homes were under consideration with the private sector under the leaseback arrangements. It was impossible for the local authority to change over to doing the job without leasing because property values in London are so high. It caused a severe problem.

Projects in my borough were affected, including the site of Leytonstone football ground, where 32 houses were to be built. They had been purchased by the Samuel Lewis housing trust, which was financed by City merchant bankers, and were to be leased back to the council for homeless families. Half had already been built and 10 homes handed over, but £1·5 million had to be paid. The local authority had no alternative but to continue funding the project and to find £1·5 million out of its other important housing projects. That was equivalent to a cut in its housing budget overnight.

At Cogan avenue in Walthamstow, 161 dwellings on council land had been sold—that is what the Government want councils to do—to London and Quadrant housing trust. The accommodation was built with privately raised finance and then leased to the council for occupation by homeless families. Without the financial security of leaseback, the 120 homes on that site cannot be built.

At Larkswood mews in Chingford, 46 dwellings have been built by Barratt and purchased by the East London housing association with private finance. They were to be leased to the council for 20 years for homeless families. Those homes have now been completed, but, because of the block, the residents can stay there for only 11 months. In effect, that site is now being used as a giant hostel. Families will be upset when they have to move. It is crazy that 46 homes with gardens are being used as a hostel. It is wrong that the council has to foot the bill for that as well as face all those problems.

I should like to make another brief point, which is that leaseback could have been used for bringing forward a scheme relating to the large-panel construction estates which are dilapidated and have structural problems, so that those estates could be put on the agenda and dealt with. Such schemes have been blocked although they offered important opportunities for the refurbishment and redevelopment of low-rise properties which would have improved the environment. It is tragic that such schemes have been blocked and it is wrong that the Government have not come up with an alternative.

The Government should stop and think again about the regulations. They should stop putting blocks on councils which are trying to address their serious local housing needs, especially when they are trying to combine with the private sector deal with a desperate housing crisis.

11.21 pm

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): We should be careful about what we are debating. We are discussing the movement from a series of short-term measures to permanent provisions. We are doing so not because we want to stop councils doing things which are valuable and not because we want to stop people going forward with capital investment, but because we want to stop people going forward with capital investment under spurious schemes.

Any Government—one of the party of the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) just as much as this Government—must take into account spending by local authorities. We must all have rules under which local authorities make their spending decisions. In the past, local authorities have been prepared to keep to sensible rules without too much trouble and have accepted that there are certain means of financing which are obviously nonsense and which no sensible local authority would follow.

Local authorities have started to do such things only because they have decided that it is they who will decide what the national economy should be; they who will decide what they will take from the general cake; and they who will decide what the nation owes them. But that is the Government's job. It is the Government who must decide the amount of resources available and how they should be shared out. It is obviously unfair on local authorities with high standards if they find that some local authorities use means of increasing their allocation to their own good, but to the detriment of others.

Therefore, all that we sought to do was exclude the kind of operation that enabled local authorities to lease their own town hall and then use the money to get round the capital arrangements—the kind of operation that was clearly designed to use techniques of leaseback, not for any sensible economic purpose but to avoid the perfectly reasonable capital spending controls that all Governments must have and which any economic policy necessitates.

The economic policy that has necessitated those capital spending controls has proved to be successful year after year. It is the economic policy which has brought down unemployment so notably, which has made us the fastest growing economy among our neighbours, which is crucial to the development of this nation and which has put Britain back where it ought to be, instead of in the slough of despond that it was in when we came to power. Therefore, it is important to defend that economic policy.

It is reasonable for the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) to say that there are many things that we should like to do, but the question is whether it is reasonable for particular authorities to use financial stratagems to do things that other authorities are unable to do because they keep to the spirit of the rules. I say honestly to him that it is sad that most of the local government legislation that the Government have had to bring forward would not have had to be introduced if local authorities had obeyed the spirit of the rules instead of trying constantly to find a sneaky way round them.

[Mr. John Selwyn Gummer]

It is sad that a small number of local authorities have brought the great business of local government into disrepute by using stratagems that their forefathers would not have dreamt of using, because they would have seen those techniques as beneath them, and not the sort of thing that anybody with civic pride would use. Therefore, I say to the hon. Gentleman that one has to be careful.

The hon. Gentleman gave us a list of things with which he suggested we should concern ourselves. Many were ones that we should have liked to see. I am happy to say to the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) that, on the proposal for Castleford town centre, which is an urban development grant scheme and associated with an "in-and-out—pipeline" application, the local authority was asked for additional information, which we received on Friday. We shall process it as rapidly as possible.

The hon. Member for Normanton should be careful with his list. He mentioned the disgraceful fact that Lewisham town hall has not been able to go ahead with its development and extension. It is true that we have had an application from the chief executive, but in his letter he admitted that the full council had voted against the scheme. Half the Labour party came down on one side and half on the other. It is difficult for us to approve an application for an allocation for a scheme that the council apparently does not support. It is a bit hard to complain that the Government are responsible for the obvious dislocation in Lewisham town hall.

At the moment we have two sets of "pipeline" and "in-and-out" schemes, as the hon. Member for Normanton knows. A large number of schemes have been proposed, many right at the last moment, so he will understand that some are still under consideration. Under the pipeline scheme we have determined 102 applications, of which 45 have been approved and 57 refused. Among those approvals are some applications that were not necessary. On the "in-and-out" scheme, 72 applications have been determined—32 were approved or the application was unnecessary and 40 were rejected. It is reasonable to say that of the 437 schemes put to us, we have already determined 174.

We are dealing with applications broadly in order of date of receipt, but we pull out cases where there is a specific need to try to pass them more quickly because of a tender date, and so on. I assure the hon. Member for Normanton that if he gets in touch with me, I shall do my best to get through the special schemes that he wants. I should be happy to answer any questions that he wants to raise with me. I am open to consider any case where he feels that I should hurry things on because of a special reason.

If the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) looks more closely at some of his proposals, he will see that Tower Hamlets was trying to avoid the perfectly reasonable capital controls, but it did not need to, because Tower Hamlets has 2,526 vacant dwellings. If the local authority got on with a sensible letting policy, it would not have this problem. We all know that the problem in Tower Hamlets is that it is probably unlikely that the local authority knows that it has that number of vacant dwellings. There is a difficulty there in trying to solve the problem. It would be helpful if the hon. Gentleman went to his friends in Tower Hamlets to see whether he could do something to help the local authority solve its problems rather than blaming the Government.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are looking at the pipeline application for Truro which involves the barter of a car park for refurbishment of the town hall. It is not the top application on the list, but when we come to it we shall do our best.

The problem with the case put by the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) is not that the things Leyton wants to do are awful or that they would not help people. Many of them would be helpful, but the problem is that Leyton wants to do them by avoiding its fair share of the arrangements which help councils over the country as a whole. It is not on to say, "We have found a quick and easy way round it, even if it is with a private developer, and we expect the Government to let us go ahead with a scheme that will do somebody else out of money," nor is it right to spend too much money in local government in order to hit the Government's economic strategy.

I hope that the House will accept that the regulations are reasonable and will enable us to share fairly among councils that which is available and will stop people doing things that their ancestors would never have dreamt of trying.

Question put and negatived.

PETITION

West Lodge Schools

11.32 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I have a petition from 793 parents, children, staff and friends of the West Lodge first and middle schools in Pinner. Each school is expanding from two to three-form entry and will each be taking in 360 children by 1992. At present, they have permanent capacity for only 280 and 260 children respectively. Extra but temporary accommodation is being provided by the use of mobiles and rooms in an adjacent semi-derelict dairy.

The petitioners wish to secure the erection of purpose-built accommodation. The semi-derelict dairy is unsuitable and the temporary buildings encroach on play areas that are already 2,000 sq ft below the level recommended by the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981. The local authority has drawn up a feasibility study for a new wing to provides each school with the necessary three extra classrooms, but Harrow cannot adopt it without authorisation for capital expenditure from the Department of Education and Science.

My constituents ask that the Secretary of State for Education and Science authorises capital expenditure in 1988-89 for the London borough of Harrow to undertake the building project at the West Lodge schools.

To lie upon the Table.

Major Peter Cory

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

11.32 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): This is the second Adjournment debate dealing with the case of Major Peter Cory, the first being held nearly 25 years ago, on 30 June 1964. By any criteria of judgment, the case of Major Cory is quite remarkable. Hopefully, it is unique and will remain so.

It is a case that will not go away, nor should it be allowed to go away. It is about an injustice, a miscarriage of justice, which not only has yet to be put right but which, as I discovered only a few months ago, has been compounded over the years by the Ministry of Defence. There is now a second dimension to the case of Major Peter Cory.

In 1961, Major Cory was charged with operating dishonestly the president of the regimental institute's fund of 60 Company Royal Army Service Corps, which he commanded, and which was then stationed in Kenya. In due course he was sentenced by court martial to the heavy term of one year's imprisonment. A shameful series of events resulted in him serving his sentence before his appeal was heard by the court martial appeal court. In a scathing judgment, the appeal court totally exonerated Major Cory, pronounced him innocent of all charges and declared him to be the victim of a miscarriage of justice. Major Cory later received some financial compensation.

The case caused grave concern in Parliament. The then Secretary of State for War, the late James Ramsden, presided over a War Office inquiry. It is a remarkable and unacceptable feature of that inquiry that neither Major Cory nor his legal advisers were called to give evidence, although his advisers were told to be prepared to do so. The Secretay of State's lengthy statement on the findings of the inquiry is to be found in *Hansard*, 17 December 1963, columns 1049-59. The Secretary of State was questioned the following day, 18 December, at columns 1249 to 1259.

The case of Major Peter Cory did not end there, as perhaps the War Office hoped. The Member of Parliament for Basingstoke at that time, Mr. Denzil Freeth, raised it in Adjournment debate of 30 June 1964, at columns 1310 to 1320. Over a period of nearly a quarter of a century, nine written complaints have been submitted to the Minister of Defence by Major Cory, by his legal advisers, and by three successive Members of Parliament for Basingstoke—Mr. Denzil Freeth, my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) and myself.

The case of Major Cory did not end in 1963 because so many people who have studied it believe that Major Cory remains the victim of a miscarriage of justice. The essential argument is that, although the miscarriage of justice that Major Cory suffered was acknowledged by the courts martial appeal court in April 1963, that miscarriage of justice has been perpetuated, primarily by the demonstrable, irrefutable and culpable inaccuracies made to the House of Commons by the late James Ramsden. I refer to the *Official Report* for 17 December 1963, columns 1949 to 1959. I have studied the statement and the whole of Major Cory's case for more than four years. Along with others who have done this, I have concluded that Major Cory will not be, and cannot be, fully vindicated as a result of the miscarriage of justice that he suffered unless or until the Ministry of Defence acknowledges and accepts the inaccuracies of the statement made to the House by the late James Ramsden.

One of the reasons why, 25 years ago, the inquiry was convened was, to quote from a letter that the Minister of Defence wrote to Major Cory,

"to supply Parliament with a true history of the case".

That has not yet happened. For 25 years, Major Cory and his advisers have pleaded with the Ministry of Defence. For 25 years, the Minister of Defence has resisted. It is abundantly clear that Ramsden did not supply Parliament with sufficient facts for the true history of the case to be understood, and that at key points his statement is irreconcilable with the judgment of the courts martial appeal court, which exonerated Major Cory. It is abundantly clear that the Secretary of State presented as fact what the appeal court had demonstrated to be false, and that he denied what the appeal court had established to be true. Major Cory appears in a less favourable light because of it.

Ramsden told the House of Commons:

"The searches made both by the prosecution and defence after the trial failed to produce any . . . material documents."

Yet, pivotal to the appeal court's exoneration of Major Cory was nothing other than the discovery of material documents. It is said in the judgment:

"Some . . . discovered after the close of the Summary of Evidence . . . others . . . were found after the trial had concluded."

One cannot have it both ways.

Referring to the 15th charge which, as my hon. Friend the Minister will be aware, was one of theft of £47 9s, which, during the court martial, the prosecution claimed to be the cornerstone of the case against Major Cory, Ramsden told the House of Commons:

"The respondents, in the course of the hearing . . . did not seek to sustain the conviction on this charge".—[*Official Report*, 17 December 1963; Vol. 686, c. 1054-6.]

That is not so. The 15th charge was withdrawn long before the appeal court hearing, since the prosecution was unable to substantiate that charge. What Ramsden should have done in this very Chamber was to explain how the War Office confirmed a conviction and a prison sentence on the prime charge, knowing full well that it was unable to substantiate the charge.

The inquiry was also convened to present to Parliament

"a considered conclusion on the handling of the case by the legal and military personnel involved".

Again, I quote from a letter that the Ministry of Defence wrote to Major Cory. Ramsden's statement came to no such conclusion. It contains no reference to the stinging rebuke and condemnation to be found in the appeal court judgment and, once again, Major Cory appears in a less favourable light because of it.

Time and again over 25 years, detailed arguments have been presented to the Ministry of Defence. The files must be enormous. It cannot, with any intellectual honesty, be denied that Ramsden omitted many crucial factors in his presentation of the case. It cannot be denied that his statement neither accurately reflects nor recalls the criticisms made by the appeal court, nor that it contradicts the judgment. The statement contains no fewer than 23 errors of fact as established by the court martial and the appeal court. The individual significance of those

[Mr. Andrew Hunter]

inaccuracies varies considerably, but their collective significance is to deny Parliament a true record of the case. That was the primary purpose of the inquiry.

In his reply of 26 May to a written question that I tabled, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary acknowledged that Ramsden

"made certain omissions in his statement",

but my hon. Friend would also have us accept that that

"these were made in the interests of brevity".

He would also have us accept that the statement

"should not be taken to contradict or minimise Major Cory's complete exoneration by the courts-martial appeal court's judgment".

I must tell my hon. Friend quite bluntly and frankly that neither Major Cory, nor his legal advisers, nor myself, will accept what my hon. Friend asks us to accept.

Now comes the second dimension to the case of Major Peter Cory. In January this year, Major Cory had occasion to believe that a situation almost beyond belief prevailed. I corresponded with the Home Office and tabled two written questions. The truth was soon revealed. Despite national interest in the case at the time, exoneration by the appeal court, a War Office inquiry, the grave concern expressed in Parliament and 25 years of relentless campaigning by Major Cory and his advisers, the legal department of the Ministry of Defence—or, as it was at the beginning, the War Office—had failed to notify the national identification bureau that Major Cory's conviction had been quashed on appeal. For 25 years my constituent, Major Peter Cory, had been labelled as a criminal and he was not a criminal. I appreciate my hon. Friend's frankness in this and, in his answer of 26 May to my written question, he said:

"I regret that due to an administrative error by the MoD Major Cory's name was not removed from the records"—[*Official Report*, 26 May 1988; Vol. 134, c. *325-6*.]

How truly remarkable is the letter written to Major Cory's solicitors by the Ministry of Defence on 7 October this year. When the Minister had already accepted the Ministry of Defence's responsibility, how truly remarkable that a Ministry official should ask Major Cory's solicitors:

"Who do you consider responsible for advising the Bureau of the quashing of the conviction?"

After all that has been said and done over 25 years, can it be that the MOD needs to inquire of Major Cory what the conviction was for, where it was recorded and when? Such a letter does little to command confidence in the MOD legal department. It is too indicative of MOD's long-standing treatment of Major Cory. The original injustice that Major Cory suffered has been compounded by this revelation. There is a disgraceful consistency in what many would describe as MOD's callous disregard for and treatment of Major Cory. From first to last, the MOD has found him a nuisance and an embarrassment. He has been an inconvenience to the system. It is not good enough for my hon. Friend to

"regret that due to an administrative error by the MoD Major Cory's name was not removed from the records".—[*Official Report*, 26 May 1988; vol. 134, c. *326*.]

It is not good enough for a Home Office Minister to ask me to pass on to Major Cory apologies for the

"inconvenience which he has suffered as a result of the records of NIB being incorrect."

Major Cory has not suffered an inconvenience; he has endured a ruined life. Responsibility for this starts and finishes with the MOD and the War Office before it. Enough is enough. Although with the passing of time it may be thought that the events and concerns of 25 years ago are of decreasing importance and significance, justice is timeless. If evil men can be punished for what they did in a war which ended more than 40 years ago, why cannot a good man receive, after 25 years, that full, complete and total exoneration which he so justly deserves? My hon. Friend alone can answer that question since the power and the responsibility to do so is his. A miscarriage of justice of a quarter of a century ago has been perpetuated by the MOD. The time has come to call a halt to it.

Major Cory has suffered immeasurably at the hands of the MOD. Indisputably, the Ministry has a moral obligation, and arguably a legal obligation, to put an end to a wretched saga. A positive response is called for.

11.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on securing this Adjournment debate. I pay tribute to him for the considerable interest that he has shown in the case of Major Cory over the years and the support that he has clearly given to his constituent.

I am sure that Major Cory is most appreciative of all the efforts that have been made over the past years in support of his interests. This is a sad case and little credit reflects on many of the parties involved, both originally and in the intervening years. I shall seek to respond to the arguments which have been advanced and give my hon. Friend the assurances that he is seeking.

Before dealing with the specific matters that have been raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke, I shall set out briefly a summary of the history of the case that he has raised.

Major Peter Cory RASC commanded 60 Company, Royal Army Service Corps from its formation in England in July 1958 until December 1960. The company was a unit of 24 Infantry Brigade Group based in Kenya. Throughout his period of command, Major Cory personally operated the president of the regimental institute's fund. These were non-public moneys that were used for the welfare of the unit in providing small additional amenities, such as sports equipment. Queen's regulations prescribe that these accounts should be audited at regular intervals, but unfortunately this was not done in accordance with the laid-down procedures.

Major Cory left the company on 17 December 1960 to return to the United Kingdom on 21 December 1960. In November 1960, he had appointed a board of officers to carry out an overall audit of unit funds and accounts as part of the handover of the unit to his successor. That board could not complete its task in respect of the president of the regimental institute's fund, because the quarter ending 30 September had not been audited.

On 15 December, two officers of the company appointed by Major Cory began the audit of the accounts for the July to September quarter. My hon. Friend will agree that there is nothing to be gained by going into the detailed account of the various audits that followed, but the accounts were found to be in a very confused state and a cash deficiency was found of £82 15s 7d. In early 1961, Major Cory's attention was drawn to the deficiency and he was asked to meet it. His reply sought to explain it, but was not considered satisfactory.

There were grounds to suspect that the account had not been run properly, and on 6 May 1961 Major Cory was asked to return to Kenya. On 16 May, he was put on a holding charge and placed under arrest. It was unfortunate that Major Cory was not asked to provide an explanation before being arrested, but at the time it was believed that there were valid grounds for concluding that the account had been operated dishonestly. On 25 September 1961 Major Cory was arraigned before a general courts martial in Nairobi on charges relating to the PRI account. The trial lasted for 43 days. There were a number of reasons for its length, but it should have taken far less time and the result was a heavy burden on all taking part.

Mr. Hunter: My hon. Friend the Minister errs in one respect. He does not draw attention to the letter from Lieutenant-Colonel Ackers which draws attention to the fact that there was no deficiency in the PRI account. I hope that my hon. Friend and his advisers will note that. There was no such deficiency, as was acknowledged by the appeal court in due course.

Mr. Freeman: I acknowledge what my hon. Friend has said. On appeal, the original charges were quashed.

Major Cory was convicted of seven of the charges and sentenced to be cashiered—the modern equivalent of being dismissed with disgrace—and two years' imprisonment. As two of the findings of guilt were not confirmed, the confirming officer also reduced the term of imprisonment to one year.

Major Cory completed his sentence and was discharged from prison on 24 July 1962. His appeal was heard by the courts martial appeal court on 9 April 1963 when the court quashed all the convictions and made a number of extremely critical observations on the case. As a result of the quashing of Major Cory's convictions, his Army pay and allowances were restored. On 7 May 1963 he applied to retire voluntarily and that was approved with effect from 1 August 1963. He was given retired pay and a terminal grant. In addition to his back pay and allowances an ex-gratia payment of £7,500 was authorised in consideration of the hardship caused by his conviction. That amounted to three to four years' pay. The amount was arrived at on the advice of one of the official referees of the Supreme Court acting as an independent assessor.

That is a summary of at least some of the facts in this very sad case. Regrettably there were errors, but when the courts martial appeal court quashed Major Cory's conviction, it completely vindicated him. I have already assured my hon. Friend, and I repeat, that that was a complete vindication of Major Cory. So far as the Ministry of Defence is concerned, leaving aside the errors that undoubtedly were committed, that was a complete vindication.

I know that Major Cory feels that that was not the case; in other words, that he was not vindicated. My hon. Friend and other hon. Members have taken up his case and we have corresponded regularly over the past two years on various aspects. The subject was raised in the House before. On 17 December 1963 the then Secretary of State for War, Mr. James Ramsden, made a statement informing the House of the outcome of inquiries undertaken by the Lord Chancellor and himself into the circumstances of the court martial of Major Cory and the subsequent events up to the hearing of the courts martial appeal court.

My hon. Friend has referred to that statement tonight and to the fact that Major Cory felt that it contained a number of omissions and inaccuracies and statements that were open to misinterpretation. I want to make it quite clear that the statement was the outcome of the inquiries undertaken by the Lord Chancellor and the Secretary of State for War. Its purpose was to supply a history of Major Cory's case with the particular criticisms made by the courts martial appeal court, and to give the considered conclusions of the then Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for War on the handling of Major Cory's case by the legal and military personnel involved and on any bearing it might have on the then current legal position in the Army. It was not inteaded as a further public vindication of Major Cory's conduct and character. Perhaps it should have been, but in fact it was not.

My hon. Friend mentioned the concern that Major Cory was not personally involved in the investigation. However, the investigation included interviews with the lawyer who defended Major Cory at the trial as well as —exceptionally, I understand—with the president and members of the court. As I have said that the purpose of the investigation was aimed at internal procedural irregularities and certainly not to serve as a rerun of the original trial, there was no reason for Major Cory's involvement.

I give my hon. Friend the assurance that the Ministry of Defence is ready to receive further representations from Major Cory's legal advisers concerning the accuracy of Mr. Ramsden's statement of 1963. I understand that Major Cory believes that Mr. Ramsden's statement contained inaccuracies and can provide evidence that has so far not been considered. We shall give those representations fair and thorough review.

I wish to make it clear that, if any statements were made to the House that were open to misrepresentation, or if any facts were omitted in the interests of brevity, there was no intention to mislead—and the statement should not be taken to contradict or minimise Major Cory's complete exoneration by the courts martial appeal court's judgment. Major Cory is innocent of all the charges.

That leads me to a regrettable error made in this case that came to light very recently. Owing to an oversight by my Department in 1963, the national identification bureau was not informed after the courts martial appeal court hearing that the convictions had been quashed. The convictions remained on the record of the national identification bureau. I have taken steps to ensure that the national identification bureau's records are now correct, and I understand that it has written to Major Cory confirming that.

In view of that unfortunate error, I have instructed Ministry of Defence officials to re-examine the procedure for notifying courts martial convictions to the national identification bureau, and to devise a system that will prevent a wrong conviction being recorded in the NIB computer, or a conviction not being erased because a reviewing authority has quashed a finding or sentence. I appreciate that that in no way undoes the wrong that has been done, but perhaps my hon. Friend will join me in believing that at least we have taken steps to ensure that such a regrettable error does not happen again. That has now been done, and Queen's Regulations for the Army 1975 are being amended to reflect the changes in procedure. All reviewing authorities have been issued with instructions reinforcing the amendments.

[Mr. Freeman]

My hon. Friend mentioned also the question of compensation. I understand that there has been preliminary correspondence between Major Cory's legal advisers and officials of my Department about the possibility of a claim, but that no details of that claim have yet been made available. My hon. Friend referred to a letter dated 7 October. That came from the Ministry of Defence claims department, and I understand that it was seeking preliminary information about that potential claim. It was not intended in any way as a slight or criticism. I understand that it was designed, at a very early stage in these proceedings, to extract information.

I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that, in the circumstances, it would be inappropriate for me to comment further on the matter at this stage. If we are to enter legal proceedings concerning any potential claim, it will probably be better to allow the normal procedures to run their course.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): As it appears that an ex gratia payment, as it were, has already been made, and as later errors have now been revealed by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Defence, it is clear that there should be reconsideration of the amount that has been paid. I would not want my hon. Friend to go further, but does he agree with that proposition?

Mr. Freeman: I may say to my hon. and learned Friend that we are dealing with a separate issue concerning the failure to erase from the NIB's records Major Cory's conviction after it was quashed. That is a separate issue, which I take very seriously. I agree with my hon. and learned Friend if the sense of his intervention is that proper consideration should be given by the Ministry of Defence to any claims that might arise. I give my hon. and learned Friend my assurance that this matter will be treated very seriously and very thoroughly.

To sum up, I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke for raising this matter and for giving me an opportunity to emphasise to the House that, when the courts martial appeal court quashed Major Cory's conviction, he was totally exonerated by its judgment.

I should also add, because I know that this point has worried my hon. Friend, that any omissions in Mr. Ramsden's statement were made in the interests of brevity. Let me also say that I am as anxious as my hon. Friend that the parliamentary record relating to Mr. Ramsden's statement and questions to Mr. Ramsden should, if necessary, be amended and made clear. He and I are at one on that. We want to ensure that, although the event occurred 25 years ago, the record is clear, unambiguous, constructive and helpful. The appeal court clearly quashed Major Cory's conviction, and it is my duty, which I take very seriously, to ensure that if there were factual inaccuracies—and I trust that the further evidence to be provided by Major Cory's legal advisers, if there are such representations, will be taken seriously—any necessary corrections will be made and put on the parliamentary record.

Finally, I offer my Department's apologies for the error in not notifying the NIB that Major Cory's conviction had been quashed. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would convey my apologies, continued interest in the case and best wishes to Major Cory.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute past Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Tuesday 25 October 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL.
Lords amendments agreed to.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training Scheme

1. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has received any representions from the National Union of Public Employees concerning the employment training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

2. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has received any representations from the National and Local Government Officers Association concerning the employment training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): I have received no individual representation, but I very much regret that these unions and the Trades Union Congress have decided to oppose employment training. In doing this they are attempting to deny long-term unemployed people the opportunity of training that will help them back into jobs.

Mr. Thompson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that NUPE is wrong to suggest that this scheme, which will benefit 600,000 unemployed people with training in a year, is just working for benefit? Should it not take the advice of the Leader of the Opposition and give the scheme its wholehearted support? Does my right hon. Friend expect that view to be supported by Opposition Members this afternoon?

Mr. Fowler: On the latter point, we shall have to wait and see. I confirm again that this is a voluntary programme. So far about 130,000 long-term unemployed people have said that they are interested in employment training, and 60,000 are in training, so the programme is off to a good start.

Mr. Nicholson: Given the undoubted value of employment training, does my right hon. Friend agree that trade unions and local authorities that are opposed to it are betraying the unemployed? Is he satisfied with the conversion of expressions of interest into genuine training courses?

Mr. Fowler: The early indications are that the answer to the second part of my hon. Friend's question is yes. We believe that things are going satisfactorily and encouragingly. By their votes during the autumn the TUC and the Labour party have turned their backs on the long-term unemployed. They have done that when there are 700,000 vacancies in the economy. That is what they have to explain.

Mrs. Mahon: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that this silly game of union bashing has to stop and that a considered decision was taken by the TUC and NUPE on the employment training scheme? They would not subject the unemployed to a workfare scheme that would force people into slave labour the like of which has not been seen since the 19th century.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Lady must decide whether she is backing the leader of the Opposition, for it was he who urged the TUC to back employment training. Had we had an ounce of leadership from the Opposition Front Bench, the TUC vote may have gone a different way.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the difficulties that community care schemes experience in obtaining funding under the new employment training scheme? What steps is he taking to secure the future of such schemes, which help the elderly, the handicapped and other important groups? The schemes are valuable to individuals and families. How can their long-term future be secured?

Mr. Fowler: I shall consider any individual cases, but the figures available so far show that voluntary bodies have about 100,000 places on the new employment training programme. In other words, more places are given to voluntary organisations under ET than under the old community programme.

Mr. Burt: Does my right hon. Friend share my concern and disappointment for those who were expecting training in the Bury metropolitan area, where the labour-controlled council, which previously expressed its desire to join the scheme, only last week took a policy decision to make a U-turn, no doubt under the influence of some Opposition Members and some members of the TUC? Is that not a denial of essential training for people in my constituency?

Mr. Fowler: Yes. It is regrettable when that takes place. The only thing that can be said is that we are finding it possible to provide training to replace the training that would have been provided by the local authorities. However, nothing that I say takes away from the blame that should attach to local authorities which have turned their backs on unemployed people.

Mr. Meacher: If ET is so good, why in many areas is the drop-out rate more than 50 per cent. after the first interview? Is it because the training is of such poor quality, is it because the allowances are so insultingly low, or is it because there is a smell of creeping compulsion about this scheme? Will the Secretary of State give the House what he has so far consistently refused—a guarantee that the scheme will remain voluntary at least for the lifetime of this Parliament; and if not, why not?

Mr. Fowler: In answer to the first question, I said that it was a voluntary programme, but it is subject to the

normal availability for work rules. That is the normal condition for any receipt of social security benefit. The fact that 130,000 people have expressed interest in the programme at jobcentres and that 60,000 are now on the programme speaks for itself. At some stage the hon. Gentleman has to tell the country whether he backs the Leader of the Opposition, who supported employment training. His weakness in leadership has put the Labour party and the TUC in an utterly ridiculous and impossible position.

Employment Training Scheme

3. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently participating in employment training.

Mr. Fowler: Employment training has got off to an excellent start. As at 14 October there were 60,000 people in training with training managers.

Mr. Lewis: Is the Secretary of State aware that his performance this afternoon will be greeted with derision by training agents and training managers throughout the country, who are complaining bitterly about the shortfall in trainees and about the 50 per cent. drop-out rate mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher)? It is a disgrace.

Mr. Fowler: There is no 50 per cent. drop-out; there are no such figures. I can guarantee with absolute certainty that training agents and training managers would not regard the hon. Gentleman as their spokesman in these matters.

Mr. Bowis: Can my right hon. Friend supply the figures for disabled people who are benefiting from the training? Will he ensure that there is careful monitoring of the scheme as it progresses, to ensure that such people benefit from training to enable them to participate in the jobs that are being created in our expanding economy?

Mr. Fowler: Yes. We shall do everything in our power to enable disabled people to benefit from the training programme. Nothing is more important than that we should do that. It is written into the employment training programme, and we shall monitor it as we go along.

Mr. Wallace: What assessment has the Secretary of State's Department made of the demand from women who, because of domestic commitments, have not registered as unemployed and available for work? Is he satisfied that adequate provision is being made to meet that demand?

Mr. Fowler: As the hon. Gentleman knows, there is provision for such women, but, again, we shall want to assess that. It is certainly part of the Government's policy to seek to bring about conditions that will encourage women to return to the labour market. The labour market will need them in the coming years.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the initiative of Nottingham Network, established under ET? Network aims to give tuition to small businesses by offering practical and sound financial advice. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we have a very long way to go in establishing one-man and very small businesses to help in our campaign to reduce unemployment?

Mr. Fowler: Yes. I believe that the Network programme in Nottingham to which my hon. Friend referred is a very promising development. I look forward to its providing more employment in that very important city.

Ms. Short: Perhaps I can help the Secretary of State by reminding him of what my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition said at Bournemouth. He said that ET was a rotten scheme and he advised the trade unions to stay in it to try to make it better. The Secretary of State then closed down the Training Commission and kicked out the trade unions, so he should not quote my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition as being on his side.

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm what the *Financial Times* told us on 17 October: that his Department has issued a confidential circular saying that the priority of restart interviews for the unemployed is, at the first stage, to push people into employment training and, at the second stage, if those people do not take up such training, to find out why not? Is that happening because the right hon. Gentleman is frightened that the unemployed do not like his scheme?

Mr. Fowler: One of the options for unemployed people at a normal restart interview is employment training. There are other options as well. If at the restart interview someone says that he is going to employment training but does not turn up, it is reasonable for the Department to find out why.

On the hon. Lady's first point, she knows as well as everyone that had the Labour party, especially the hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), taken a more constructive view on employment training there would have been an entirely different outcome. I am not prepared to take lectures from the hon. Lady. The Labour party has turned its back on the unemployed, and the public recognise that.

Labour Statistics

4. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures for Stockport.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): In September 1988 the number of unemployed claimants in the Stockport local authority district was 9,300—a fall of 3,000, or 24 per cent., over the last 12 months.

Mr. Favell: In Stockport, within the framework set by the Government, councils and colleges, employers and employees, commerce and industry have combined to create jobs. Are there not lessons to be learnt from that? Is it not remarkable that city councils, such as Manchester, which profess to be anxious to help the underdog should kick him when given the opportunity to help him?

Mr. Lee: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has just said, it is sad that a minority of councils have turned their backs on the unemployed and are not participating in employment training. I am glad to say that, as my hon. Friend has intimated, Stockport city

council is playing a full part. It has a 500-place ET scheme, which is 95 per cent. full. I am delighted with the co-operation between the Stockport city council, education and the private sector.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Will the Minister turn his attention to the point that while Stockport is the most favoured part of Greater Manchester, and although the small decrease in unemployment is obviously welcome, unemployment in the centre of Greater Manchester has not decreased? People have been pushed off the register, but there has been no real increase in employment. The local authority has a role to play and Stockport city council will play its role. When will the Government do something positive about mass unemployment in the centre of Greater Manchester?

Mr. Lee: I do not believe that a 24 per cent. reduction in unemployment in Stockport is a small fall. There has been a fall in unemployment in Manchester from 13·2 per cent. to 10·9 per cent. in the past year. As the hon. Gentleman knows, although there are pockets of inner-city unemployment in Manchester, by and large Manchester's economy is vibrant and buoyant.

Mr. Jack: Does my hon. Friend agree that the economic factors that have brought about Stockport's fall in unemployment have also resulted in lower unemployment throughout the north-west of England? Private enterprise has contributed to that good news. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is a more positive contribution to reducing unemployment than some of the far-fetched plans of some local authorities, such as Labour-controlled Lancashire?

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend is right. There is a tremendous feeling of optimism, pride and confidence throughout the north-west.

Trades Union Congress

5. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he next plans to meet the Trades Union Congress; and what subjects he proposes to discuss.

Mr. Fowler: I have no immediate plans to meet the TUC.

Mr. McAvoy: I thank the Minister for that answer. When eventually he meets the TUC, will he explain why the Government have removed from workers at GCHQ the fundamental right to belong to a trade union? Is he aware that those workers were commended for the part that they played in the Prime Minister's Falklands war? What possible excuse could the Government have for their attack on the rights of those workers and that slur on their patriotism?

Mr. Fowler: That was clearly the subject of a statement by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who has responsibility for it. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) should listen. As my hon. Friend said, action is necessary because, in the period 1979 to 1981, 10,000 days were lost at GCHQ as a result of industrial action.

Ms. Short: Two days.

Mr. Fowler: I do not believe that any Government could stand by and allow that kind of action to take place in a security installation.

Mr. Latham: Is it not extraordinary that, even in the depths of the recession, some industries were reporting major skill shortages? Should that not be discussed with the TUC so that we can give our training programme, and especially some of the remaining training boards, a jolly good shake up?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, it would be sensible for the Government and the TUC to discuss that aspect. NEDC is one area where we have been talking about just that. I underline what my hon. Friend has said. There are indeed skill shortages, and this emphasises the need for more training in this country.

Mr. James Lamond: Should not the Secretary of State be seeking a meeting with the TUC to apologise for the constant repetition by him, by other Ministers and by Tory Back Benchers of the claim that the TUC has turned its back on the unemployed, when he and those Ministers and Back Benchers were responsible for creating long-term unemployment, constantly denying having any responsibility for it and doing absolutely nothing about it except to make 24 changes in the method of counting in order to have a cosmetic effect on the figures?

Mr. Fowler: The Government have put forward the biggest training programme for long-term unemployed people not just in this country but anywhere in western Europe and are devoting a substantial amount of public finance to it. The TUC at its congress voted to boycott the programme, so it has indeed turned its back on the long-term unemployed in this country, and the public understand that only too well.

Mr. Roger King: Were my right hon. Friend to seek to meet the TUC, will he highlight the contrast in the attitude of the trade union movement in this country and the opportunities for jobs by comparing the situation in Dundee, when it was hoped that a Ford plant would be set up there, with the enlightened attitude at Bridgend, where Ford will indeed be investing, thanks to the co-operation of the unions in providing the right environment for that investment?

Mr. Fowler: Again, my hon. Friend is right, certainly with regard to Bridgend and the attitude of the Transport and General Workers Union in Dundee, where the only result was to turn its back on literally a thousand jobs. The Labour party and the TUC are turning their backs on unemployed people in this country in all kinds of ways. If they want to show real concern for unemployed people, they need to change their policies on training and inward investment.

Mr. Meacher: Will the Secretary of State reconsider the disgraceful decision to sack workers at GCHQ for no other reason than that they are members of a trade union? When will the Government ever learn that the right to membership of a trade union is not just a hallmark but a gurarantee of a free society? If the Government are genuinely interested in rooting out the unreliable, when will the Secretary of State learn that it is trade unionists who are the patriots and old Etonians who are the traitors?

Mr. Fowler: The last comment was silly, even for the hon. Gentleman. I know that he is running very hard for the shadow Cabinet, but he cannot get away with that kind of comment. Union action was targeted on GCHQ to gain publicity for a whole range of other issues, and 10,000 days were lost at GCHQ.

Ms. Short: Two days.

Mr. Fowler: In my view, the action taken by the Government is entirely justified.

Action for Jobs

6. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the action for jobs initiative.

Mr. Lee: Action for jobs was launched in 1986 to raise public awareness of the wide range of help available through the employment, training and enterprise programmes of the Employment Department group.

Central to the campaign was the "Action for Jobs" booklet, and it is a measure of its success that more than 7·5 million copies of the booklet have been taken up.

Mr. Hanley: Does my hon. Friend agree that a recent study by the independent research organisation MORI has shown that advertising reaches those who need the services of the Department of Employment? Will he therefore continue to use advertising to reach those in need and not listen to the Labour party, which tends to think that any piece of good information reaching those who need it is called "political"?

Mr. Lee: Our action for jobs programme was a great success in raising awareness of our range of programmes, and within it we produced the first ever comprehensive guide to the whole range of programmes. We intend to continue in that way. Group publicity expenditure for 1988-89 is forecast at £49·5 million, or less than 2 per cent. of our overall programme spend.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not somewhat of an empty initiative for handicapped support organisations, such as Smile in Cumbria? Is the Minister aware that, following the phasing out of the community programme, it cannot employ people under the new training scheme? Is he further aware that it has had to approach Cumbria county council—rate and cash-strapped as it is—for additional funds? Does that not mean that the Government are with the one hand closing employment opportunities while with the other artificially trying to create them?

Mr. Lee: I am not aware of the programme to which the hon. Gentleman referred. The Department is spending about £3·5 billlon this year on its overall employment and training measures and about £144 million on specific programmes to help the disabled.

Mr. Devlin: Will my hon. Friend take an early opportunity to thank the staff in the northern region who have done so much to promote interest in the action for jobs initiative? Will he congratulate them on the success of the Government's strategy in that region, where unemployment has fallen consistently for 26 months? In my constituency unemployment has fallen by about one third since 1987.

Mr. Lee: I am sure that when any of my ministerial colleagues next visit the northern region they will take up my hon. Friend's suggestion and praise the staff of the employment service for what they have achieved.

Earnings

7. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the adult work force earn less than £3·30 per hour.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): It is estimated from the new earnings survey that about 30 per cent. of the adult work force, including both full-time and part-time employees, earned less than £3·30 per hour in April 1988.

Mr. Barnes: Is the Minister aware that more and more people are falling below the Council of Europe decency threshold for wages? Is that not deliberate Government policy, being implemented through the abolition of wages councils, the fair wages resolution and the undermining of the labour market through YTS and ET? Is that not a disgrace, given the so-called economic miracle?

Mr. Nicholls: No. The hon. Gentleman referred to the so-called decency threshold, which was merely a recommendation by experts. Not one country within the European Community has adopted that definition. No useful purpose would be served by attempting to help the low-paid by artificially fixing the rate to which minimum pay should be geared.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government have greatly helped the low-paid by providing additional funds to encorage people to accept low-paid work so that they can get on the step ladder back to full employment? Is that not what we are trying to achieve? Does he accept that sometimes people have to take low-paid jobs to learn a skill and so move up the employment ladder and improve their lot and that of their families?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is right. The Government have ensured, by various tax and social security measures, that the rate of pay of the lowest paid members of our society is at a better level than it has been for a great many years. He is also right when he says that the effect of the policies advocated by the Opposition would be to strangle at birth the new jobs that have enabled so many of our citizens to get back into the labour market.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Will the Minister tell the House what proportion of that 30 per cent. are female employees and how that squares with equality of opportunity and pay?

Mr. Nicholls: I can tell the hon. Lady that the incidence is higher for women than for men. Clearly, there are a number of reasons for that. One reason is that many women find that their work patterns fit naturally into part-time work and, by the same token, they will not be involved in overtime as well.

Mr. Conway: Can my hon. Friend tell the House how many extra people would fall into unemployment, and what a grievous effect that would have on the expanding employment market, if he were to follow the advice and logic of the Opposition?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is right. I doubt that it could be completely quantified, but it is clear that if we were to reach the stage of fixing a minimum wage the effect would be to ensure that many employers would find it uneconomical to employ people and it would be impossible for people to get back on to the labour market.

Ms. Richardson: The Minister has failed entirely to tell the House that the new earnings survey reveals, yet again, that women earn only 62 per cent. of men's average earnings, so for every £1 that a man earns, a women takes home 62p. Is the Minister aware that at the moment there is a lobby of Parliament that is campaigning to ensure that there is no watering down of the concept of equal pay for work of equal value? Will he here and now give the House an undertaking that not only will that legislation not be watered down, but that it will remain more simple, so that more women can take advantage of it and claim what is rightfully theirs?

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Lady is right to draw our attention to the fact that women in the labour market and women who wish to return to the labour market have particular difficulties, which should be catered for. Therefore, it is a pity that the employment training programme, in which the eligibility criteria have taken account of the need to be able to bring women back into the labour market, has been boycotted by the Trades Union Congress and some of her hon. Friends. Her remarks and those of some of her hon. Friends about the need to help women in employment will sound far more genuine when they can pledge their full support to employment training, as they should have done many months ago.

Jobcentres

8. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the jobcentre network.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. John Cope): As with any other Government activity, the jobcentres are kept under continuous review.

Mr. Baldry: Given not only the continuing falls in unemployment levels but the increase in some parts of the country in skill shortages, is it not time to think again about the role of the jobcentres, so that they become skills shops as well, where people can identify the skills that are needed in the local labour market and, equally important, where they can go to obtain training for those skills? Is it not also time to think about tying jobcentres more effectively into the training access points initiative and to think of ways in which new technology can better take the jobcentre network into the 21st century?

Mr. Cope: Yes, we are doing all that. We are currently implementing a new programme called SUPERVACS, which is a computer-based vacancy system which is now fully operational in the north-west and is being extended elsewhere. *[Interruption.]* We are introducing direct public access systems as well, which have been piloted in Glasgow and will be extended to the Docklands and Coventry, and we are also following up the suggestions that my hon. Friend made about skills.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House not to carry on private conversations, and certainly not to shout from a sedentary position when answers are being given.

Mr. Vaz: Does the Minister accept that, rather than contracting the jobcentre network, the Government should be expanding it, specifically for those who live in the outer areas of cities? Does he not accept that the prohibitive costs of transport prevent many people from travelling into inner-city areas to use the facilities offered by jobcentres? Will he give sympathetic consideration to the creation of mobile jobcentres to enable services to go to the outer areas and so ensure that the people who live there are treated in exactly the same way as those in the inner-city areas?

Mr. Cope: Yes, indeed, but it is part of the point of the computerised vacancy and direct access systems to which I referred that they make information available in public libraries and so on. The hon. gentleman asked about mobile jobcentres. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is to launch one next week.

Mr. Marlow: In view of the growing and justifiable anger and resentment at the large number of people in prosperous parts of the country who refuse to take available work, will my right hon. Friend change the availability for work rule and bring in instead a looking for work rule?

Mr. Cope: All sorts of new ideas come forward and we consider them all.

Part-time Workers

9. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of 16 to 19-year-olds were working part-time in 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholls: It is estimated from the labour force survey that 3 per cent. of people aged 16 to 19 in Great Britain were working as part-time employees in spring 1979. The equivalent figure for the spring of 1987 was 14 per cent.

Mrs. Golding: Is the Minister not aware that our young people want full-time jobs? They want full-time jobs with training; they want full-time jobs with work protection; they want full-time jobs with decent holidays and they want full-time jobs with a decent living wage. If he is aware of that, when will he provide such jobs for our young people, rather than force them into totally unsatisfactory, part-time, poorly paid jobs?

Mr. Nicholls: I am sure that those young people would not want to be generalised about and told what they are supposed to want. Only 9 per cent. of those young people gave as their reason for taking part-time work the fact that they were unable to find full-time jobs. There are all sorts of other reasons why young people may want part-time work. For example, they may be students who have decided to supplement their grants. The hon. Lady is entirely wrong to draw only one conclusion from the figures.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my hon. Friend aware that many youngsters are employed part-time in the kind of work that is available in my constituency, where the tourist industry is the largest employer? Many of them work

part-time to supplement the allowances that they receive while they are at college or university, and we must encourage that.

Mr. Nicholls: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right. More than 80 per cent. of the increase between spring 1979 and spring 1987 was among students. Clearly, there is nothing wrong in students' deciding that they want to start to earn some money on a part-time basis as part of the process of making their way in life. There is nothing wrong in that, and obviously that is why Opposition Members condemn it.

Mr. Morley: Is the Minister aware that many young people are being exploited by firms through poor pay and poor conditions? Furthermore, as a direct result of the young workers' scheme, many of the firms that have exploited young workers are non-union firms and have intimidated and frightened them into not joining trade unions? When will the Government protect the rights of people to join the union of their choice rather than taking those rights away, as they have at GCHQ?

Mr. Nicholls: The question has nothing whatever to do with GCHQ. If the hon. Gentleman has firm evidence concerning the exploitation of the young, he should give it to the relevant authorities. I hope that he is pleased that more is being spent on training than at any time in the past; about £1·4 billion is now being spent, as opposed to £380 million when the Labour party was last in office. The figure has more than doubled in real terms.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: To what extent does my hon. Friend consider that the failure of young people to get full-time jobs is due to the low quality of education in some of our schools? If young people are turned out unable to read properly, to spell or to do simple arithmetic, how can they do the full-time jobs that arise in an advanced society?

Mr. Nicholls: If the state of a young person's education was so poor that he could not get a full-time job, I doubt whether he could get a part-time job either. However, my hon. Friend has given me the opportunity to make the point yet again that only 9 per cent. of young people gave as their reason for taking part-time employment the fact that they could not get full-time employment.

Mr. Cunliffe: We should not let the junior Minister get away with the complacency shown at the Dispatch Box today. Young people want full-time jobs. Young people want jobs with training. If those disgraceful figures that he has given to the House are combined with the fact that there are more than 100,000 young people at 16 in jobs with no training at all, that is a national disgrace. As the demographic downturn takes place during the next months. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must ask questions.

Mr. Nicholls: Once again, that illustrates the pitfalls of writing one's diatribe before listening to the answers. There is nothing complacent about the information that I have given to the House.

Mr. Cunliffe *rose*——

Mr. Nicholls: What I have given to the hon. Gentleman is fact. What he does not like is the fact that the Government's record for training both youths and adults is extremely good. If the hon. Gentleman really cared about members of society who would benefit from training, he and his hon. Friends would be doing something about backing employment training.

Small Businesses

10. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the director-general of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the development of small businesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: My right hon. Friend and I are in regular contact with the CBI to discuss issues affecting small firms and other matters.

Mr. Moss: As a result of the Government's enlightened policy towards small businesses, through deregulation and assistance, through such measures as the small firms advisory service, enterprise agencies and the enterprise allowance scheme, is it not true that successful small businesses are being created at an unprecedented rate?

Mr. Cope: Yes, indeed. The latest VAT statistics show that about 1,000 extra firms register for VAT every week.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: As small businesses have a substantial contribution to make to the reduction of unemployment in rural areas, may I ask what new initiatives are being considered by the Minister's Department, in consultation with the Secretary of State for Education, to make young people more aware of the benefits of setting up in business in those areas?

Mr. Cope: They are not specific to rural areas, but the technical vocational and educational initiative does exactly that job all over the country. Obviously, the Rural Development Commission has a particular responsibility for rural areas. Because of the importance of job creation in small firms, to which the hon. Gentleman correctly drew our attention, there are a number of enterprise training courses for young people, as well as for adults, to encourage them and to assist them in setting up small businesses.

Employment Training Scheme

11. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if any representations have been made to him by Derbyshire county council on the employment training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Derbyshire county council wrote to my right hon. Friend in April setting out its opposition to employment training. I regret that negative attitude, but I am glad to say that we now have all the training places needed in the area.

Mr. McLoughlin: Will my hon. Friend be careful not to take any strictures from Derbyshire county council? Is he aware that it has just undertaken one of the most expensive job training schemes ever announced, in that it appointed as its chief executive a former Labour Member of Parliament at £46,000 a year? He had no training for the job and he had to resign. Does my hon. Friend think that the attitude of Derbyshire county council, if it spread to a national level, would do anything at all to help the people of this country?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is right. If one looks at the attitude of that authority, one sees an attitude to the training of the long-term unemployed that is thoroughly reprehensible. I dare say that my hon. Friend has it in mind that when the Leader of the Opposition belatedly came out in favour of employment training, he was joined by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who was quoted the next day as saying that if, in fact, the TUC came out against employment training it would send the wrong message to the unemployed—indeed, it did. The message that it sent them was a slap in the face.

Part-time Workers

12. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to improve the rights of part-time workers to paid holidays, pensions, and overtime payments.

Mr. Nicholls: No. In general, terms and conditions of employment are matters best left for employers and employees or their representatives to determine. Pension rights are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Mr. Michael: In view of his earlier answers, will the Minister accept that the Government are preparing people through training for part-time employment only? In this run-down economy, that especially applies to women. In the increase of those employed since 1983 there are 682,000 women out of a total of 974,000—that is 70 per cent. That offers little hope for women in the future. Part-time employment offers little hope or opportunity except to those whom it suits. All that many people want is a full-time job. When will the Government face their responsibility and provide those jobs?

Mr. Nicholls: Once again, the hon. Gentleman makes his point, but it has no basis in fact. If we were to accept the hon. Gentleman's thesis it would amount to a belief that any form of part-time employment is bad and that only full-time employment can be good. The labour market is extremely varied. Many people find that part-time employment is right for them and many see it as a stepping stone back into full-time employment. Obviously I should not allow the hon. Gentleman's remarks to pass without wishing him, too, the very best of success in the shadow Cabinet elections.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Macdonald: Given the Prime Minister's many previous answers to this question, does the right hon. Lady believe that it is right for the Bank of England to spend so much money on propping up the pound?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend's policy, with which I wholly agree, is to do every single thing to try to get down inflation. The action that he has taken is the action that will do that and it will also succeed in getting down the balance of trade deficit.

Q2. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Curry: In view of the recent series of visits by Western leaders to the Soviet Union, and Mr. Gorbachev's manifest need of Western technology and finance to accomplish the economic reforms that he has promised, does my right hon. Friend believe that the provision of such aid by the West should be linked to progress on liberalisation in Eastern Europe and memorable progress on disarmament?

The Prime Minister: I agree that we very much want to encourage both economic and political reform in the Soviet Union. Indeed, we have been foremost among the nations doing so. I do not think that it is advisable to link that specifically to credits either to the Soviet Union or to Eastern Europe. First, I do not think that it would work; and secondly, we want to have as much influence as possible over them on human rights and such a link would be adverse to the maximum effects that we could have.

Mr. Kinnock: Last year, when the Prime Minister said that:

"child benefit will continue to be paid as now, and direct to the mother",

had she decided then that child benefit was to be frozen, or did the decision to deceive come later?

The Prime Minister: I indicated from this Box that that particular phrase, which is to be found in the Conservative manifesto, would be honoured. The right hon. Gentleman will have the same reply as he had last week. He knows full well that there will be a statement on all uprating. He knows that it will come comparatively soon, either this month or early next month, and he really must wait to see what that statement says.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister is dodging again. On this occasion I think that we can safely regard her silence as an admission of guilt. The Prime Minister is a cheat. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not hear the last word, but I hope that it was not unparliamentary. *[Interruption.]*

Dame Elaine Kellet-Bowman: Will my right hon. Friend —*[Interruption.]*

The Prime Minister *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not hear the right hon. Gentleman's last word. I am certain that if it was an unparliamentary expression the right hon. Gentleman will rephrase it.

Mr. Kinnock: If you did not hear it, Mr. Speaker, the last phrase that I used was, "The Prime Minister is a cheat." *[Interruption.]*

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I must advise the right hon. Gentleman that I do not think that that is a parliamentary expression —*[Interruption.]*—or one that we should use in the House. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to please withdraw it.

Mr. Kinnock: I respect your judgment greatly, Mr. Speaker, and on that basis I withdraw the word "cheat". *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I call Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. Friend find time in her busy day to emphasise to her right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy that if a proposal were to be put to him to store spent fuel from advanced gas-cooled reactors throughout the country on the borders of my constituency, the paramount consideration would be that of safety? Would it not be infinitely more sensible for each AGR station to store its own spent fuel rods on its own site?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, a great deal of capital expenditure is being incurred at Sellafield in order to store spent fuel safely. Her proposal would be a fundamental change of policy which would have to be put to the appropriate authorities. I think that the present arrangements are the best.

Q3. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Home Robertson: "Cheating" may be an unparliamentary expression but it seems uncommonly frequent in the conduct of this Government. If the Prime Minister will not answer in this Chamber the question put to her by my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), will she come to Scotland to explain to 6,000 mothers in Govan why they should sacrifice again and see their child benefit frozen for the second year in succession in order to fund the £2 billion-worth of tax cuts that have been given to the richest 1 per cent. of people in this country?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman must wait until the uprating statement is made. May I remind him that last year a greater amount was spent on helping the poorest families by increasing their benefits than would have been spent on uprating child benefit as a whole. I should have thought that some Opposition Members would prefer a greater amount of money to go to young children, as happened last year. With regard to the future, the hon. Gentleman must await the statement which he knows will come.

Mr. Wilshire: As part of my right hon. Friend's ongoing, highly successful reforms of local government financing and service delivery, will she find time during the course of the day to send a message of support to the new Conservative administration on Bradford city council as it seeks to grapple with Socialist excess and Socialist waste?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I will gladly send a message of goodwill to that new administration. I hope that it will place the finances of that authority on a sound and sustainable financial basis for the future, which will bring great credit to the new administration.

Dr. Owen: With the amounts of compensation for the Piper Alpha rig disaster very much under discussion, is it not time that something was done for the families of those who have lost their lives as a result of the IRA? Should not the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board be far more generous when we realise that the family of a Member of this House who lost his life four years ago in the Brighton bomb disaster was offered only £24,000 after three years? Does that not suggest that a lot more needs to be done for the victims of IRA bombings?

The Prime Minister: With regard to the right hon. Gentleman's point about Piper Alpha, as he knows, that has yet to be decided. I think that there is a delegation to my hon. Friend the Minister of State this afternoon to discuss the possible payment of costs on the inquiry. With regard to the IRA and the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, I take note of his point and will pursue it.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Will my right hon. Friend find time during her busy day to have discussions with Ministers from the Department of the Environment about the plight of the innocent victims of Socialism in Brent, where teachers are being thrown out of work and services cut because of the council's mismanagement? Is not the verdict of the electorate—a derisory 3·8 per cent. of the vote for the Labour party in an election last week—just and deserved?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I entirely agree. If local authorities run their finances badly it is the ordinary people who will pay for the consequences, and I hope that that lesson will be learnt.

Q5. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Audit Commission be asked by the Government to inquire how the freehold of Tory Central Office was purchased from Westminster city council, or does the Prime Minister take the view that if British Aerospace can make so much profit from privatisation there is no reason why the Tory party should not also make a killing from the public purse? Has Ivan Boesky anything to learn from enterprise culture and from members of her Government?

The Prime Minister: The short answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is no, not as far as I am aware. With regard to privatisation as a whole, it has been brilliantly successful and greatly to the advantage of most employees.

Q6. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gregory: As the tax and prices index has shown such a modest rise as 3·9 per cent., thanks to this year's cut in income tax, will my right hon. Friend urge employers to take that into account, and particularly to give a boost to profit-related pay?

The Prime Minister: I agree that that factor should be taken into account. As my hon. Friend will have seen from the latest figures, the increases in average earnings are such that our unit labour costs are not quite as competitive as they have been with those in Europe. It is therefore vital that increases should be taken in relation to the profit that has been made. I hope that my hon. Friend will point out to employers that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor made special provision for less tax to be paid on amounts that are distributed from profits than would have been paid on straight increases in earnings.

Q7. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Beith: Will the Prime Minister now address herself before it is too late to the merits of child benefit, not the least of which is that, because it is not withdrawn as income rises, it does not create the kind of poverty trap that the switch of that aid to other benefits is likely to produce? If it is important that those who are already rich have an incentive to work, is it not also important that those who are at the bottom of the scale receive the full advantage of their own efforts to better themselves?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, child benefit is composed of two factors: first, the old family allowance, which was a plain, straightforward distribution to all families; and, secondly, the income tax allowance. The two were combined, and therefore child benefit has not only one quality.

The hon. Gentleman must wait for a statement on all upratings, including child benefit. Let me point out, however, that any indiscriminate benefit has a lot of what is called "churning", in that it takes money from one pocket, puts it through a bureaucracy and it goes into the other.

Mr. Allason: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of my constituents who are victims of the Barlow Clowes affair are deeply grateful for the reported interest of my right hon. Friend in the report? Will she give her urgent support to the Department of Trade and Industry for the private sector's lifeboat to assist them?

The Prime Minister: Anything that the private sector decides to do will be welcome. There is, perhaps, some confusion when these matters are called lifeboats and are compared with what happened in the mid-1970s. At that time no taxpayers' money was ever involved. The Bank of England took action to put secondary banks into liquidity and the money was repaid. Alternatively, they were put into liquidation. That has absolutely nothing to do with the present circumstances. *[Interruption.]* I notice that Opposition Members are noisy. We remember how much many people lost when, under a Labour Government, the stock exchange crashed to 150.

Division List

3.30 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I point to an error in *Hansard* of 20 October, which shows me voting No in conjunction with my honourable namesake, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown), in the defence debate last week? I would not raise the matter now had it not given rise to repeated press comment, most notably in today's issue of *The Daily Telegraph*. I should be most grateful if the error could be corrected.

Mr. Speaker: I can confirm that the hon. Gentleman voted Aye in the Division in question and that his name mistakenly appeared twice, showing him to have voted in both Lobbies. I understand that the hon. Gentleman has received an apology for this error.

Ministerial Answers

3.31 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will have noticed during Prime Minister's Questions that when my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition asked his second question, the Prime Minister refused to answer. Can we construe from that that she is exercising her right to be silent before she abolishes it?

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for what people say, or do not say, in this Chamber, provided that it is in order.

Limitation of Speeches

3.32 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I draw your attention to the fact that during last week's defence debate several hon. Members sat throughout both days' proceedings without having the opportunity to speak? Will you give serious consideration to applying the 10-minute limit every time we have large numbers wishing to speak?

Mr. Speaker: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern. With hindsight I might have applied a 10-minute limit on both days, but last year fewer hon. Members wished to speak on the second day. I note what the hon. Gentleman has said, and I shall comment on this matter again shortly.

Consumer Protection (Registration of Professional Chemists)

Dr. Michael Clark, supported by Mr. Donald Anderson, Mr. Malcolm Bruce, Mr. Ted Garrett, Mr. Tim Janman, Mr. Michael Lord, Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson, Mr. Austin Mitchell, Mr. Gordon Oakes, Sir Trevor Skeet and Mr. Nicholas Winterton, presented a Bill to extend and entrench the protection of the consumer by means of a system of statutory registration of professional chemists; to protect the public interest by achieving higher standards of practice within the profession of chemistry and to highlight the skills of members of the Royal Society of Chemistry; and for purposes connected thereto: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 218.]

State of the Economy

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. Further to the point of order raised on the 10-minute limit on speeches, as this is an additional Opposition day, the Chair has no formal power to enforce a 10-minute limit, but I think that it would be right, and for the convenience of the House, if speeches were limited to 10 minutes between 6 and 8 o'clock, in the hope that hon. Members who speak after that time will not exceed the limit. I hope that I have the agreement of the House for that suggestion.

3.33 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the Government's mismanagement of the economy, which has produced record balance of payments and trade deficits, damaged the country's trading and industrial interests, and brought high interest rates as the Government's only response, with resultant higher costs for homebuyers and for industries trying to compete in home and foreign markets; is concerned by the failures of supply side policy which mean that British industry is not properly equipped to meet current demand or future challenges; insists that the Government must not make public expenditure on investment, services and welfare, including Child Benefit, a victim of its own incompetence; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to adopt an effective strategy for investment in economic efficiency and social justice for the United Kingdom.

It is now seven months since the Chancellor came to the House at the end of the Budget debate in March and told us that he was presiding over an economic miracle. These have been seven months during which, with real interest rates among the highest in Europe and inflation rising to the highest in Europe, every major forecast and assessment that the Chancellor has made has been proved wrong.

The right hon. Gentleman told us in March that inflation would be 4 per cent. Now that it has risen to nearly 6 per cent. his only response is to tell us that it will rise for many months to come, making this the longest temporary blip in history. He told us in March that imports would rise by 7 per cent. this year. They are now rising twice as fast as that—by 15 per cent. He told us in March that the trade deficit would be £4 billion. Now that it is rising above £10 billion it has worsened three times faster than he predicted. He told us that savings would rise because of his top-rate tax cuts. Now they have fallen. He told us that unemployment would fall throughout the year. Last month it started to edge upwards. He told us in March that interest rates were just about right. They have risen eight times to 12 per cent. He told us in March that the money supply would increase within a range of 1 per cent. to 5 per cent.; possibly by as little as 1 per cent. Now that it is rising by 8 per cent., this favoured indicator of the earlier years was not even considered worth a mention in the Chancellor's Mansion House speech.

Historians will be interested to know what special powers the Chancellor has over the Prime Minister that she should witness these appalling errors and then describe them as brilliant, wonderful and marvellous. The right hon. Gentleman was wrong about inflation, about interest rates, about imports, about savings, about trade deficits and about the money supply, and his response is to tell us that what we need is self-discipline—not from him, but from everyone else who borrows and spends. These problems could have been averted if the Chancellor had practised some self-discipline himself——

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The hon. Gentleman talks of the need for self-discipline. In view of his party's wild promises to spend money, will he say how much more than £38 billion his party would now spend?

Mr. Brown: I do not know from where the hon. Gentleman gets his figures, but they are clearly wrong. If he produces a list for me I shall look at it, but I can tell him that there are no such commitments.

In November last year the Chancellor told us that the pound was just about right at about 3 deutschmarks. He told us in March that, at 3·07 deutschmarks, it was unlikely to be sustainable. In April he told us that the pound, then at 3·10 deutschmarks, would not rise much further. Since then it has been as high as 3·22 deutschmarks, and even now it is at about 3·14.

What does the right hon. Gentleman say about that and about all his other forecasts? Does he say that they were unfortunate, or ill advised? Does he say that he was over-optimistic? No. Now that all his forecasts have failed, his response is to try to do away with forecasting. Most of us would say that the proper response is not to discard the Chancellor's forecasts, but to keep the forecasts and discard the Chancellor. His forecasts have been wrong because his strategy has been wrong, and as the teenage scribblers who criticise him now include not only commentators in the City but senior Back Benchers on both sides of his party, his strategy should have been different and clear from the beginning.

When there was a boom and overheating in the south-east, when that overheating was creating inflationary pressures in its wake, when demand in the economy was outstripping our capacity to supply it, and when, most of all, despite the rise in investment this year, investment has been rising far more slowly than consumption over the past nine years, the Budget should have been as we told the Chancellor at the time: a Budget for investment. In March, when there was an imbalance between investment and consumption, we told him that he should have chosen to boost investment. When there was an imbalance between the south-east and the regions, we told him that he should have chosen to boost the regions, to the benefit of both. Instead, he boosted consumption at the expense of investment, and the south-east at the expense of the regions, to the detriment of both——

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): The hon. Gentleman talks about investment. Is he aware that manufacturing investment is rising by 13 per cent. a year? When did it ever reach that level under a Labour Government?

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to educate him about the real levels of investment in the economy. Is he not aware that it is now nine years since the Government came to power and that manufacturing investment, in real terms, is now only just creeping back to the level of 1979? Can he name any other comparable competitor country that has put itself in that position, especially as it is this country that had North sea oil and it is this country that should have used it to invest?

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): The picture that the hon. Gentleman is painting is of great gloom and despondency. Why, then, it is that the Ford motor company, a multinational, has selected south Wales to

[Mr. Roger King]

invest in its largest ever production capacity? Is it because there are opportunities here that are not available anywhere else?

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and hope that he will join me in congratulating the workers in Wales. I should like to point out to him that the finance director of Volkswagen said only a few days ago that although wage rates here are 45 per cent. lower than in Germany, he could not contemplate investing here because the skills in Germany were far superior as a result of their investment in education and training.

The tragedy is that, because of the Chancellor's mistakes, his top-rate cuts for a few in March have been paid for in the mortgage and price rises of the summer and autumn and are now, we fear, to be followed by public spending and child benefit cuts in the Autumn Statement and during the winter.

Let us look at the impact of what the Chancellor has done this year on families up and down the country. We know that many of the 7 million who depend upon housing benefit and income support are already worse off as a result of the changes following the social security reviews. We know also that pensioners, who received only a 4·2 per cent. rise in their pension last year, and who will receive only a 5·9 per cent. rise this year, now find that their pensions just cannot keep pace with the prices that they have to pay.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Has the hon. Gentleman forgotten what the Labour Government did to pensioners by switching from the historic to the forecast method of uprating? Will he tell the House what happened to pensioners under the Labour Government?

Mr. Brown: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman what the previous Labour Government did. They linked pensions to earnings. They raised pensions in line with earnings. Let me tell the hon. Gentleman that the result of breaking that link between pensions and earnings has been to take a cumulative total of £18 billion from pensioners over the past nine years. When the Chancellor boasts about the fiscal surplus, let him remember that it has been attained on the backs of the pensioners.

We know that over this year households have been faced with price rises that are higher than even the ordinary levels of inflation—11 per cent. rises in electricity prices, 10 per cent. in water, 10 per cent. in rail and tube fares, 12 per cent. in rates, 6 per cent. in gas and 8 per cent. in prescriptions—rises that are well above the ordinary levels of inflation for basic goods. Those rises make many thousands of families worse off. We know also——

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I am trying to give information about what is happening to people up and down the country. If Conservative Members will listen, they might be able to represent their constituents a great deal better.

We know that for millions of families at, below or just above the average income, the tax cuts of the spring have also been wiped out by the mortgage rises in the summer and autumn. Their tax cut, averaging £4 a week, became £3 after the electricity and gas price rises and £2 after the rate rises, the rises in train and underground fares and the water rate rises. That £2 has been wiped out altogether by mortgage rises.

Average wage earners may have had £12 a month in tax cuts, but they will see their mortgage repayments rise by £30 a month once these are fed through into the demands upon them. First-time buyers, who received around £7 a week in tax cuts, will see their mortgage repayments rise by an average of £38 a month once they feed through. First-time buyers in the south-east, especially those in London, received an average of £21 a month in tax cuts, but now their average mortgage repayments are rising by about £70 a month. What people gained in tax cuts they have now lost in price rises and mortgage increases. The tax handout was followed by the mortgage clawback. The mortgage clawback, although delayed, was an inevitable consequence of the tax handout. The spending power that the Chancellor appeared to offer in the spring was reined back in the summer and is now substantially reduced for the autumn and winter.

This is the first Chancellor in history to give £6 billion in tax cuts and make the majority of families worse off. Having created these problems by his misjudgments in the spring, his response in the autumn is to compound his errors by threatening public spending and by refusing to face his responsibilities for health, housing, education, transport and investment in our economy generally.

We know that there has been overheating and overspending, a credit explosion and a consumer boom, and we know about the economic imbalances that have resulted. There is no overheating in the Health Service, no overspending on our schools and no explosion of credit for hospital or other community building. There is no consumer boom among pensioners and low-income families. The economic imbalances that we face arise not from an excess of public expenditure on those who need it and are entitled to it, but from the extravagance of unnecessary tax cuts for those who are already well off.

If top-rate taxpayers are spending too much on imports, it cannot be the right response to cut spending on hospitals and schools. If the south-east is overheating, it cannot be right to cut investment in the regions. If the economy is unbalanced because of the Chancellor's selective generosity towards a few, it cannot be the right response to cut child benefit for millions of people.

Sir John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): We have been listening to the hon. Gentleman for 16 minutes. May we hear his remedies? Will he put up taxes? Will he renationalise industries? Will he reduce our defences?

Mr. Brown: I have made it absolutely clear to the hon. Gentleman and to the House that it is the imbalances in the economy created by the Chancellor's policies that have caused so many of our problems. We are calling for an Autumn Statement about investment and, if necessary, that would have to be paid for by withdrawing the top-rate tax cuts.

Nothing is more revealing about the Government and their priorities than that they should consider freezing child benefit and putting it in second place after top-rate tax cuts. The Chancellor is prepared to hand out billions in top-rate tax cuts to those who are very rich. He gave people at the top £10,000 a year for each year since 1979, and has added to that an extra £12,000 a year in his Budget. He had added to that cuts in inheritance tax for

those who are well off and cuts in capital gains tax. He did that to such an extent that while the wages and standard of living of many people are starting to fall because of mortgage rises and price rises, people at the top on unearned income are receiving rises not of 10 or 20 per cent. but of 30, 40 or 50 per cent. The Chancellor is prepared to give people at the top on unearned income rises of 30, 40 or 50 per cent., but is not prepared to uprate child benefit even by 45p a week in line with inflation.

Can the Chancellor explain to the House and to the 6 million mothers and 12 million children who depend on child benefit why he cannot uprate it, even when it is known to be the most effective, economical and efficient means of relieving family poverty? He knows that child benefit has a 100 per cent. take-up, while family credit has only a 50 per cent. take-up. He knows that child benefit reaches all poor mothers, while family credit gets to only 250,000 of them. Will he explain why he cannot uprate child benefit in line with inflation when that uprating could be paid out of his £3 billion in tax cuts for those who are very rich, and still leave £2·75 billion?

We have done an analysis of some of the spending implications of the child benefit decision. This year, 2,000 wealthy citizens will gain as a result of cuts in inheritance tax and the reliefs for it. That tax relief is exactly equivalent to the amount needed to upgrade child benefit for 12 million children. We are talking of 2,000 people at the very top, against 12 million children throughout our country. I say that a civilised society would use its cash for 12 million children who deserve it, not for 2,000 taxpayers who do not.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): The hon. Gentleman has been commenting adversely on tax cuts for the rich. Can he explain why he wants to give benefits to them indiscriminately?

Mr. Brown: What we know is that child benefit goes to all who need it. We know that it does not raise problems of marginal tax rates. We also know that child benefit, which goes to 6 million mothers and 12 million children, is a universal benefit that goes to mothers. There is no other benefit like it. Conservative Back Benchers who now diminish the case for child benefit are doing a great disservice to their colleagues on the Back Benches who have supported child benefit for many years and to many of their colleagues in the Cabinet who support it now.

I remind Conservative Back Benchers who, in the past, when it came to uprating matters, have given Ministers the benefit of the doubt, but who will find that there is now doubt about the benefit, of what the then Chancellor said in 1983 when he uprated child benefit. He said that it

"plays a major part in easing the unemployment trap . . . improving incentives for everyone . . . is important for families, and particularly for the low paid . . . provides the greatest help to many of the poorest families in the country."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1983; Vol. 39, c. 143.]

What has changed? Has the case for child benefit changed? Has the argument changed? Has the need for child benefit changed? Or is what has changed the submissiveness of the majority of Tory Back Benchers, whom Ministers can now override with impunity?

This is a Chancellor whose family policy is freezing child benefit, imposing a poll tax that will split up families, cutting investment in nursery schools, taking teenagers off benefit although there are no youth training scheme places for them to take, reducing investment in education and imposing charges for eyesight tests and dental check-ups. He is a Chancellor who will do the groundwork for doubling school meal charges in places such as Bradford, as has happened today. He says that his party is the party of the family. Is there anything more damaging to family life than a failure to provide for decent schools, a decent Health Service and a decent level of child benefit?

Public services and home owners are not alone in being hit by the Government's ill-judged strategy. It affects industry too. High interest rates, which have already added £1 billion to industry's costs, and volatile exchange rates will make it even more difficult for industry to export, and the Confederation of British Industry has already criticised them in many of its conference motions, but the one instrument that the Government choose to use—high interest rates—is the one that does most damage to industry.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington) *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I am not giving way again.

The policies that the Government think right for Britain are actually the policies that are wrong for British industry.

The Chancellor believes that the economy is fundamentally sound. He believes that our prospects are better than ever. If he believes that we are doing well, can he say why, during the past nine years, manufacturing output, which has risen by 45 per cent. in Japan, by 25 per cent. in the United States, by 16 per cent. in Italy and by 12 per cent. in Germany, has in Britain only just come back to the 1979 level? Why has our share of manufacturing exports in world trade fallen? Why, as a test of future prospects, is manufacturing investment not much more than the level of 1979?

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Brown: If the Chancellor believes that we are wrong, that he is right, and that the economy is in balance, he should consider the regions. What sense does it make to have overheating, congestion, skills shortages, pressure on the green belt and escalating house prices in one part of the country and under-investment, under-use of resources, high and persistent unemployment, forced emigration and depopulation in another, which are the results of his policies? Why, even in this year of high growth, are exports growing more slowly than those of all our European competitors, with one exception? Why are our imports growing faster than all countries except Italy and Greece? The result is that we have a trade deficit higher than ever in our history.

The deficits are most worrying because they are not just in our traditional industries, but exist in new high technology industries. Deficits in electronics have grown to almost £1 billion, in computers to almost £1 billion, in plastics to nearly £750 million. We import 50 per cent. of our washing machines and fridges, 60 per cent. of new cars and 80 per cent. of videos and computers. The problem is not the old industries making way for the new, as the Chancellor would like us to believe, but the new industries at home making way for the new industries from abroad which are taking over our market.

The Chancellor tells us that the balance of payments problem does not matter, is neither here nor there, and is something that we should not worry about. However, before the right hon. Gentleman was Chancellor with

[Mr. Brown]

power over the lives of millions he was the editor of a magazine with sales of thousands. He was a humble editor waiting for the power to put his ideas into practice and writing regular articles about problems such as the balance of payments.

I shall tell the House what the Chancellor did not say in those articles. He did not say that the balance of payments problems were neither here nor there. He did not say, as he said in July, that the balance of payments problem was a problem of success. He did not say, as he or his colleagues said in January this year, that the problem was a result of freak figures. He did not say that it was a second-order matter, which I remember him saying to a Select Committee. He did not say that it was self-correcting.

The right hon. Gentleman said exactly the opposite. He said then that the balance of payments "was the overriding priority". He said:

"the balance of payments must come first".

He said, not that it was a second-order matter, but that it must come first; not a problem neither here nor there, but the overriding priority. Perhaps he does not remember that as the editor, rather than as the Chancellor, he said of Budgets at the time:

"Our verdict must be guided first and foremost by what the Budget has done to strengthen Britain's balance of payments."

He was happy to give that advice in the 1960s, but he was not prepared to accept it in the 1980s.

Mr. John Townend: Will the hon. Genleman give way?

Mr. Brown: No. I shall give way to the Chancellor.

No doubt the Chancellor will tell us that the problems of the 1980s are fundamentally different from those of the 1960s and 1970s, that the balance of payments deficit does not matter because there is a fiscal surplus and because it is a private sector rather than a public sector phenomenon, and because, as he said, it has done little damage to the economy. He asks us to believe that this is the first balance of payments deficit in history that does not matter. However, the issue is not whether the balance of payments deficit is a private sector or public sector phenomenon, but whether it will be financed and at what cost in interest rates.

The damage to the economy was already clear on 25 August, at 12.30 pm after the appalling July trade figures were announced at 11.30 am. Investors did not wait to ask whether there was a fiscal surplus and it was OK, or whether it was a private sector or public sector phenomenon in origin, but were fleeing the pound, pushing the pound down and forcing the Chancellor to bend the knee and push up interest rates. That is the damage done to the British economy and British industry.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: No.

Was not the Chancellor nearer the truth about deficits when, in 1969, in similar circumstances, when there was a fiscal surplus, when there was no public sector phenomenon that he could point to as explaining the balance of payments problem, he counselled the then Chancellor:

"There is no case whatsoever for taking the smallest risk with the balance of payments in the coming Budget."

The tragedy is that the teenage scribbler who was right in the 1950s has now become the Chancellor of the Exchequer who is wrong in the 1980s. What has changed is not the nature of the problem, but the scale of the problem, which is now unparalleled in our history. It has changed from a problem in millions to a problem in billions; a problem which the Chancellor will fail to tackle at his peril.

No Government have had the advantages available to this Government. No Government in our history have had the £120 billion that has come in revenues and returns from the North sea. No Government in our history have had £40 billion in asset sales and capital stocks, which they have used for current consumption. No Government have had the £18 billion attained by the vindictive decision to break the link between pensions and earnings. That is £180 billion available to this country that has never been available under any other Government, yet no Government have invested such a small share of our national income in our future.

The Government are investing as a share of our income less than comparable countries in Europe—less than Portugal and Spain and less, of course, than Taiwan and Japan—with the result that we are more poorly prepared for the economic challenges of 1992 and the later 1990s than all our major competitors. We are more poorly prepared in education, when more young people leave school early and have fewer qualifications and when less of our work force is well qualified. We are so badly prepared that there are fewer students at university and college in Britain than there are in South Korea. We are poorly prepared in research and development, in science and innovation and in investment in our work force, which is the key to higher productivity.

If the Chancellor doubts the investment failure and the training gap, skills gap and research gap with which we go into the 1990s, let him listen, not to me, but to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who, a few months ago, said:

"Private sector research and development is a smaller proportion of GDP and growing more slowly than in most major competitors.

The training and skills of our managers and other employees are low compared with our principal competitors.

The level of productivity remains on average about one third to one half less than our competitors."

That was from a Minister in a Government who tell us that they have presided over a supply side miracle.

If we had invested as much as West Germany in these past nine years we would have invested £100 billion more in our future, yet West Germany had no North sea oil. If we had invested as much as Japan in these past nine years we would have invested £300 billion more in our future, yet it was Britain that had oil and Britain that wasted that oil under this Government. If the Japanese had discovered oil, would they have used the windfall resources of oil to close down many of their major industries, such as the electronics industry? If the Germans had discovered oil, would they have used the windfall to close Volkswagen or Mercedes or run down industry in the Ruhr? Would they not have invested even more in their future so that they were better prepared for the challenges of the 1990s?

The Government, who believe that there is no such thing as society, have little regard for the future. This is a Government who, to make a few individuals richer, will

make all our communities poorer. This is the Government who would prefer to give cash to the top 1 per cent. to buy their way into private schools and private education, even into private roads, rather than to invest in proper schooling, proper health care and proper transport for our community.

Our case is not just that the quality of life is being eroded in so many of our communities up and down the country. It is not only that the Government have failed to prepare this country for the economic challenges of the future. It is that this Government's vision of the future is so narrow, so blinkered, so dogmatic that when it comes to choices, against which a Government must be judged, they will always put the needs of children second to those of their friends, those people to whom they gave top-rate tax cuts.

When these Ministers have left office one, two or three years from now, many of them taking up jobs in the City, they will be remembered, not as members of a party that presided over an economic miracle, but as members of a party that squandered our oil money, sold off our assets with no benefit to the nation, paid out top-rate tax cuts which made everyone else worse off, failed to prepare our economy for the future, and left a society ever more polluted, congested, unfair and divided. These are the mistaken policies of now discredited Ministers in a failing Government. The House should vote against those policies tonight.

4.5 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its economic policies which have led to unemployment falling faster than in any other major country, manufacturing output at record levels and investment rising rapidly; welcomes the Government's achievements in restoring the public finances to such strength that the national debt is being repaid, while at the same time income tax rates have been reduced and public spending on priority programmes has been increased; commends the Government's firm stand against inflation and the action it has taken to secure monetary conditions that will exert further downward pressure on inflation; and applauds the Government's supply side policies which have enabled British industry to be more profitable than at any time for nearly 20 years and have led to manufacturing productivity growing faster than in any other major country during the 1980s."

I am sure that the whole House will join me in regretting the temporary absence of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and in wishing him a full and speedy recovery. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

That apart, I welcome this debate. Remarkably, it is almost a year since the Labour party chose to debate the economy. During that time, it has had no fewer than 18 opportunities to do so, but for some reason has failed to take a single one. The speech of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) perhaps explains why. He is obsessed with what he calls "top-rate tax cuts". Is he not aware that the top 5 per cent. of income tax payers now pay a significantly higher proportion of the total tax yield than when Labour was in office? Is he not aware that the whole of the increase in income tax yield in real terms comes from the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers and that the remaining 95 per cent. are not paying any more in real terms? Is he not aware that the purpose of the cuts in the higher rates is to improve incentives and motivation, as we have seen with the economy performing better? The Labour party, is not interested in the economy performing better. It is simply interested in malice.

As for pensions, I was astonished to hear—

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Chancellor's speech is being freely distributed to members of the Press Gallery. Would it not be for the convenience of the House and the better management of the debate if the Chancellor remained seated and gave us all a copy of his speech, so that we could go on with something sensible?

Mr. Speaker: I am concerned only with whether the Chancellor is in order, and he is. Furthermore, he has been speaking for only two minutes.

Mr. Lawson: I was astonished at the impertinence of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East in his comments on pensions. Is he not aware that, while this Government have been in office, pensioners' incomes have grown on average, by 2·5 per cent. a year in real terms, whereas under Labour there was scarcely any increase? The Labour Government robbed the pensioner by changing the system of uprating. They robbed the pensioner by having negative real interest rates. Above all, they robbed the pensioner through the ravages of inflation.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East talked a great deal, as he has in the past, about the real economy—I shall come to that—but I often wonder whether he is living in the real world. I well recall him predicting, two years ago almost to the day:

"The Government simply cannot reduce unemployment by present economic policies."

Since then, unemployment has fallen in each and every month. Today the hon. Gentleman has been bemoaning the lack of investment in the economy—I think that that is what he said. Is he really so blind to what is happening up and down the country—the factories being extended and the new machines being installed? Total investment in the economy is running at all-time record levels, well above anything achieved under Labour, and is currently surging ahead twice as fast as the growth of consumption. That is what is happening to investment today. In the past five years, investment has risen faster than in any five-year period for a quarter of a century, and this year we are seeing a particularly strong investment boom, with manufacturing investment leading the way. That is the truth.

However, it is not merely a matter of quantity. Today's investment is high-quality investment. The days when businesses bought machines and equipment simply for tax reasons are over, thanks to the corporation tax reforms that I introduced in 1984. It is partly, though not wholly, as a result of that that the rate of return on capital in manufacturing industry is better today than it has been for nearly 20 years.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East appeared, however, to be particularly—if not exclusively—concerned with public sector investment. That is one of the blind spots of Labour Members. When they talk about investment, they mean exclusively public sector investment. If that is what they consider important, however, let us talk about it.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Does the Chancellor agree that there are different kinds of investment and that

[Mr. Andrew Welsh]

it is a dangerous form of investment when a foreign company can step in and take over the largest remaining native-based manufacturing company in Scotland—Scottish and Newcastle Breweries? Will the Government use section 13 of the Industry Act 1975 to prevent such a takeover and protect jobs in this country?

Mr. Lawson: The misbegotten Industry Act 1975 was never used by the Labour Government, let alone by the present Government. But let me continue. Let us consider the Labour Government's record on public investment when they were in office and had a chance to put their views into practice for the last time. Let us see what they did.

Under Labour, spending on roads fell by 40 per cent. in real terms. We have increased it by 30 per cent. in real terms. Not content with cutting nurses' pay by 20 per cent. in real terms, the Labour Government slashed capital spending on hospitals by nearly a third. We have increased hospital spending by more than 40 per cent., just as we have increased nurses' pay by more than 40 per cent. in real terms. That is the difference between this Government and the Labour Government. That is the difference between what Labour Members say at the Dispatch Box now and what the Labour Government actually did when in office.

The investment boom now taking place throughout the country is a sign of the new-found confidence of British business and British industry. That confidence has infected the entire British people—indeed, that is why they have been saving less and spending more.

Mr. John Garnett (Norwich, South): Private sector investment is not an end in itself but a means to an end—the end being competitiveness. If the picture is as glowing as the Chancellor claims, why are we suffering such a colossal imbalance of imported manufactured goods?

Mr. Lawson: The sign of competitiveness is the size of our share of world trade in manufactured goods. For the first time in decades, under this Government we have maintained our share of exports and world trade in manufactured goods.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): In relation to that claim, what credence does the Chancellor give—most people give considerable credence—to the Ernst and Whinney ITEM analysis which shows that our share of world trade in manufactures, at 6·9 per cent., is at its lowest ever and that we have been overtaken by the Italians and are in danger of being overtaken by countries such as Canada, Spain and the Benelux countries? Does the Chancellor believe those figures? If not, will he tell us what is wrong with them?

Mr. Lawson: Those figures were certainly faulty, and the official figures are correct. If the hon. Gentleman will write to me, I will explain to him in detail the methodological errors in the Ernst and Whinney figures.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Do tell us now!

Mr. Lawson: As I was saying, the investment boom now taking place is a sign of the new-found confidence of British business and industry. That confidence has infected the entire British people. Indeed, that is why they have been saving less and spending more—so much so, in fact, that we are growing rather too fast. I do not expect Labour Members to know much about that, as it is a problem they never had to face—indeed it is just about the only economic problem that the Labour Government did not have to face.

However, it is absolutely clear that the problems that we now have would have been infinitely worse had I accepted even the smallest part of the advice that Labour Members gave me at the end of last year and for much of this year. The House will recall that, when the stock market crashed last October, the Labour party took it as a signal that the recession which it had been confidently predicting every year for the past six years was finally upon us.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): We warned against the possibility.

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman was depicting in the most lurid colours the collapse of capitalism which he believed was coming to pass.

Mr. Holland: As the Chancellor will be aware, we said that if there was a cut in the United States budget deficit, the world economy would slow down. The fact that there has not been such a cut is one reason why we have not had a crisis on that scale.

Mr. Lawson: Even on that narrow point, there has been a slight cut in the American budget deficit, but the world economy has speeded up.

At that time—it is all on record—Labour Members were urging me to cut interest rates far more than I was prepared to do. On top of that, they called for expansionary fiscal measures to be taken. Unless we altered course, they claimed—to quote the motion that they tabled for the last Opposition day debate on the economy—there would be

"serious implications . . . for investment and employment".
—[*Official Report*, 5 November 1987; Vol. 121, c. 1084.]

I rejected their advice, and did not alter course. The House has already heard the results, especially for investment. Far from recession, the problem is that the economy as a whole, and domestic demand in particular, have been growing rather too fast, with inflation edging up and the current account of the balance of payments moving into substantial deficit.

With the Government's own finances in surplus, the current account deficit is not in itself a cause for alarm. In today's global markets, it is inevitable, and, indeed, desirable, that there should be net capital flows from one country to another, which may last for a period of years. Current account imbalances are the inevitable counterpart. British industry is thriving, investing for the future and drawing on the savings of the world to do so.

When the Labour Government were in power, with a large Budget deficit, raising money abroad to finance a current account deficit was always a nerve-racking and chancy business, because foreign investors understandably had no confidence whatever in the policies pursued by that Government. Today, the situation is very different. Today, foreigners want to invest in this country, and I intend to stick to the policies that give them that confidence.

What does need to be directly addressed, and has, indeed, been directly addressed, is the re-emergence of inflation. That is why interest rates have been raised, and raised substantially—and, as I have repeated on

innumerable occasions, they will have to remain as high as it takes for as long as it takes to get on top of inflation. That, in turn, will require MO to be heading firmly back towards the target range that I set at the time of the Budget.

I realise that higher interest rates are not popular with home owners or small businesses, but this Government have never shirked taking unpopular measures when it is necessary to do so—[HON. MEMBERS: "Especially after elections."]—and a sustained rise in inflation would be far more damaging than a period of higher interest rates. Let us also not forget that higher interest rates benefit savers—many of them pensioners, for whom the Labour party periodically professes concern, but whose savings were devastated by the nightmare of Labour's inflation.

Mr. Hardy Ewing: I invite the Chancellor to go back one stage before interest rates were increased not once but nine times, and before inflation leapt up rather than crept up. Does he accept even the slightest possibility that it might have been his mistaken policies which caused the increase in inflation in the first place so that responsibility for the consequences must lie solely with him and his colleagues?

Mr. Lawson: As I implied earlier, and with the benefit of hindsight, whatever mistakes I may have made on that front would have been far worse had I taken the advice of the Opposition, who were constantly urging me to cut interest rates even further and to have a huge fiscal deficit.

As I have said on innumerable occasions during the past two years—but see no need to repeat in every single speech I ever make—the battle against inflation means that there can be no question of bailing out businesses that fail to curb their costs, and in particular their wage costs, by permitting the exchange rate to depreciate. That is Labour's policy—as we shall no doubt hear from the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) when he replies—and it is one that I wholly reject.

While on the subject of the exchange rate, I would just add this. For most of the past 12 months, whenever the pound has strengthened slightly, it has been said that it has become a one-way bet, set to soar out of sight; and whenever the pound has weakened slightly, it has been said that it is about to plunge disastrously. The prosaic truth is that, as it happens, throughout the past 12 months, with the exception of a short-lived upsurge in April and May, the sterling index has never varied by even as much as 3 per cent. from its present level.

However, one thing that I will not do is take lectures on inflation from the Opposition, who presided over more inflation in a single year than there has been in the whole of the past five years put together. The current rate of inflation is certainly too high and must be brought down, but it is well under half the average level recorded throughout Labour's disastrous spell in office.

What is more, the Opposition would do no better in the highly unlikely event that they were ever returned to office, for they are committed to higher public spending, a Budget deficit in place of a Budget surplus, lower interest rates and a lower pound. It is no wonder that the Labour party is the party of inflation—it always has been and it always will be.

Mr. Shersby: Does my right hon. Friend recall that in June 1975 the then Prime Minister, now Lord Wilson, circulated to every household in the country a leaflet telling every citizen that inflation was 26 per cent. higher than it was a year before and that prices were 88 per cent. higher than they were in 1970? That is the standard of inflation under the Labour party.

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right to remind the House—and, indeed, the nation—of the horrors of inflation under a Labour Government.

Nor will anything change as a result of Labour's so-called policy review. I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East but curiously, not once during the whole of his quite long speech—not too long, but quite long—did he say anything about the outcome of that review. Perhaps, on reflection, that is not so curious, because the Opposition can afford to take their time—they have such a long period of opposition ahead of them.

I have to say, in all candour, that the picture that the hon. Gentleman attempted to paint of the British economy today portrays a party that has become wholly out of touch with the everyday lives of the British people. I commend to him the friendly advice in the leading article in the brand new Left-wing newsletter "Samizdat", which said about economic performance:

"To admit the improvements could seem like defeatism. To ignore or downplay them does not carry conviction."

That is sound advice. It continued:

"Yet it is surely reasonable to welcome economic advance, even to allow the Government a part in bringing it about."

I commend that advice to Opposition Members.

The Opposition are always urging me to look at what they like to call the "real economy". I shall tell them just what is happening in the real economy, as they clearly do not know. Production is at an all-time high; national output has risen by 6 per cent. during the past 12 months; factories everywhere are humming; exports are at an all-time high; unemployment is tumbling; investment is at an all-time high and is roaring ahead. Great tracts of our country are being rejuvenated as old buildings come down and new ones go up. We have only to go five miles along the river to docklands to see that in action; or to the north-west at Salford Quays, where new life has been given to a once-depressed inner-city area; or to Glasgow where prospects are better now than for a very long time indeed —*[Interruption.]* There are many other areas, too— *[Interruption.]* Yes, including the north-east.

Leading the way in all that has been manufacturing industry, where output has risen by 7 per cent. during the past year to reach a new all-time high. Manufacturing industry's output actually fell under the last Labour Government, together with our share of world trade and practically everying else—apart, that is, from unemployment, which doubled during their period in office, and inflation, which rocketed. Britain's manufacturers have led the world in improving their efficiency in the 1980s. Industrial relations, quality and reliability have all improved beyond recognition. As a result, throughout the country new firms are setting up, and established firms are increasing their investment.

Overseas firms, too, see Britain as an increasingly attractive place in which to invest. Most recently, there has been the very welcome news that Ford is expanding its operations in Bridgend. That decision is a firm vote of confidence in the management—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): That is on page 14.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members come to the House to listen to speeches, not to read them—*[Interruption.]* Order. Listen to the speech.

Mr. Lawson: Opposition Members are clearly not the slightest bit interested in whether Ford invests in Bridgend, but the people of Wales do care about that investment.

Ford's decision was a firm vote of confidence in the management and work force at Bridgend, following the damaging strike by the constituents of the hon. Member for Dagenham in February and the antics of Labour's true shadow spokesman on trade and industry, Mr. Ron Todd, which cost Scotland so many jobs in Dundee. Indeed, Dundee is a sad illustration of the conclusion reached by Professor Metcalf of the London School of Economics, who wrote in the *New Statesman*—not a journal noted for its uncritical support of the Government:

"The plain fact is that in the 1980s, non-union companies have a better record on maintaining and creating jobs than do unionised companies."

[Interruption.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) please put that paper away?

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): The Chancellor referred to the interest of foreign companies in this country. How does he square the remark made by Lord Goold, the chairman of the Scottish Conservative party, that Scottish and Newcastle Breweries should remain an independent Scottish company, with the Government's policy as enunciated in the mergers policy document, which clearly shows that the Government will let foreign predators strip our companies and do whatever else they like? How does he reconcile the two?

Mr. Lawson: Lord Goold is certainly entitled to his opinion, which may be widely shared, but that is no reason to be hostile to foreign investment. I think that the hon. Gentleman, on reflection, will realise that his question was a complete non sequitur.

Thanks, in part, to the emerging benefits of bringing trade unions back within the law, unemployment has fallen faster in Britain during the past two years than it has in any other major country.

Let me remind the House that at the last general election the Labour party said that if it was re-elected it would reduce unemployment by 1 million over a period of two years. The Labour party said that it would do that by an extra £6 billion a year of public expenditure—although, as usual, the Opposition were remarkably coy about how that public expenditure would be paid for. Let me tell Opposition Members this. In the year and a quarter since the general election—at which Labour's policies on unemployment and, indeed, everything else, were so comprehensively rejected by the British people—unemployment has fallen by more than 650,000. That rate is equivalent to a shade over a million in two years.

How has that been achieved? It has not been achieved by spending an extra £6 billion, for a start. That did no good when the Labour party was in power and it would not do any good now.

Mr. Winnick: Page 17.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very unseemly of the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) to behave in this way. We come here to listen to each other's speeches not to read from documents which are not parliamentary papers.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Did not a former Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, describe the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) as the silliest man in the House of Commons?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us get on with the debate in a parliamentary fashion.

Mr. Lawson: We have more jobs today because we have profitable businesses and a thriving economy. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Yes, we have more jobs than ever before in our history.

In particular, we have more jobs because we have more businesses. That is something else that did not happen when Labour was in office, which is hardly surprising, as Labour sought to regulate everything in sight and to tax enterprise out of existence. Today, with a tax regime that makes it worth working hard and taking risks, the small business sector is booming. I take the point made from a sedentary position from the Labour Front Bench. So far this year, after netting off the businesses that have died, the net increase in new businesses is running at the rate of more than 1,000 a week. That is the net figure, which means that new businesses are being created faster today than at any time in our history.

Meanwhile, the measures I have taken to get on top of inflation will inevitably involve some slowdown in the economy, after two years in which growth has been faster than the already very strong trend. But this needs to be seen in perspective. Over the past five years, growth has averaged well over 3 per cent., and over the past two years it has risen to over 4 per cent. There is no reason why the slowdown need take us as low as the 2 per cent. average growth of Labour's five years. In other words, a performance below the trend of recent years will still be well ahead of the state of affairs that applied under the Labour party.

Industry itself remains in good heart. To quote today's "Quarterly Trends Survey" from the CBI:

"Both investment intentions and the level of business confidence remain strong in manufacturing."

And well they might. British industry is better managed, better equipped—and with a better work force—than it has been for a generation or more, so it is better able to sustain a higher level of performance.

The British economy has been transformed, these past nine years, by this Government's commitment to sound finance and to free markets.

That is not just my assessment. I have to thank the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, in his absence, for this piece of advice, which he gave the House on 14 January:

"I advise Conservative Members that it is extremely instructive to read OECD publications to discover what it says about the British economy."—[*Official Report*, 14 January 1988; vol. 125, c. 484.]

I duly turned to the latest OECD report on the British economy, published less than three months ago, and read this:

"It is already now clear that the 1980s will stand out as a decade of impressive improvement in economic performance, reversing a long-term trend of decline relative to other Member Countries."

I quite agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman: that is, indeed, extremely instructive.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Lawson: For the last time.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Chancellor confirm that it is normal practice for an OECD document to be produced in draft and submitted to the Government whose economic policies it describes, and for amendments by that Government to be taken into account in the final version?

Mr. Lawson: The document was written by the OECD, and I am sure that the OECD would be deeply upset to hear the hon. Gentleman suggest anything other than that. I assure the hon. Gentleman that if he examined not the OECD report for 1988 but that for 1978 he would find that it told a very different story.

Fortunately, even though the Labour party does not really understand what is going on, the British people do. They also understand why. As Mr. Eric Hammond said, explaining why the electricians were leaving the TUC:

"Above all, our members reveal an enthusiasm for the market system and its values which infuriates the sherry-party revolutionaries with their model resolutions and conference hall rhetoric."

What is more, enthusiasm for the market economy is spreading all over the world—far beyond the members of Mr. Hammond's union. It has even been embraced by Mr. Gorbachev in Russia. Even the Chinese are taking tentative steps along that road. In fact, today, devotion to Socialist economics is to be found only in Cuba, Albania, and Walworth road.

That is why Labour's policy review is not even a shambles, but a complete sham. It is clear that Labour will end up sticking to the same old policies. Labour has already said that taxes should go up. It is already committed to taking privatised industries back into state control. Opposition Members are already clocking up new public spending pledges which would take them straight back to the IMF, as they did in the 1970s. They are completely out of touch with the world in which ordinary people, and real people, live. They may think that they have a dream ticket; in fact they are living in a dream world.

Their economic policy and the attitudes which shape it are completely divorced from modern reality. That is why they will be voted down not just in this House tonight, but in the country as whole.

4.36 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The main charge against the Chancellor today is not a charge against his new habits of speech writing and delivery, although he has certainly given a new meaning to the phrase, "refreshing himself copiously from notes", given that those notes had been supplied to the press in advance. One begins to wonder when we shall have two little glass autocue screens in front of the Dispatch Box so that a speech can be delivered with more care.

Of course, there was a reason for the Chancellor ensuring that the press had his comments in advance: his speech last Thursday at the Mansion House dinner did not entirely meet expectations. The absence from it of certain phrases caused quite a stir. It is one thing for the Chancellor—like many other hon. Members—to feel slight indigestion when delivering a speech at a dinner, but that indigestion was felt widely around the City and the financial community, where there has been the clear expectation that something will be said in today's speech to calm the markets and give a sense of reassurance. Presumably that is why the speech was supplied to the press in advance of its delivery.

I am not sure whether the City will find the reassurance that it seeks. Meanwhile, the House seeks more long-term assurances than the markets may be looking for today. We want to know what state the British economy will be in if the Chancellor continues on present lines.

The Chancellor faces a number of immediate problems. He has referred to one of the greatest of them as inflation—an inflation that he has helped to generate by his own policies. He has done so through his interest rate policies as well as by the way the Government have increased electricity prices, prescription charges and so on.

Another problem which the Opposition parties have stated as clearly as that of inflation is the balance of payments. The Chancellor claims to have privatised it. He claims that it is not really a problem any more. Indeed, the Chancellor thinks that he has privatised Keynesianism. He thinks that demand correction can be carried out by the private sector. He cannot get away with that. Eventually, the continuing balance of payments and balance of trade problems will prove to be real problems in the real economy. The idea that they are made easier to finance because they exist in the private sector sits strangely with the fact that any reputable Government can borrow more cheaply than the private sector can. The Chancellor's case does not stand up to argument.

The Chancellor's Budget strategy contributed largely to those problems. The tax cuts did not merely feed through as more money in the pockets of people who were then able to go out and spend it, but created an expectation of spending power which was acted upon immediately. We all know that the rise in consumer demand did not wait for the tax cuts to arrive in the pay packet. There is no doubt that those tax cuts helped to stimulate that rise in consumer demand.

Two remedies are being attempted at the moment—the interest rate measures and the public expenditure policy, about which we shall learn more shortly. The Chancellor has admitted that interest rates are a limited and, perhaps, blunt instrument. I am not using his own phrases, but he was quick to point out in his Mansion House speech that it was rather foolish to blame two weeks of lower interest rates for a whole series of problems. Interest rates are not a sophisticated instrument for restraining consumer demand, as any executive of a credit card company must realise when he collects the proceeds of the enormously high interest rates for credit card borrowing.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): The hon. Gentleman may recall that at the last election the alliance parties proposed an increase in public sector borrowing to finance an increase in public spending. What does he think the effect of that policy would be on boosting interest rates? Or does the hon. Gentleman propose to rat on his policies of the last election as comprehensively as he has ratted on his former identity?

Mr. Beith: I must say that the hon. Gentleman levels a very strange charge at me. If he has not noticed, a little time has passed since the last election, but we advocated, in the circumstances of that time, that it would be possible to make a considerable expansion in selected public expenditure to reduce unemployment, as long as measures

[Mr. Beith]

to restrain inflation were taken at the same time. We showed our willingness to take measures to restrain inflation.

The Chancellor and others said that such measures were highly undesirable and would not be necessary. The Chancellor has now discovered that there must be some means of restraining inflation. Like him, I am not a wild enthusiast for the rather cumbersome apparatus that previous Labour and Conservative Governments have sought as a means of restraining inflation. If inflation continues, measures must be taken, but it is wiser not to generate additional inflation by measures which affect important consumer prices and cause the problem that the Government now have.

Mr. John Townend *rose—*

Mr. Beith: I shall give way when I have made a little progress with my speech.

At the same time, we have every reason to believe that a fairly tight policy on public expenditure will be conducted by a Government who have declared that their policy is that public expenditure should diminish as a proportion of GDP year on year. Nobody has ever said when that policy is supposed to come to an end. Perhaps one day the Chief Secretary will tell us at what point the steady year-on-year diminution of public expenditure as a proportion of GDP is supposed to end. It has been held out as the objective of the Government for no particular reason.

In given circumstances, too high public expenditure can obviously be dangerous, but there is no particular merit in reducing public expenditure steadily year by year, least of all in circumstances where there are compelling reasons to see some of the benefits of increased prosperity go into public investment—some into public services and some into areas that will promote industrial competitiveness. One of the consequences of the Government's attitude to public expenditure has been squalor in parts of the public services—the National Health Service is the most obvious and most often quoted example—and a continuing weakness in areas which are of importance to industrial competitiveness, of which training is an obvious example. All the surveys show far higher levels of qualifications, training, higher education, and craft skills in our main industrial competitors than in Britain. The Government should make a far bigger effort in that direction.

Another consequence of the Government's attitude to public expenditure is likely to be the squeeze on child benefit, which has already been discussed, and is likely to lead to further problems for some of the poorest people. The freezing of child benefit is an odd interpretation of the Government's manifesto pledge. They certainly made no effort at the time to show that that was the appropriate interpretation.

I stressed to the Prime Minister today, and I stress again to Treasury Ministers, that they believe in incentives. Child benefit is one of the few means of getting help to poor families which does not at the same time sharpen the teeth of the poverty trap, which is what a switch to means-tested benefits is likely to achieve. I do not believe that the Government have undertaken the kind of review that would enable them to devise an alternative to child benefit which does not sharpen the teeth of the poverty trap and lead to a situation where those at, and just above, current benefit levels find that for every pound that they earn they lose substantially by the loss of whatever the alternative is for child benefit.

That illustrates a number of long-term problems that will remain if the Government do not pursue more sensible policies. They should equip industry through more expenditure on research and development and a more skilled work force, thus providing an adequate infrastructure. It requires some care, but selected private investment could be less inflationary and generate fewer imports than the current boom in private sector consumption.

The Government are exacerbating other long-term problems by not tackling them. The housing crisis requires attention, both to the overall financial system under which housing is supported and to what is happening to public sector and other kinds of rented housing. The Chancellor made one nod in the direction of reducing some of the subsidies at the top end of the housing market in his action on multiple mortgages, but—at the Prime Minister's insistence—he left untouched tax relief on mortgage interest at the top rate of tax. Nobody who has studied this sector can seen any sense in that. I do not believe that the Chancellor can either. This is another thing that has continued to fuel the rapid rise in house prices.

A wider problem lies in the rented sector. Rented housing is so difficult to obtain and so expensive in many parts of the country that it is a serious bar to labour mobility. When industry attempts to improve its competitiveness, it constantly comes up against that difficulty. It finds attracting skilled workers from other areas extremely difficult when those workers cannot obtain housing. Part of the answer to that problem is to encourage more widely spread development, rather than concentrating it in the south-east. There must be some opportunity for people to move around the country to obtain jobs, especially those who wish to do so, but present housing finance does not allow that.

Another long-term problem is that the Government are not creating a climate for real business growth. A large proportion of the development and growth now taking place is dependent on the inflation of property values. One can see that vividly illustrated by the Royal Ordnance factory saga. The short-term growth potential lies in the opportunity to sell land that has acquired considerable value because of planning permission.

That paints a rosy picture for a number of companies, but it does not provide a climate for stable long-term growth. A number of other elements are necessary for industry to have a stable environment. As the Chancellor has said, one of those elements is exchange rate stability. If that is so, why do we continue to refuse to put Britain into the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system? It is because that is one of the things that the Prime Minister cannot personally bear to contemplate.

In the Chancellor's Mansion House speech there was a phrase which I took to be yet another coded reference to his desire to get Britain into the EMS. When talking about European economic co-operation, he said:

"I would like to see that co-operation taken further."

We continue to have a Government who are divided on economic policy in relation to Europe. In fact, they are even more divided on European policy than we had realised earlier. Before the Prime Minister's Bruges speech, most people assumed that there was a broader consensus about Britain working with Europe on the development of an

economic policy than there now appears to be. I was never more surprised than to find in the Division Lobby last night such a large number of Conservative Members apparently supporting the Single European Act—with varying degrees of enthusiasm in the wake of the change of climate in which the Prime Minister seems to have induced in her party on that issue.

The Chancellor had the opportunity to go down in history as the Chancellor who presided over years of clear improvement in Britain's economic performance. Advantage could have been taken of that improvement as well as capitalising on special advantages, such as our oil revenues, to build for the future. I regret to say that the right hon. Gentleman's years as Chancellor will not be looked upon in that light. The OECD report that the right hon. Gentleman quoted gives too rosy a picture. When we look back upon the right hon. Gentleman's Chancellorship, it will be clear that some changes have led to greater productivity and greater competitiveness, but that the opportunity was lost to create the conditions for an enterprise society in which success was widely shared.

We have sought to add to the Labour party motion, which is sensible so far as it goes, a clear reference in our amendment to the need for an enterprise society and the need to work together in Europe to develop common economic policies and common economic institutions. Such co-operation would enable us to prosper.

I must congratulate the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) who had to step into the unfortunate breach left by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), to whom we all wish a speedy recovery. The speech of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East was strong on denunciation. I should hate to come across the hon. Gentleman in an angry mood in some kirk session ravaging against the evils of our society, but unless all parties commit themselves to international remedies and greater European co-operation, we shall not see the achievements which the Labour party's motion seeks.

There are many things that we need to do if our industry is to be properly equipped to take advantage of new European developments. Unless we have direct rail links from the north of England and Scotland, through the Channel tunnel and into Europe, industry in those regions will be unable to share in the potential greater prosperity. If we learn later this week that Sunderland Shipbuilders is to close, there will be no basis for that industry's future. One or two companies may remain, but we shall lose the opportunity to share in future growth

The Chancellor had considerable advantages over many of his predecessors. In his Mansion House speech the right hon. Gentleman chose to quote some of his past remarks when he was a teenage scribbler. That career need not have stood in the way of a successful chancellorship. The Chancellor now finds himself under attack from many directions, not least from within his own party. At the end of the day, I believe that the verdict on him will be that he has missed the opportunities—opportunities that the Government should have recognised—to build for a more sustainable future.

4.51 pm

Mr. Dudley Fishburn (Kensington): When making one's maiden speech I believe that it is the convention to make some remarks about one's constituency. That is hardly necessary when I look around the House and see the many hon. Members who came to visit that constituency in July in search of the elusive Kensington voter.

Kensington is the great cosmopolitan heartland of the capital. South Kensington is an area of great prosperity and architectural heritage. Some 70 per cent. of the homes in that area were built before the first world war. The two great concerns of that area are conservation of the environment and the interests of those people who live in mansion blocks under archaic leaseholding arrangements and who have missed out on the great housing reforms of the past few years.

North Kensington is home to two great ethnic minorities. There is a Moroccan population of 7,000 and a West Indian population, although that population is now almost wholly British, which is particularly welcome. Although 30 per cent. of the residents of my constituency were born overseas, as I was, that is no bar to their being utterly British.

The economic expansion that has taken place under this Government in the past few years has given the black community of North Kensington the interest that they have sought for so long—to become part of a productive economy, to find jobs without prejudice, to receive a productive share of the new wealth of the country and to have fair policing of their community. The black community looks somewhat askance at the black leaders, who are like the trade union leaders of a decade ago, when they march off full of the sound of fury in one direction leaving the troops behind.

I count myself as extraordinarily fortunate in having a truly brilliant parliamentarian as my predecessor. Sir Brandon Rhys Williams was a great parliamentarian and campaigner. He knew that if it took Mr. William Wilberforce 25 years to convince this House that the abolition of slavery was a good idea, those who have more modest aims must still think in terms of decades to achieve them. Sir Brandon made his maiden speech 20 years ago. He argued for something that was regarded as positively quirky: that people should have the right to portable, private, personal pensions. Twenty years later, under this Government and this Chancellor, such pensions were finally created.

I feel that Sir Brandon should be the patron saint of all Back Benchers. He was a great campaigner and one of his Bills to put more non-executive directors on the boards of companies to protect the interests of small shareholders was passed by the House earlier this year. It was killed in another place, however, on the very day that Brandon died. I am delighted that that Bill will be reintroduced in the new Session by my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith). I hope that the Bill will have the full support of the House, as it had in Brandon's day.

I wonder how good a patron saint Brandon would be. Instead of looking down benignly on our proceedings, I believe that he would always be too busy collaring some angel and discussing his latest plan for child benefit for cherubs. I know that Brandon is enormously missed. Whatever the time I may spend in this House, if I can leave it with but a fraction of the affection in which Brandon was held in his constituency and the esteem in which he was held in this House, I shall count myself a lucky man indeed.

I came to this House—much to my surprise and greatly to the surprise of the residents of my constituency—having been, for the previous 20 years, once a teenage and then a

[Mr. Dudley Fishburn]

decidedly middle-aged scribbler. In those days, in common with many who are participating in this debate, I concentrated on the various economic indicators that show up on the control-panel of the economy. By doing so, however, I often lost touch with the fact that the engine of the economy, which creates the real productive increase in our national wealth, has been purring along for the past six years at almost unprecedented speed. We scribblers enjoy pointing out that some particular measure of inflation or some particular measure of the trade deficit is going wrong. We have done that so much, however, that we have overlooked the extraordinary growth in personal productivity and prosperity that has occurred.

Of course it is possible to become excessively hooked on the details of economic matters. One should remember that it is possible to have a high rate of inflation and of growth at the same time. The Government, quite rightly, will not allow that to happen, because it is not economically ideal, but it is possible—witness Brazil. It is possible to have a major deficit in public spending, and strong growth—witness Italy. The Government have rightly put their deficit into surplus. It is possible to have a long and sustained trade deficit and still achieve real economic growth—the Chancellor may find that uncomfortable at the moment—witness the United States. I should remind the House that it is entirely possible to have all those things together—inflation, a public deficit and a trade deficit—and to have no growth in the economy —witness the years when the Labour party was in power in the last years of the 1970s.

Growth and a real increase in prosperity per head is economic reality. All other things are but measures towards that. I often feel that when people talk about the economy overheating they are extraordinarily unambitious in the aims that they hold for our economy in the years ahead. The growth course that this Government have followed in the past six years is only the start of a most modest beginning in real growth. It would take this country over 50 years to reach the same wealth per head that Germany has, if both countries continued at the same growth rate; and over 30 years to reach the same wealth as our neighbour, France. Let us not, in fear of overheating, turn back on our course of real economic growth: because that is the real measure of our success.

In the policies that we hear advocated by Opposition Members, the only thing that we can be sure of succeeding is that should our economy so overheat that it breaks into spontaneous combustion, a quick spell of a Labour Government would be the fire extinguisher to put out all growth for many years to come.

Future growth will come only with vastly increased productivity, and if we open up our labour market to the many people who are desperate to get into it. I do not mean only those who are unemployed but those many millions of people who would like to be employed, if we were able to offer them training and the opportunity to enter a productive job.

No single thing prevents that happening more than the collective bargaining that still sets, on one day a year, the wage rates of 100 per cent. of the people who are within its system for the rest of that year. We shall see the system of collective bargaining, for which there was once so fine a historical need, wither on the vine over the next generation. It is a system of great social injustice and cruelty.

One third of people in the labour market at the moment do not come under the system of collective bargaining. They are men and women who sit down with their employers—they may be self-employed—to work out within budgets and their own responsibilities what their remuneration will be; what is expected of them; what their hours of work will be; and what are their productive intentions for the year. That is predominantly a middle-class luxury. The Government have been slow to spread it throughout the community. Whereas at the moment one third of people can fix their own remuneration to their own responsibilities and productivity and two thirds are left out, I predict that within a generation two thirds of employees will be deciding their own remuneration with one third having it forced upon them once a year through collective bargaining.

However, that can happen only if the Government will take a lead. As the largest employer and as the employer of all state servants—civil, military, the police and others —they permit that system of single collective bargaining to exist and therefore to hinder the entry into productive work of so many people who wish to work. A mother with children, for example, may want to become involved in work, but, under the system of collective bargaining, she is either "in" or "out" of work and cannot be on the margin. There are people coming up to retirement who still wish to continue in some form of productive labour and who, under collective bargaining, are either "in" or "out" and are, therefore, invariably "out". As I have said, we shall come to see that system as being, above all, socially regressive and cruel.

It is hard to say where the years ahead will lead in terms of economic growth. We know that, 100 years ago, the employment statistics in this country and in Europe were remarkable in that 30 per cent. of people were in domestic service, 20 per cent. in farming and 10 per cent. were employed in some form of horse transport. If we were to say to our grandfathers that all three of those great industries and sources of employment would disappear, our grandfathers would find it impossible to imagine the prosperity that we have in Britain today. Domestic service, which employed 30 per cent. of the working population, has disappeared; yet the grandchild of one who had been in domestic service now serves as the First Lord of the Treasury. Our farmers are almost an endangered species —they are so few and far between—but they pile up their surpluses to the sky in Britain and in Europe despite enormous increases in the world population. As the great-grandson of someone who was an illiterate journeyman-saddler in the horse trade, at least, in politics, I can say that I will be dealing with a superior form of horse manure.

5.5 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): We all remember the predecessor of the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn), Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, who won the respect and affection of the whole House by his independence and integrity. I for one remember especially what he had to say about child benefit. Judging by the speech that we have just heard, the knowledge which the hon. Gentleman has shown about his constituency and his

grasp of economic issues, he will be a worthy successor to Sir Brandon, at least for this Parliament. We look forward to his contributions to our economic debates.

The Chancellor invited the Opposition to say what is going well in the economy. I want to do just that. I shall deal first with economic growth. It is certainly true that, since the deep and disastrous recession of 1980-81, the British economy has expanded steadily throughout the 1980s. Average growth in the period 1979-87 compares favourably with that of 1973-79, although the Chancellor should note that it is still significantly below that of 1968-73, when he was a complaining teenage scribbler.

The second encouraging feature has been the increase in labour productivity. During the 1980s, labour productivity has risen faster than it did in the 1970s. In part, that improved relative performance has reflected the sluggish productivity growth rate in other major industrial economies. Interestingly, a similar productivity performance in the British economy between 1968 and 1973 put Britain second bottom of the six major industrial countries in that period. Therefore, we need to put what has happened in the 1980s into some perspective.

We should not forget that our improved productivity has coincided with sharper increases in unemployment in Britain than in other comparable countries. The latest OECD report, to which the Chancellor referred, also pointed out that those improvements in labour productivity have been related more to changes in work organisation than to increases in investment, and are therefore likely to taper off. Even so, there is little doubt that the increase in labour productivity has had the effect of raising the productive potential of the British economy.

Whereas it used to be said that we could grow at only two thirds of the rate of our competitors, we can probably now grow at the same rate without running into balance of payments difficulties. The Chancellor, with all the modesty that we have come to know and love, claims all the credit for those two successes. He also suggests that the improvement in the British economy can be sustained on present policies into the 1990s.

I congratulate the Chancellor on the way in which he has changed from an orthodox monetarist into something far more pragmatic. Some of us remember those far-off days of 1980-81 when the Government, especially the Chancellor in his guise of Financial Secretary, believed that they had found the magic ingredient: that the key to economic success was control of the money supply. As everyone now knows, it proved impossible to arrive at a satisfactory definition of the money supply. Should it be M3, M1 or even M0? No one could decide, and no one knows even today.

The other problem was that increases in the money supply appeared in practice to have little direct influence on inflation. As the Chancellor, with his much admired insouciance, told the Lombard Association,

"no economic relationship is perfect".

By the end of 1985, the Government had tacitly abandoned monetarism.

One of the main reasons for the recovery of the British economy in the mid-1980s was the Government's adoption of a much more flexible policy. With the assistance of North sea oil and the proceeds of privatisation, fiscal policies were gradually relaxed and public spending increased—so much so that in the 18-month run-up to the last general election, the Chancellor helped to engineer an old-style pre-election Macmillan boom fuelled by devaluation, tax cuts, earnings rising faster than inflation and a dramatic fall in the savings ratio, at the same time as a massive credit expansion.

By spring this year, the question being asked by serious commentators in the City and elsewhere was: could growth at this pace be sustained? Last March, there were already clear signs that the British economy was growing not only faster than those of our competitors—we have heard the Chancellor boast about that this afternoon—but faster than our productive potential. The Chancellor, indeed, admitted that when he came before the Treasury Select Committee. The balance of payments was already in deficit and most commentators expected the position to deteriorate sharply.

That is why many of us, not only Opposition Members, warned the Chancellor against the tax cuts that he made in his Budget. I certainly did so myself, and I remember our Front Bench spokesmen doing so as well. We said that the cuts would contribute to the overheating of the economy and would make the balance of payments worse. The Chancellor cannot say that he was not warned, that this is something that we have just dreamed up.

Mr. John Townend *rose*——

Mr. Radice: The Chancellor foolishly ignored our advice. He not only cut the basic rate of taxation but cut the top rate to 40 per cent. Since the Budget, the balance of payments has deteriorated alarmingly. Even the Chancellor now admits that the deficit this year will exceed £12 billion, and that it will be at least 1990 before there is any change in the balance of payments. Surely that must worry Conservative Members. The Chancellor also accepts that inflation will go up and will take some time to come down, but he is not proposing to do much about it as far as I can see.

It is clear that, because of what the Chancellor did in his last Budget, the British economy is now in danger of becoming seriously out of balance; so much so that the two successes that I have described—growth and the increases in labour productivity of the past few years—are now in jeopardy. In that context, it is instructive to compare British and Japanese economic policies in the period 1986-88.

British expansion has been based overwhelmingly on private consumption, boosted by a fall in the savings ratio to a 30-year low and a major expansion of credit on top of that. In both the 1987 and the 1988 Budgets, the Chancellor fuelled that consumption boom by tax cuts which, not surprisingly, served to worsen an already deteriorating balance of payments.

In Japan, the Government's approach has been far more balanced and far more successful. The expansion of Japan's economy has been based not just on private consumption but also on investment—investment in housing, manufacturing and the service sector. It is true that the 1987 Japanese budget made tax cuts, but as the latest OECD report—which came out on the same day as the report on the British economy—showed, the emphasis has been far more on increases in public investment and public works. The case for public investment—which the Chancellor so despises as an engine of growth—is not advocated only by Socialists. It is also actively supported by right-of-centre Governments in other countries.

Mr. Oppenheim: I have found it interesting today that so many Opposition spokesmen seem all of a sudden to

[Mr. Oppenheim]

have discovered the Japanese economy and are lauding it to the heavens. Is it not true that the Japanese have very low public spending compared with most European countries; that they have very low tax and very low public indebtedness; and that for more than 40 years they have had the benefit of a Government who have pursued right-of-centre economic policies, which have encouraged enterprise and business and discouraged trade union malpractices? Perhaps that is one of the many reasons why Japan's economy has been so successful.

Mr. Radice: Of course Japan has a right-of-centre Government, but they are not an ideological Government. If they think it sensible to adopt a balanced approach to expanding the economy, they do not just cut taxes; they do not consider that the be-all and end-all of economic policy. They also rightly invest in the public sector and public works, because they recognise that there is much to be done in that regard, just as there is in this country. They are behaving in a far more sensible and pragmatic way than our Government.

The question remains: where do the Government go from here, with such a massive balance of payments deficit? The Chancellor gives the impression that the deficit is a minor local difficulty that can be financed indefinitely, but sadly that is not the case. It may be sensible to sustain for a short period a balance of payments deficit that is caused by temporary cyclical factors. But when it is clear, as it is in our economy, that demand is running well ahead of productive potential—and that in any case, as was shown by the OECD report, imports of manufactured goods have increased faster than exports throughout the 1980s and import penetration is on the increase—the problem must be far more serious.

It is not possible to continue indefinitely to support an external deficit that reflects both excess demand and underlying structural weaknesses, as ours does. Apart from anything else, the overseas assets about which the Chancellor boasts so often will eventually be used up, and that is a great waste of North Sea oil. Corrective action must be taken sooner rather than later.

The trouble with the Chancellor's strategy is that it is both too complacent and operating with far too few instruments. As the Chancellor tacitly admits, interest rates are now used primarily to control movements in the exchange rates, not to control movements of inflation. It is far too blunt an instrument in its impact on industry and far too uncertain in its impact on inflation and demand.

In the near future the Chancellor should be prepared to take action on two fronts. First, he should consider introducing consumer credit controls, at least temporarily. There is a case both for obliging lending institutions to make special deposits and for imposing some limitations on bank loans to the personal sector. At least that would be a signal to consumers and the market that the Chancellor was serious about overheating and the balance of payments deficit.

Secondly, the Chancellor should have the courage to admit that he was wrong in his Budget. One obvious move is to restore the 60 per cent. top rate band. It may well be that he has to go further—I do not know, and I hope not—if he is to restrain demand sufficiently to bring our balance of payments into equilibrium.

As my hon. Friend rightly said, the balance of payments does matter. My goodness, if we had been in government and the Conservatives in opposition, they would have been telling us how much the balance of payments matters. I remember how, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Conservative Members used to do that. The balance of payments matters simply because it represents the fundamental test of our ability to pay our way in the world. If we cannot do that year in, year out, there must be something wrong with our economy. That is the truth.

It is better to act now when the problem is still surmountable than to wait until later when turning round the balance of payments could bring the whole economy to a grinding halt.

1 pm

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): It is a great pleasure to be the first Conservative Member to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on his maiden speech. We were all deeply impressed that he could speak with such sang froid and without a note in his hand, and that he seemed to get into the parliamentary habit with no apparent effort, although I am sure that the effort was there. He made a first-class debating speech, which one might have expected from somebody who had been in the House for many years, and he has got off to a most auspicious start.

All of us were particularly touched by the way in which my hon. Friend referred to his predecessor Sir Brandon Rhys Williams. He sang his praises as well as I could. I worked with Sir Brandon on many causes, and it is particularly relevant to mention him today because child benefit was a subject near to his heart. It is also the part of the Opposition's motion on which I wish to address the House.

What the Opposition have to say on child benefit is unimpressive. The motion seems to imply that incompetence in the management of the economy is responsible for the Government's reported decision to freeze child benefit, and obviously that is a ridiculous assumption. If the decision has been made, I hope that it will be changed in the next few days. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was careful to say that no announcement had been made, and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer did not mention the subject during his speech.

I would not be surprised if the Cabinet were to consider the matter on Thursday morning. Therefore, I make a strong plea to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry that there should be no question of freezing child benefit. I know that he has a deep knowledge of this subject and I shall not try to embarrass him by digging up quotations from the past. I am sure that I could have found some that might have made him blush if I had read them today. He is evidently a reasonable man, and although he will address the House tonight as the Minister of Trade and Industry, he cannot altogether shrug off his past.

It is essential to say that there is clearly no difficulty in finding the £130 million that would be necessary to uprate child benefit next year. It is also important to say that those of us who are asking for the uprating of child benefit are not asking for expenditure above what was previously planned. It is different, for example, from the position over nurses' pay, because in that case the DHSS had to go to the Treasury and ask for more money. The public expenditure

White Paper shows that child benefit was expected to increase in the coming financial year in line with what was then assumed would be the rate of inflation, so we are not asking for additional money; simply that the Government should stick to the position that they adopted in previous years. Clearly, we can afford to uprate child benefit without harming the economy.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the resentment that many people on low pay and pensioners feel when they are taxed on incomes well below £5,000 a year in order to give money to the richest people? Surely that cannot be justified.

Mr. Raison: I accept that some people, especially pensioners, express that view. I shall try to put to my hon. Friend and others why I believe that, despite that, it is right to pursue a policy of child benefit. I shall return to its merits shortly.

We should debate, not whether we can afford the £130 million, but whether child benefit is desirable and should be a major part of our social strategy. It would be completely wrong to change the system of child benefit in an ad hoc way. If the Government want to get away from child benefit as we have known it, that is one thing—I would not agree with that—but at least that should be done as part of a coherent policy, properly expresed, with alternatives set out, rather than by allowing it to wither on the vine.

The House knows the pledge in the 1987 Conservative party manifesto that child benefit would continue to be paid as now direct to the mother. That has been repeated often by the Prime Minister. Child benefit should be uprated every year and I have voted to that effect. It may be defensible occasionally not to uprate child benefit—for example, economic circumstances might make it imprudent—but it is unacceptable two years running when the economy, in terms of funds available to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, is strong and there is not a pressing need elsewhere not to uprate child benefit. That seems to mark a change of policy and a serious backtracking from the spirit of the manifesto. Therefore, I hope that my right hon. Friend will inform his colleagues that many Conservatives, though not all, believe that it would be wrong to embark on this change.

I am sure that Ministers have been trying to find another way of tackling this problem. In particular, they will have considered whether we can keep child benefit but tax it—in other words, return to the old system that applied to family allowances. I am sure that they will have run up against two significant stumbling blocks. The Chancellor separated the taxation of husbands and wives, which I wholly support, but in doing so he made it much harder to tax child benefit. We are committed to the idea of child benefit going to the mother, not to the father. Does that mean that the mother will be taxed? In almost all cases she will be the less well-off partner. If the father were taxed, he could reasonably say that he does not receive the benefit. Therefore, it is hard to tax child benefit.

Some people are attracted by the idea that those who pay the 40 per cent. rate of tax should not be paid child benefit. I concede the plausibility of that argument, but again one runs into severe practical problems. As we were told over and over again when we debated the amendment to the community charge moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), it is impossible to apply the 40 per cent. tax rate to a new rate of 150 per cent. of the community charge because it would often take a year and a half before people know whether they were on the 40 per cent. tax rate. Exactly the same would apply to child benefit. It would begin to be paid in April, but many people would not know for a good year or more whether they were 40 per cent. taxpayers. So we must face the problem that it is difficult to proceed in this way.

There is also talk—perhaps this is the area at which the Government are looking hardest—of putting more money into families with children, through family credit and income support—the argument of selectivity. We must recognise that there are real problems in making selectivity a universal yardstick in social policy.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): My right hon. Friend has addressed the problem of taxing child benefit. Is he aware that £1·3 billion of child benefit goes to families with incomes in excess of £20,000 a year? How can that possibly be morally, practically or politically justifiable?

Mr. Raison: I shall come to that in a moment. I know that people feel strongly about it.

I revert to the selective approach. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will recall the so-called Fowler review, carried out by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment in 1985. It took a hard look at taxing child benefit, and so on, but came to the view:

"We do not therefore propose any changes to the basis of universal child benefit."

In explanation of that, the Green Paper spoke of the unacceptable degree of "churning" and of means testing that would be entailed. So that exhaustive study of our social security system came up with the view that child benefit should remain as it traditionally had been. I can see no new circumstances or arguments that might lead us to reject that point of view now. What was true in 1985 is still true.

Finally, I come to why I believe that child benefit has so much to be said for it. Its first advantage is that it is paid to mothers. Many people in the Conservative party and in other parties have supported that strongly over the years. It is a point of great importance. Although my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) talked about people living on £20,000 a year, the benefits of that scale of living often do not find their way into a mother's pocket. There are occasions when the father keeps a rather larger slice of his income than is justifiable. Even when he does not—I do not suggest that the whole human race is as hard as that—it is extremely important that the mother, primarily the non-working mother, should have the certainty that an independent source of income is coming to her. Child benefit has the great advantage of being certain and simple and of not requiring elaborate means testing. Of course we must have means testing in the social services—no one can argue otherwise—but it is of great value to have this one clear-cut benefit.

Child benefit is of particular value to the people whom I have described as the not-quite-poor. Under our social policies there is a risk that those, not necessarily at the bottom of the pile in terms of income, but a bit above it, will find things tough. For them especially, child benefit is of great value.

Mr. Gow: Has my right hon. Friend come across a strange but growing phenomenon, that of the mother, the

[Mr. Gow]

very person of whom my right hon. Friend was speaking, going out to work and the father staying at home to look after the child?

Mr. Raison: I have, but I am not quite sure what I am meant to make of that.

Mr. Gow: My right hon. Friend said that the great virtue of child benefit was that it was always paid to the mother. If she is the one who goes out and earns a high income and the improverished father stays at home, how can he justify what he has been saying?

Mr. Raison: I apologise for my obtuseness; I understand my hon. Friend's point now. What he describes does happen, but only in a minority of cases, and I do not think we should build social policy on such a minority.

There is no problem of take-up with child benefit. We know very well that the family credit system which has been introduced and which has many virtues—I am not speaking against it—is so far running at a rate of take-up estimated to be below 50 per cent. Set against that is the certainty that attaches to child benefit. Above all, it avoids the disincentive effect of selective benefits. The leading article in *The Times* this morning summarised that well:

"It is an inevitable consequence of switching from universal benefits to targeted benefits that the unemployment trap is either deepened or widened, or both. By reducing dependency in the population at large, dependency among benefit recipients is increased because the incentive to earn more is reduced by the high effective marginal rate of tax as benefits are withdrawn."

According to *The Economist* of 22 October:

"The introduction of family credit has already increased by three quarters the number of people facing marginal tax-cum-benefit withdrawal rates of 70 per cent. or more." That is a serious point.

In my party there has been a long history of support for child benefit, or for the principle that those who have children should have direct support from the state. William Pitt enunciated the principle. Back into the 19th century it was achieved through the tax system. It would be sad to abandon it. Above all, I hope that our support of child benefit is a firm signal of a real commitment to the family, about which we talk in the Conservative party. We are absolutely right to do so, and there is no more clear-cut token of our support for the family than child benefit. Long may it remain so.

5.38 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): There is no doubt that this debate can have but one purpose: to make the Government—I am glad to see the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his place—rethink their attitude to child benefit. It is true that, over the past few years, there has been a crescendo of discussion of problems related to families—family abuse, alcoholism, violence and split families. I thought that all parts of the House shared a growing anxiety that many of today's social problems have their roots in the family and in something going wrong with it.

Money does not solve every problem in every family—we all know that—but making ends meet at the end of the week can be a major problem for millions of people. Considerable poverty is still concentrated in families, especially large ones in which the male earner is on low wages. A substantial proportion of people who should claim family income support and go out and get all the means-tested benefits that are theoretically available to them have always not done so—and still do not.

Some families do not take advantage of these means-tested benefits, but one benefit of which they do take advantage is child benefit, which constitutes a large proportion of their income. I think I am right to say that it contributes 18 per cent. of the incomes of families in the bottom 10 per cent. of income distribution. It is thus an extremely important weapon in dealing with family poverty.

We must face the fact that this will be the second time that child benefit has been frozen. It was also cut in November 1985. We should be talking about increasing it to £8·35 a week if we were to replace the April 1988 freeze and the November 1985 cut.

That is the honest answer, because many of the families will not take up other means-tested benefits, even if they are increased over and above inflation. The Chancellor should think again. It is reasonable to say that it is an unselective benefit, there are great problems of churning and, on the face of it, there is something rather silly about paying a benefit to people on high incomes. But the answer to that is a fundamental reform of the tax and benefits system, which the Chancellor still refuses to do. He lost a great opportunity in the most recent Budget. When he was lowering the tax rate from 60 per cent. to 40 per cent., that was the moment to make the national insurance contribution progressive right up through the tax base.

It will be much harder to integrate the tax and benefits system because the Chancellor did not take that opportunity to reform the national insurance contribution, which is, in effect, a tax system, but there is a growing feeling that there must come a day, and fairly soon, when every citizen has one form to fill in each year and as a result he will either benefit or pay out tax. It will be a means test for us all. Within that system, there will be a credit for children and a perfectly acceptable method of clawback for the large amount that needs to go into family income, which would be clawed back from the most wealthy. I know that such a reform would take three or four years to be fulfilled, but in its absence there is no alternative but to insist that the Chancellor does not go ahead with the proposal to freeze child benefit.

I remember that the first debate that I instituted as a Back Bencher, at Christmas 1966, was about family poverty. The present Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who was previously in the Department of Health and Social Security dealing with social security, understands the problem well. He knows that the provision will hit hard some of the families who can least afford it. For that reason, we shall vote for the Labour party motion, although not for its economics.

As for the Chancellor and the economic issues that face us, the problem seems to be that what we have not been able to achieve is cuts in tax that are then saved. Nobody wants higher tax, but it is vital to be able to save. The savings ratio is lower today than it has been for 30 years. Although the Chancellor announced a new savings measure in his speech to the Conservative party, it has been postponed until the new year—I imagine because he is worried about the success of the launch of the sale of British Steel rather than for any other reason. There is a strong case for that savings bond to be issued as soon as

possible. The right hon. Gentleman has not yet announced the terms for it, but there is a strong case for the interest rate to be 10 per cent. net over five years and for there to be a £50,000 limit.

I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will introduce an imaginative way of siphoning off what is at the moment spending power that should be pushed into savings. I hope that he will also look at the French scheme, Loi Monory, for trying to use fiscal incentives to encourage wider share ownership, which is particularly attractive to middle income earners. There is now a real gap in the fiscal armoury, in encouraging savings. That is absolutely fundamental if the Chancellor is to be able to pull back the present consumer boom.

Most people have considered whether one can have selective restrictions on borrowing. I confess that I have not yet seen any that would not escape. One of the problems of deregulation is that it has made it immensely difficult to have the consumer constraints, selectively applied, that we used to have in the past. I wish that I could be convinced. If somebody had a good scheme, I should look at it.

The problem of using interest rates is that they are a blunt instrument. It will have to be used over the next five or six months; otherwise, we could have a serious slide in the sterling rate. Therefore, the Chancellor must look again at a selective measure to help first-time house purchasers. We must face the fact that in some parts of the country an initial house purchase entails a large sum of money. The increases in mortgage rates will be crippling and will hit hard young couples and first-time purchasers.

I for one believe that, in the problem that the Chancellor faces, which is what weight to give to inflation and what weight to give to the balance of payments crisis, he is right to give the maximum weight to inflation. Inasmuch as an anti-inflationary stance is now vital, there is no question but that the right hon. Gentleman must continue to be ready to make our interest rates higher than we should wish for our manufacturing industries. Again, he must consider a selective measure which, I agree, has the same problem of leakage that I mentioned over restraining consumer spending, and—this is a problem for the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—he should try to let industry borrow at preferential rates.

I know that in arbitrage and other things it is easy to escape it, but there are countries that operate schemes that give preference to industrial investment. Interest rates are staggeringly high in comparison with other countries, and the Chancellor suggested in his Mansion House speech that we might face a balance of payments problem all through 1989, which suggests pretty high interest rates during that time, perhaps into 1992. If that happens, we must consider the effect on manufacturing industry.

Manufacturing industry must consider its own problems. We face a 9·25 per cent. increase in earnings, and once again we are in grave jeopardy of pricing ourselves out of export markets. That is vital. I should find it easier to listen a little more attentively to industry's complaints about a non-competitive exchange rate if we were not seeing earnings rising at the present rate.

The Chancellor admitted that he made a mistake in the Budget. It is reasonable to make a mistake. I was interested to hear what he said today: "I might have made a mistake." I believe that in an interview with Mr. Walden, he said that perhaps his Budget judgment was not absolutely perfect.

Mr. Lawson: As I said to Mr. Walden, who is a former colleague of the right hon. Gentleman, it was not the Budget about which I had any second thoughts at all—I stand by that judgment and that Budget totally—but with the benefit of hindsight, had I known the strength of the economy and the extent to which borrowing was increasing, I should have had monetary policy tighter at an earlier stage. I would not have reduced it as much prior to the Budget.

Dr. Owen: I have never believed that one can run the economy just on one aspect of it. Monetary policy has been too loose and is probably still too loose, but I do not think that that of itself would have achieved what we want. The point that I was making to the right hon. Gentleman is that, if one is making substantial tax reductions, one is well advised to try to ensure that that does not all go into consumption. The fact is that a substantial amount of that drop from 60 per cent. to 40 per cent. in the top rates of tax has gone into consumption, not savings. At the same time as making that tax cut, a prudent Chancellor would have launched a savings initative of the sort that I described. However, we are in this mess now——

Mr. Oppenheim: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Owen: No, because we must keep speeches short.

This mess is not yet of crisis proportions. The balance of payments is fundable and the surplus is strong. The only thing that would make it into a crisis would be if people saw that the inflation rate was out of control, and if we eroded our competitive edge. At that stage, however high interest rates went, people would like very much to take a risk and speculate on sterling. That must be the Chancellor's main anxiety.

The Chancellor may be lucky. Oil prices may be coming down, the other commodity markets may be coming down and it may be possible to relax interest rates towards the middle of next year, but what we want from the right hon. Gentleman is a little less brazenness. There is no reason to be ashamed of admitting that there is a marginal error. The right hon. Gentleman has had quite a good success rate. He should show the capacity to make an adjustment when there has been an error.

Many of us are worried about the problem of looking at public expenditure and not looking at tax and fiscal policy. The Government announce their public expenditure review months in advance of the Budget. The Secretary of State for Social Services has been told to cut his overall budget. That has resulted in a freeze in child benefit, but the amount saved could be saved in other ways by means of fairly minor fiscal adjustments. There is an inability to bring together public expenditure and fiscal policy.

I shall end as I began, by saying that the most fundamental reform is an integrated tax and benefit system that would give a guaranteed minimum income for everybody. That is better than minimum wage legislation, which is extremely inflationary. A guaranteed minimum income would obviate arguments about child benefit. That is the correct reform, but unless it is started early in this Parliament, it will not be introduced at all, and we shall continue to spatchcock along with the benefit and tax systems always slightly out of tune and creating anomalies, adding to poverty traps and to the general muddle of the

[Dr. Owen]

scheme. The Chancellor has not shown a great deal of interest in this area of reform, but I hope that he will put it higher in his list of Budget priorities.

5.50 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): When I read a motion from the Labour party alleging Government mismanagement of the economy, I detect an air of unreality and a lack of conviction. Perhaps that is not surprising, given their appalling record of economic mismanagement in the last years of the 1970s and their apparent problems in agreeing economic and financial policies since then. A former Home Secretary, the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), said, I think on 2 September, that he thought the Labour party was politically incompetent and that, even after nine years of opposition, it had not put itself in a position where people would trust it.

The principal reason for not trusting the Labour party is that the British people have a nasty habit of judging people on their record and up to 1979, Labour's record was abysmal. In 1978, the Brooking Institute talked about Britain's economic performance and said:

"Britain's economic malaise starts from its productivity problem, whose origins lie deep in the social system."

The institute thought that the malaise was so bad that it was incapable of being remedied. When Sir Nicholas Henderson reported to the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) about the British economy, he said that it was the sick man of Europe.

To illustrate the difficulties of the economy in those days, I shall look at three important areas, the first of which is productivity. It was growing at only two thirds the rate of that of our OECD neighbours, and GNP had fallen so far that Britain, with a population similar to those of Germany and France, was producing just over half the amount of production of Germany and only two thirds of that of France.

The second area is tax. There is no doubt that the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer made good Labour's promise to make the productive pips of the economy squeak. Basic and top rates of tax were the highest in Europe, apart from those in Sweden. Equally damaging under Labour were the systems of capital relief, tax convenants and stock reliefs. Those systems not only reduced incentives for business but meant that business men too often spent their time looking at schemes that did not justify themselves on grounds of economy but only on grounds of taxation, such as container leasing. As a result, they did not spend time looking at management design quality and at improvements in industrial relations connected with the real growth of their companies and of the economy.

The third area of concern under Labour was attitudes. There was high inflation, low growth and deteriorating industrial relations. Job flexibility was destroyed and the strike record was worse than anywhere in Europe. That brought about a culture which set management against work force, and people did not act in a unified way to improve the economy. As a result, the economy was over-taxed, hyper-inflated, trussed up and rigidified when we took it over in 1979. To their eternal credit, the Government have cut the economy free, deregulated it and made it more flexible. They have lowered rates of taxation to produce dramatic improvements in productivity, and most important in attitudes.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): The hon. Gentleman says that the British people judge people by what they do. Perhaps they also judge them by what they say. What does he think of the 1987 Conservative manifesto pledge that child benefit would continue to be paid in the way that it was then? Will he tell us what that meant?

Mr. Coombs: That pledge meant what it said. From what I hear, no decisions have been made about child benefit and the Opposition are indulging in unconstructive and damaging speculation. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps Opposition Members would allow me to return to the topic of productivity. I have no doubt that they do not want to hear about that because they know that, since 1980, Britain's productivity has improved faster than that of any other country except Japan, and that the average productivity of each worker has increased by no less than 50 per cent.

The rate of growth in investment is the best for 25 years and the Confederation of British Industry says that profitability, which engenders growth, investment and jobs, is at a 20-year high. That is why we have had increased investment: it is not because of cheap money but because companies have seen that their profitability is high and are able to fund their investments out of profits. After eight years of sustained and continous growth, they have confidence in Britain and know that they will see a rapid pay back of their investment. That is why we have increased investment in the economy, and it has little to do with any temporary rise in interest rates.

The confidence has spread to the venture capital industry, which is now doing business worth £1 billion a year as against nothing in 1979. The population as a whole has felt that increase in confidence, because 21 per cent. of our people have bought shares. No one is saying that productivity does not need to be improved, because in any economy productivity needs to improve. The CBI has said that average productivity in the United Kingdom is still 10 years behind that of France and Germany and 25 per cent. below the European average. As Sir John Egan has said, Jaguar's productivity is one third below that of Mercedes. Our competitiveness in car markets is kept up because our real labour costs are 50 to 60 per cent. below those of Germany.

The exchange rate against tne mark, in which we are doing an increasing amount of business, is 3·14. That may be a bit high, but four years ago it was 4·25. That is a significant improvement. It is no answer to these problems to decrease consumer spending through hire purchase controls, which would not work anyway, or to increase taxation, which would work but which would shatter the confidence of industry and reduce the investments that it has been making to such good effect. It is no answer artificially to reduce the value of the currency, because even the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service has admitted that that would be counter-productive and probably ineffective.

It is important to improve the productive supply side of the economy by increasing the skills of our existing work force through better training: I agree with what the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said about that. It is of major concern that 69 per cent. of our

companies recognise problems of skills shortages. The Government have introduced the biggest training programme in Britain's history, but the majority of firms do not take sufficiently seriously their responsibilities for training. Whether we change it through fiscal encouragement or, as in France and Germany, through statutory requirements, this is a matter which the Government must examine.

Mr. Morgan: I think that we are reaching an area of agreement, at least between Back Benchers on both sides of the House. The hon. Gentleman is stating an important truth: employment training has no bearing on skills shortages. It does not lead to city and guilds-type qualifications such as France and Germany are concentrating on; it is purely probationary or rehabilitative training for the first six months. It is what used to be accepted as part of people's first six months on the job. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that it has nothing to do with skill training? I think he is.

Mr. Coombs: The employment training scheme, which is directed towards the long-term unemployed, puts people into a situation where they can be picked up by firms, whereupon it is the firm's responsibility to provide a higher level of training.

Improvements in taxation have been equally profound. Tax rates have decreased and provided incentives, but revenue has risen by 40 per cent. in real terms as a result.

The reductions in taxation mean that the system now works more equitably than it did in 1979. Because personal allowances have been increased by 25 per cent. ahead of inflation, 1·7 million people who would have been in taxation if the Labour party had still been in power are not in taxation. Because top rates have been reduced, the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers pay one sixth more now in real terms than they did in 1979 but pay a higher proportion of the total tax bill than they did in 1979.

A lower tax rate regime increases incentives, is more efficient and has been more equitable—benefits which were not available under the Labour party's high tax regime, when the tax that people paid often depended on what they could afford to pay grossly overpaid tax consultants.

One of the most important improvements to take place during the past nine years is in attitudes in industry. The old antagonism and confrontation have given way to a more co-operative, flexible and unified atmosphere in the vast majority of companies. People realise that industrial success depends on unified effort and not on scrambling over what are regarded as the spoils.

The fall in the number of industrial disputes is evidence of that. One might say that the fall in union membership, despite the increase in the number of jobs during the past few years, is another. Recent CBI figures show that about 30 per cent. of pay settlements involve agreed changes to cope with new technology, improvements in productivity or demarcation changes.

More significant still is the fact that a recent Gallup-CBI survey showed that no fewer than two thirds of private sector employees think that pay increases should come only from increases in productivity or profitability in firms. I regard that as a sea change in attitudes. It has come not from union leaders but from people on the shop floor who must make a unified effort with management to increase profitability and prosperity.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Devonport about increased realism in wage settlements. It is worrying, although we have a 7 per cent. increase in productivity, to read of a 9·25 per cent. increase in wages. I have just read the October report from the German embassy, which shows that, despite the fact that their economy is growing at 4·9 per cent. a year, wage costs have not risen at all.

Relations between schools and industry must be more deep-rooted and systematic. It is worrying that 60 per cent. of firms have no links with schools, and that 60 per cent. of schools have no effective links with industry.

This realism and improvement in attitude depends more than anything else on wage bargaining being done at a local rather than a national level. Plant level wage bargaining makes for better competition and better labour mobility. That builds on the principal premise that has ensured economic revival—which is that the Government should provide a low-tax, minimum-interference framework which allows business to prosper and improve prosperity.

The OECD says that we have had years of decline in the 1980s, but that the long trend of decline against other countries has been reversed. In the 1990s, provided that those policies and others which I have outlined are continued, I believe that we can regain our position as the most prosperous nation in Europe.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind the House of Mr. Speaker's earlier appeal for brief speeches and for 10-minute speeches from 6 pm.

6.5 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I congratulate the Government on their confidence, propaganda and sheer gall when dealing with the long-term prospects for the economic well-being of the country.

If Chancellor Kohl had not already used the term, I am sure that he would use it in regard to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, instead of Mikhail Gorbachev, to describe his success at self-delusion and the national delusion that the Government have achieved. If that were done by any other party, Conservative Members would have torn it apart and encouraged the media to take a very different view each night on television and radio and each morning in the newspapers about the real long-term prospects for the nation.

If investment in manufacturing industry and output from it fall to an abysmally low level, and they are improved even by only a modicum, one can talk about massive growth. If unemployment reaches such a catastrophic high that any downturn appears to be a great boon, people can convince themselves and others that they are doing well. People can persuade themselves that a reduction in savings is somehow a good thing, whereas in the past they preached that it was a bad thing. People can convince themselves that their most sacred of cows—the inflation rate—is not all that bad because it is not as bad as it used to be.

In Japan, inflation is 0·7 per cent., in Holland 0·9 per cent., in Belgium 1·2 per cent., in West Germany 1·4 per cent., in Switzerland 2 per cent., in France 3 per cent., in the United States 4 per cent., in Canada 4·1 per cent., in Italy 5 per cent., in Spain 5·7 per cent., in Sweden 5·8 per cent. and in the United Kingdom 5·9 per cent. We can tell

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people that although our inflation rate—the thing to which we have pinned our flag, the mast which we count as the most important symbol of our success after massive unemployment, after a downturn in the key parts of our economy which earn our wealth and in the teeth of the most catastrophic balance of trade figures ever—is one of the highest in the Western world, we are really doing well.

We know that people have felt better off. There are four major wells on which the Government have drawn. One is the diminishing and misused oil well, of which we should have made better use. Benefit levels and our responsibility for the poor has been another, in that we have cut benefits and reduced the well-being of the poor. We have drawn off from them to give to the better off.

It comes ill from Conservative Members to speak of how the less well off will feel aggrieved if the rich manage to get a little extra in child benefit. Conservative policy has been based on taking from the poor and giving to the better off in substantial measure through taxation and other hidden benefits.

Of course, there has been the well of public spending cuts, which have reduced investment in education and in the key sectors of our economy, in transport, in higher education and training and in the way that we look to the future for not a shabby, but a sensible and sane society.

The biggest well of all has been the sale of our public assets. During the past eight or nine years we have raised £24 billion from among others, the sale of British Gas at £7·7 billion, British Petroleum at £6·5 billion and British Telecom at £3·6 billion. Now we face the sale of the water industry at a knockdown price of £7 billion—apparently a quarter of its true value—and electricity at between £15 billion and £18 billion, making a staggering £50 billion from asset sales.

We used to hear from the Prime Minister and from other Conservative Members about the thrifty family which would look after its own. We used to hear about not printing money—until the invention of the elastic-sided plastic card which is now the road to everywhere. Credit has risen as a proportion of GDP from 40 per cent. to more than 80 per cent.—a bonanza in debt that British people never thought possible. Yet it is encouraged and applauded as a short-term method of gaining popularity.

We used to hear about farmers and not eating the seedcorn that we should be setting aside for the future. The farmer has cows and hens producing milk and eggs for himself and his family and for those to whom he can sell such produce. Some of the cows may have been sacred cows and some of the hens may have been bantams, but they are fattened up, made more sleek and encouraged to be more efficient in their output. Just at the point at which they were all increasing their yield, the farmer has the bright idea to sell off his cows and his hens for whatever price he can get and go down to the local alehouse and buy everybody a round to make himself really popular. That is an alehouse economy—a lager land with froth on the top and a lot of gas underneath. What happens? Having spent the money that he has gained from the sale of essential assets, he gets home to find that not only has he no money to buy the seed for future sowing and reaping, but he has to buy milk and eggs at extortionate rates from the people to whom he sold them because they now control the market to which he previously contributed.

That is the economy of the future. We are selling not only the seedcorn, but the seed itself. That sort of economy is a road to nowhere. It is making money out of money and not earning it. It is not seeking to invest in a partnership for the future with the people of this country.

We hear about France and Germany, where prosperity has been built on a partnership between public and private sectors. The banks—the länder banks and the city banks—are the biggest finance sector in the Federal Republic of Germany guiding not through central planning but through communities and the Government genuinely working together.

The answer for the future well-being of this country is, of course, enterprise and increased productivity, but enterprise and productivity based on the well-being of our people. This debate is about not simply competence or a balanced economy, but the values that we, as a civilised society, hold and the way in which we use our economy, because politics is superior to economics. The debate is about using democracy to ensure well-being not only for ourselves and popularity for the moment, but for investing and ensuring that our children and grandchildren have something of which to be proud.

6.14 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): I join my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) in paying tribute to the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) to which the House listened with such admiration. I am sure that the whole House envied his ability to speak without notes and the quality of his speech, notably his tribute to Sir Brandon Rhys Williams.

I begin by examining the amendment which stands in the name of the Liberal party. Unfortunately, no spokesman from that party is present, and the entire Liberal Bench is empty. The amendment stands in the name of the new leader of the Liberal party, and beneath his name is that of the shadow Chancellor of the Liberal party. Those two names appear first above the amendment. I consider it a matter of deep regret that those two names were not reversed. In my opinion, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has qualities infinitely greater than those possessed by the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). Nevertheless, I have to qualify that tribute when I read the words of the amendment tabled by the Liberal party. I commend them to your serious attention, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I read them, but I did not select them for debate.

Mr. Gow: I was about to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your wisdom.

The words, although not selected for debate, bear repetition, even in the absence of the authors. This is what they sought to add to the motion which stands in the name of the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition, and which is absolutely characteristic of the muddled, pathetic, confused, mixed thinking which has characterised the band of visionary Liberals with neither vision nor mission:

"while encouraging the development of a successful enterprise economy throughout the United Kingdom and playing a full part in the development of co-ordinated European economic policies and institutions".

Who could have been the author of those words? How could they have placed them upon the Order Paper? How wise you were, Mr. Speaker, not to select that amendment.

I now turn to the speech of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). It was a speech which I enjoyed, but it did not offer the House or all those outside an alternative strategy to that of the Government. I shall devote almost all my speech to a single issue: mindful of your injunction, Mr. Speaker, that we should speak for a maximum of 10 minutes, I wish to talk about inflation, a subject upon which the Opposition are qualified to speak but about which the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East did not speak.

Our debate takes place in the absence of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). My hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) is sitting in his place, and is a worthy replacement. My hon. Friend the Member for Horsham never believed that which my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup believed—that it was possible by passing an Act of Parliament to abate or to hold down prices. That was never the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham. Sometimes, I believe that it is still the view of those who sit—although not presently—on the Liberal Bench.

At least I exonerate the Labour party from believing that it is possible by Act of Parliament to hold down or restrain prices. Unfortunately, the consequences of the arrival at No. 11 Downing street of any Labour Chancellor are certain—first, a massive loss of overseas confidence, and consequential withdrawal by people overseas of massive funds presently in London, and, secondly, a continuing rise in inflation.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East did not address his mind to the inevitable consequences of Labour policy. The endemic problem of inflation was addressed first by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and then by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. I was pleased when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, first in his speech and secondly in an intervention during the speech of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), said that, with the advantage of hindsight, he should not have reduced interest rates after the Budget.

Mr. Morgan: And top rate tax.

Mr. Gow: I am in respectful agreement with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. He told the House twice this afternoon that it was a mistake to reduce interest rates after the Budget. I believe also that the Budget judgment made in March was correct and that, in so far as error has followed that judgment, it was about the interest rates—although it is easier to say that after the event than to say it at the time.

I want to say something to the Labour party, because it is most in need of instruction on this matter. There is one other certainty—that a policy of high interest rates will abate inflation.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Eventually.

Mr. Gow: My hon. Friend uses the word "eventually". It is not the view of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, and it is certainly not my view, that a policy of high interest rates will abate inflation instantly. Therefore, I agree with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen). The policy of high interest rates will succeed. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will persevere in that policy.

Mr. Budgen: That is the thing.

Mr. Gow: I am getting support from my hon. Friend. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor rightly said in the House this afternoon, at the Mansion House last week and before then at the conference in Brighton, and my right hon. Friend the First Lord of the Treasury said in the House today and last week, that we will persevere with a policy of high interest rates because it remains the Government's continuing commitment to abate the evil of inflation.

I want to say something to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor; I shall say it in public because I have said it to him in private before. After 12 years of Conservative government, we should have achieved the attainable goal of stable prices. That would have been possible if we had followed the policies which were necessary and which we could have followed consistently over a period of 12 years.

Mr. Battle: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gow: I shall certainly give way. I shall give way to any Opposition Member until I use up my 10 minutes.

Mr. Battle: I should like to hear how the hon. Gentleman, who says that prices remain stable, explains the increase in electricity prices.

Mr. Gow: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. Clearly, I was not talking in such a manner that he could hear what I was saying. Some of us do not speak as clearly as others, and I apologise to the House. I was saying that it would have been possible for a Conservative Government in office for 12 years to achieve stable prices at the end of that period. I regret that I do not think that we shall achieve that aim. I believe that an economy in which there is zero inflation is likely also to produce full employment and economic growth.

We have heard from the right hon. Member for Devonport about the dangers, as he sees them, of high interest rates and of a high exchange rate. There is not a single exporter—or if there is, I have yet to meet him—who does not say, "Of course, it would be so much easier if the sterling exchange rate were lower." We hear that constant refrain from all those who export. We are entitled to reply that those countries which have been the most successful in providing full employment and growth for their people and in achieving a high rate of exporting are those with the strongest currencies. Three examples are Germany, Switzerland and Japan—all of whose currencies have been among the strongest.

I very much hope that, when there is an opportunity for a further Supply Day, the subject of the economy will again be chosen, because we shall have the opportunity to listen—alas, in vain—for a coherent alternative from the Labour party.

6.27 pm

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): I join the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) in congratulating the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr.

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Fishburn) on his maiden speech and in hoping that the hon. Gentleman will prove to be as strong a defender of child benefit as his predecessor.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who has offered us the prospect of a war of attrition in which the Government's economic policies will rely heavily upon the single weapon of interest rates. We cannot confidently predict the outcome of an economic policy that centres only on interest rates, but we can confidently say that in that kind of war of attrition the casualty lists will be long and will come from parts of the country represented by the Opposition. In that respect, I want to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) who, in an excellent speech, described what he called the economy of the future. In that he made a mistake. It is not the economy of the future; it is the economy of the present.

The Chancellor described a policy of bluffing it out and charging on, hoping that luck would hold. He did not offer those of us who represent the north and Scotland any signal revealing the Government's industrial policy. It may be asking the Chancellor too much to provide us with an industrial policy. He has only one policy—the instrument of interest rates. As summer turned to high summer and then to autumn he had already played such a varied range of tunes on that policy instrument that it was probably unreasonable to expect that he would supply an industrial policy as well.

On industrial policy, the Chancellor is content to be a spectator. I refer to his present rather than to his past. His right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has a policy which we have seen in action today. It is the kind of policy that many of us have seen in action at children's parties—one stops the music from time to time, takes away a chair and sees who is left. We can see that clearly in action in our communities.

The Chancellor has spoken of the growth of small businesses, and we welcome that. I very much hope that before the end of this week we shall see one more small business join the 999 to which the Chancellor has referred, and I hope that that small business will be based on the Wearside shipyards currently belonging to North East Shipbuilders Limited. All of us from the north-east hope that one additional small business will be in place by the end of the week, and we shall be sorely disappointed if it is not.

While the Chancellor talks about the growth in small business, we are witnessing the greatest expansion of concentrated industrial economic power at any stage of the industrial history of this country. In the past year, there have been nearly 1,200 mergers and acquisitions. Indeed, much of the so-called investment referred to by the Chancellor is actually acquisition rather than investment. Forty per cent. of the net borrowing of industry in the past year was for the purpose of acquisition. The Chancellor makes the fatal mistake of confusing acquisition with investment. Following the Rowntree merger, Tyneside now faces the projected takeover or merger of Scottish and Newcastle Breweries with Elders Courage. That is typical of the industrial policy unfolding in many of our cities.

The significant thing about that policy is that it depends not at all on industrial structure or industrial logic; it is simply an exercise of finance. Old-age pensioners in my constituency who have worked all their lives and bought their homes many years ago wish to find a method of converting the equity represented by their houses into income to see them through the rest of their lives. The hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) pressed for such a measure in the Budget proposals and it was a pity that he did not put the matter to the test.

While the old-age pensioners in my constituency find themselves unable to translate their equity into income, the current wave of mergers and takeovers ignores all distinctions between capital and revenue, debt and equity, future and present. It is a vast exercise in speculation, with the prospect of asset stripping. It is not based on industrial logic, industrial investment or any kind of industrial strategy.

Apparently this week is national chemistry week and in Westminster Hall there is an exhibition by the Royal Society of Chemistry. As the Prime Minister is a graduate in chemistry, that is entirely appropriate; but it is surprising that one university chemistry department has closed every year that she has been in power and we now have the prospect of half the remaining departments having to close.

Mr. Morgan: It is perhaps not so surprising when one considers that, after working for three years in chemistry, the right hon. Lady rapidly discovered that she would be better off working as a tax lawyer.

Mr. Cousins: That comment connects with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Brightside about the economy of the future. My concern is to point out that it is not the economy of the future but the economy of the present. That is why it is so peculiarly ironic to note the contradiction in the policy of ignoring the long-term industrial future and prospects of this country and the measures necessary to achieve them and in the gross financial speculation currently going on.

Conservative Members talk about the prospects for services, and it is right and proper to bring them into the equation. The city of Newcastle has been primarily a centre for service industry employment for at least 50 years. It is right and proper to bring services as well as industry into the equation but the signs that we have seen in industry are already clearly present in the service sector. The Chancellor has had to withdraw from the national accounts that old friend of his in the monthly trade figures —the balancing item—which saw him through many difficult days in 1987 when the figures had to be padded for the purposes of winning a general election. The Chancellor's old friend, the balancing item, has been withdrawn hurt, for the simple reason that the calculations that underpin that balancing item show that it no longer exists.

The same trend that we have seen in Britain's visible trade is clearly evident and developing in our invisible trade. It is crystal clear that Japanese banks, such as Nomura and Daiwa, will do to the City what industries such as Nissan and Mitsubishi have done to the cities. The same trends are unmistakably in prospect. It is thus peculiarly ironic that those same Japanese banks should be at the centre of so much of the industrial speculation rather than investment that is currently taking place.

It is interesting to end with the example of Japan, as in many ways it illustrates the real prospects for the Chancellor. Apparently, he will not change his policy.

Sadly, he will not be allowed to change his job. All that lies before him is the fate that befell the unfortunate Japanese financial manager only last week—the dull squelch as the concrete blanket finally hits the swamp.

6.37 pm

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) gave the only semi-coherent account of the Opposition stance on the economy, but he found it extremely difficult to get anywhere even by way of landing any punches in his attack, let alone in setting out any alternative which might be better than that currently being pursued. I counted some six howlers in his schoolboy exegesis of the problem —[HON. MEMBERS: "Only six?"] It was a relatively short speech by the hon. Gentleman's standards.

First, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East believed that the problem in the United Kingdom economy was that of an overheated south-east and an underheated regional economy beyond. The hon. Gentleman is several weeks or months out of date, as there is now a noticeable tendency for the prosperity, jobs and activity to spread northwards and westwards. Three examples come to mind. A firm in my constituency, in textiles, recently announced expansion plans for Cleveland in the belief that it would be easier to recruit labour and to find cheaper property there than in the Reading area. There is also the Ford decision for a major investment in south Wales and the very welcome Pilkington decision to put major investment into St. Helens rather than Kent, although it wishes to service the south-eastern market, because that company, too, realises that it is easier to recruit labour and to find cheaper property in the north than in the south.

The second problem that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East failed to address was the question how inflation could be brought under control. The hon. Gentleman cast aspersions on the idea that interest rates might do the job, but without much conviction. Interest rates are doing the job, and they may do it within a reasonable time scale—a matter of some months, over this winter and into next year. That is already evident from the slowing down of the housing market, which is most noticeable in London and the south-east, and the decline in the rate of increase in mortgage advances. People are responding to the high rate of interest, which stands to reason. After all, interest rates are a price, like many others in the economy: if the price is raised, people save more and borrow less, and vice versa. The medicine will work.

The third area about which the hon. Gentleman became rather worked up was child benefit. He attacked a policy that has not been announced or even been finally determined. Even on the assumption that he was correct to forecast a freeze, he was wide of the mark. Why should the Labour party want to give increased child benefit to the countess and the millionairess when they have already benefited from the tax reduction in the Budget? Why should it want to turn down the idea of giving more targeted help to those most in need of it—those poorer families who are making the effort to go to work despite some of the difficulties of the tax and benefit structure, which has already been reformed and could be strengthened by more generous family credit?

Is it not interesting to note that the last occasion that the Labour party increased child benefit, when an election was not immediately in sight, was in November 1977, when it raised it to the magnificent sum of £1 per week for the first child. Today, child benefit for the first child is £7·25—7·25 times higher in nominal terms and a substantial increase in real terms. It is humbug for the Labour party to protest too much about child benefit.

Fourth came the scholarship question, which the hon. Gentleman quite simply funked—whether a balance of payments deficit when not conjoined with a fiscal deficit is more benign. Of course it is, because the private sector is making judgments about how much money it wants to borrow and whether it can obtain an economic return on that money. The private sector knows that it can finance that deficit for a short time, much of which is incurred to import necessary intermediate and capital goods to increase the capacity of the industrial economy. It is welcome that industrial capacity is now expanding rapidly, and we must ensure that it is financed in a prudent way, which the interest rate changes will help to guarantee.

Fifthly, the hon. Gentleman believes that the balance of payments cannot be corrected under current policies. That is very misleading. One of the main problems in the balance of payment figures for this year and last year was the large deficit on engineered manufactured products with the Federal Republic of Germany. It may amount to £9,000 million this year, which accounts for the bulk of the overall balance of payments deficit. We have not been sufficiently competitive against the Germans, especially in motor vehicles. Part of the problem is that Governments of both persuasions continued to invest in a failed nationalised industry that never managed to become competitive.

I am now much more confident that the motor industry, strengthened by Japanese investment, management and design and by the passage of the Rover group to the private sector—following Jaguar—can put up a better competitive challenge to the Germans in the early 1990s than has been the case under the management and subsidy system of the 1980s. We cannot guarantee that the balance of payments will always be good news for the Opposition —it is quite possible that the investment rate and the new style of management will succeed in winning back those important markets for British manufacturing industry.

The final howler was the hon. Gentleman's feeling that all the Government's success—he conceded that there was some—had been based upon oil revenues and privatisation. I do not know whether he has looked recently at the oil price, which has fallen from about £24 a barrel—its peak in sterling—to £7. That colossal drop has produced a large decline in the oil revenues. If we add the total oil revenues in the current financial year to the total likely proceeds of privatisation, the two will probably just match the Government's financial surplus in the public sector. That is the height of fiscal prudence, and it means that oil revenues and the proceeds from asset sales are being applied to debt reduction. This is exactly the right thing to do when there is some slight worry about inflationary pressures but no worry about the rate of growth, which is extremely strong.

I regret that it is nought out of 10 for the economics of the hon. Gentleman—and where was his alternative strategy? The House has been left in ignorance of whether the Opposition want interest rates to go up or down, whether they want more public borrowing or a smaller public surplus or whether they think it right to run a large public sector surplus, as the Government are doing. We are in complete doubt about how, suddenly, those magic

[Mr. John Redwood]

investments would be found in the public sector, when the evidence of the 1970s is that the Government-led investment programmes helped to eliminate our competitiveness in crucial engineering industries under nationalised control. It is vital that we do not return to the economics of the public madhouse, as advertised by the then Labour Government and now by the Labour Opposition.

How wise the hon. Gentleman was to stick to the attack and not try to produce sensible policies. I must say how much I admired his Nelsonian blind eye when he said that he could see no additional Labour public spending commitment, which amounts to the sum total of £38 billion. There will be many more rows and wrangles in the shadow Cabinet, which will have to go through its equivalent of the Star Chamber. There will be a great deal of blood on the floor before it even gets down to £38 billion of additional public spending commitments, let alone down to none. I hope that, when the Opposition have made their decisions, they will come and tell the House which of the items for which they constantly demand additional spending have been deleted from Labour's programme.

6.46 pm

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): The hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) referred to the wisdom of my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). Many of us could say how wise the hon. Gentleman was not to seek to intervene in my hon. Friend's speech. My hon. Friend gave a searing indictment of the Government's handling of the economy.

If we compare the mood on the Conservative Benches today with that on Budget day, the contrast is quite stark. On Budget day, Conservative Members were beside themselves with joy, not least because of their personal gain from the Chancellor's tax cuts. Since then, a catalogue of disasters has vindicated our consistent criticisms. All the Chancellor's forecasts on the balance of payments, inflation and monetary growth have proved hopelessly wrong. Britain now has a massive balance of payments deficit. Since June, the eighth rises in interest rates have pushed Britain's interest rates well above those of our main industrial competitors and have also meant crippling mortgage payments for millions of home buyers.

During the past few years, growth has been seriously unbalanced, with credit-driven consumption increasing far faster than investment or output. The Budget tax cuts made the position worse. The result is a record trade deficit that appears set to reach £14 billion, and an inflation rate higher than that of any other industrialised nation.

I have already said that our consistent criticism of the Government has been vindicated. To cite just one example, on 16 March my right and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said:

"the deteriorating balance of payments is the most serious constraint on economic management . . . in the years immediately ahead of us . . . eight years or so after reaching oil self-sufficiency",

we are

"heading into balance of payments problems again."—[*Official Report*, 16 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 1123.]

Underlying the severe balance of payments problem is the damage inflicted on British industry by the Government since they came to power in 1979. Britain is unique among industrialised countries in that, from 1978 to 1987, our manufacturing output did not grow. By 1987, it was only just back to its level in 1978, Labour's last full year in power.

Comparisons have been made before, and I make no apology for making them again—output in Japan grew by more than 40 per cent., in the USA by 25 per cent. and in Italy by 16 per cent. In 1979, the import penetration of manufactured goods was 25 per cent.; now it is 35 per cent. I represent Glasgow, Rutherglen, which contains a Hoover factory, and we know at first hand the damage that has been done to our market by the penetration of imports. The balance of trade is the best single indicator of the nation's ability to produce goods that people at home and abroad want to buy.

Foreign earnings from North sea oil are declining, and the prospects are not great unless there is a turnaround in investment and in industrial performance. The oil years have been wasted. The previous Labour Government had planned to use oil revenues to improve the infrastructure and to re-equip British industry. The Government have used those revenues to fuel a vast consumer boom. Oil revenues and privatisation may have funded tax reductions, but the Barber-style dash for growth has been neither balanced nor sustainable. Unemployment in many of Britain's less prosperous areas remains high and the trade deficit and increasing inflation show that the end of the Chancellor's ill-conceived boom is in sight.

The Government have always said that low inflation was their number one priority, but our inflation is now the worst among the major industrialised countries, and it is set to go even higher. Interest rate increases are feeding through to mortgages, and the Government are fattening up the electricity industry and British Rail for privatisation. Of course, that entails higher electricity charges and rail fares.

I take no pleasure in illustrating the economic troubles facing the country, because it is our country too and we want to see our people prosper. However, the Government must change course and must not dismiss serious economic indicators as mere blips. The Labour party's proposals to get the nation onto a sound economic path could qualify for the over-used description of "prudent" —a word that will come back to haunt the Chancellor.

The Chancellor should use the Autumn Statement to signal a change in strategy to redress the imbalance between the south-east and the other parts of Britain. He should reverse the top rate tax cuts, which gave the top 5 per cent. £3 billion. He should boost investment in the National Health Service, education, transport and the infrastructure, creating jobs and wealth without floods of imports. He should uprate child benefit in line with inflation. That, after all, would cost only a fraction of the Budget's top rate tax cuts. He should assist industry with a stable pound and lower interest rates. He should implement credit control to slow down the consumer boom without damaging investment. We are putting Labour's proposals forward in a constructive manner, and we hope that the Government will respond likewise.

6.53 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I think that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) would agree that a theme has emerged from

Conservative Members. It is the theme of the Tories' belief in the need for social cohesion as the most important objective of Government. It is the theme that actuated Sir Brandon Rhys Williams throughout his life and which made him a proponent of indexing child benefit. It is certainly the theme of my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison). It is also the theme of those who take some of their views from the Victorian liberals and believe that the most important factor in preserving social cohesion is to have sound money.

It seems to me that the Chancellor faces a very difficult period over the coming months. It is obvious, of course, that he has received a great deal of unwise encouragement from these Benches, as he has taken considerable chances with inflation, particularly over the past three years.

It is most unfortunate that the person who built, brick by brick, the medium term financial strategy so that it might be the prison that would discipline future Chancellors was also the person to smash the prison when he came back as Chancellor to live in it. As editor of *The Times*, Lord Rees-Mogg supported Peter Jay and Sam Brittan, the two most influential journalists to re-emphasise the importance of monetary control and lay the intellectual framework for the medium term financial strategy. It is significant that in today's edition of *The Independent* Lord Rees-Mogg should point out that broad money—admittedly defined in a slightly different way, but broad money nevertheless—has been increasing by 22·6 per cent. per annum in this country compared with increases of 6·6 per cent. in the United States, 6·2 per cent. in Germany, 8·1 per cent. in France and 11·1 per cent. in Japan.

That shows that, although the Conservative party has unwisely applauded all the pleasant and euphoric effects of the upturn of a consumer boom—as inflation has been producing its enjoyable effects—we now face a real problem. Of course, my hon. Friends have been delighted to watch the value of their houses increase by 40 per cent. over the past 18 months.

Mr. Gow: No.

Mr. Budgen: Many of them have. Many of them were delighted, too, by the way in which assets such as shares increased so rapidly until autumn last year. Now we are to have the necessary downturn.

Mr. Gould: The stop.

Mr. Budgen: And the stop.

My hon. Friends and I must now support the Chancellor and the Government as they introduce the necessary corrective measures. We shall do that for high Tory reasons because we believe that all those other objectives that are so enjoyable and desirable, such as the creation of wealth, the freeing of markets and the encouragement of enterprise are subsidiary to the necessity for sound money. We shall do so for the containment of inflation because we believe that by letting inflation loose in society we do more to create injustice and envy than——

Mr. Oppenheim: And unemployment.

Mr. Budgen: And unemployment, although I shall leave aside those economic arguments.

By letting inflation loose, we undermine social cohesion. Let me give an example from the debate. A moment ago, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) spoke with resentment and envy against speculators and tax lawyers. In a period of upturn of inflation, inflationary circumstances encourage speculation and make speculators prosper. They also make it necessary to employ tax lawyers. It is not the fault of the speculator and the tax lawyer if they respond to the conditions that have been created by the Government.

High interest rates will do the trick eventually. We do not know for how long they will have to be applied, but we do know one thing: if they are not applied for sufficiently long and if the pain does not occur, we shall have a high and rising rate of inflation.

I conclude with one small technical point. Many Conservative Members—ambivalent as I believe them to be about inflation—say that there is a compromise. For example, they say that we can do the trick by imposing some sort of controls on hire purchase lending. In principle, I believe that to have been unfair and wrong in the past, but it is technically no longer possible because those persons who used to be able only to borrow through hire purchase now have bank accounts and can borrow much more cheaply on overdrafts from the bank.

Secondly, it is suggested that it would be possible to make some form of enforceable but voluntary arrangement with the clearing banks by which they designate preferential borrowers. That used to be possible in the days when the clearing banks had a monopoly in lending, but that is no longe possible. For example, if it is said about Alton Towers in Staffordshire that it is part of the candy floss economy, so it may not borrow and borrowing should be confined to farmers or manufacturers, the manager of Alton Towers would simply catch the train to London, see the managing director of Nomura and borrow the money probably at finer rates than he would receive from the Midland bank, Stoke on Trent. Therefore, that is not possible either. I fear that we are in for a difficult period.

I beg my hon. Friends to support the Government, because I believe that the Government are now doing the right thing. I hope that all my hon. Friends will agree that in the end the Tory party is in the business of maintaining our institutions and social cohesion. As the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central has shown in his attacks on speculators and tax lawyers, there is no better way of creating resentment, envy and a lingering sense of injustice than to have inflation.

7.1 pm

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): It is important to put on record our views about the excellent contribution to the debate by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). I do not believe that his speech has in any way been undermined by the rather petulant comments of the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) in giving a blow-by-blow account of it.

I should like to highlight the issue of training and economic performance, which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East. This appears to be one of the key areas in which the Government claim success. I and many of my colleagues and commentators, when considering countries within the OECD, feel very uneasy about that sector. One of the principal reasons for emphasising training this evening is that the Government's economic policies are characterised by short-termism—

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next year's balance book, and next year's public expenditure figures—when most of our competitors are looking to the long term. They are looking towards reinforcing their infrastructure, of which training is clearly an essential element.

It is important to study some of the countries which the Government seek to ignore in their analysis of where Britain's economic prospects and economic strategy should be going in the months and years ahead. Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland and the USA have much to offer the Government. However, instead of a coherent industrial training strategy, we have a mismatch of ideas and programmes borrowed and transferred from certain parts of the United States—policies which I should not like to see replicated throughout the United Kingdom.

We do not study our competitors' policies so that we can transfer every idea, every programme and every piece of innovation. But it is essential for the Government to learn why other countries are more successful in increasing productivity, in tackling skill shortages, and in having a long-term financial and industrial commitment to training rather than selective borrowing of ideas that suit their political strategy and instinct, but do little for the long-term needs of the economy.

The first point is one of consensus, which has become a dirty word for Conservative Members. It is clear, when studying our competitors, that there is a consensus between the social partners—the trade unions, industry and the Government. We shall discover later how our Government deal with consensus. Consensus is no longer about delivery, but is about national objectives and ideas that, can maintain the social and industrial momentum in the years ahead.

The second point is that those competitors value post-16 education. We have heard much from the Government about the MSC, but one cannot help thinking that, because education is largely state-funded, it does not figure on the agenda. It does in competing countries in the OECD and in Europe.

The third point is the interest shown in what I would call effective industrial training. The Government are obsessed with pre-employment vocational training. The reason for that is simply that we are one of the few countries in the industrialised world to have created mass unemployment during the past 10 years. There were few jobs for young people, so the Government had to rely on pre-employment vocational training. It was not that they cared about training: it was seen simply as an alternative to the lengthening dole queues. Most of our competitors are investing in in-company or in-enterprise training. The patchwork of the often incoherent policies of the British Government is not for them. Our competitors see the benefits of in-plant training, which their industrialists finance in partnership with the Government.

The fourth point is an absence of local labour market strategy. What strategy for training do the Government have? This afternoon, when answering questions on employment training, we saw that we had at the Dispatch Box a petulant Secretary of State who was looking for hon. Members to argue with, rather than taking any cognisance of the real issues in local labour markets up and down the country. It appears that the range of the Government's perception stretches no further than the south-east, and perhaps a little further west. Local labour market strategies are essential. For example, in Germany, with a consensus at local level, there is effective delivery. That is not something that we see happening with this Government.

Our competitors also believe in improving access to university education. They do not want to be countries with low skills and a low-tech service economy. They want knowledge and technology. Young people in this country are not only denied access to university education, but are not given the opportunity to take up a vital role in manufacturing or in our service or hi-tech economy.

The reality of success for our competitors means training that will contribute to their economic performance. That is real and effective training. It is not training as a response to the dole queue. It is not training in terms of a set of incoherent, undefended programmes that respond to the short term. It is not training that is left as an extra to the whims of industry, individuals or the market place. It is training that is a key component of any attempt to have a full employment policy, to have a credible competitive economy and—something about which Conservative Members rarely speak—to improve the quality of life for individuals.

Why is it that in this country fewer people continue their education after the age of 16 than is the case with virtually all our industrial competitors? Are Conservative Members aware that in Singapore, Taiwan and Korea more than 85 per cent. of the post-16 age group are receiving education, against 50 per cent. in this country? Until a few years ago, those countries were frowned upon. Japan also boasts a similar percentage of youngsters who remain in education.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McLeish: No, I wish to continue.

We are slowly moving towards employment-based training, but industry does not yet have enough enthusiasm to embrace that objective. In Germany, three times as much is spent on in-plant training as in this country. It is estimated that Britain spends 0·15 per cent. of turnover on training, compared with the 1 to 2 per cent. that is spent by the Germans, the Americans and the French. That is a staggering proportion and it highlights the weakness of our approach.

The Government look upon YTS and ET as successes. Other countries do not have similar schemes, basically because they do not need them. In Germany there is a coherent training system—a dual process of education and training—for 16 to 20-year-olds. The Government's programme for 16 to 20-year-old training and for adult training lags well behind that of any comparable country. Our training policies also lack information. It is remarkable that the Government have sought to abuse statistics in such a way that we are now planning for the future on the basis of scant information.

Short-termism lies at the root of many of the evils in our economy and in our training programme. If the Government are serious about the 1990s and the year 2000, they must abandon their superficial, half-hearted, mediocre approach to training and take on some of the ideas that we have proposed.

7.11 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): The Opposition's case against the Government has been based on three criticisms—tax cuts, our manufacturing performance and the credit boom. Opposition spokesmen could have made a valid case by criticising Government policy in other areas, but they have failed to do so and have left that critique to the eloquent speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) and for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow).

Opposition spokesmen have criticised our manufacturing performance, yet under this Government our manufacturing output and manufacturing investment is up and our share of world trade in manufactures is stable for the first time in many years. We should compare that with Labour's record in the 1970s. During the time of the previous Labour Government, manufacturing output fell and we imported three times as many manufactured goods as we exported. Our share of world trade in manufactures was also falling. It is all too easy for the Opposition to forget that.

The Opposition have criticised the Government's tax-cutting policy, and we have heard a great deal of self-righteousness from them about tax cuts. Do the Opposition disapprove of the fact that, as a result of our tax cuts, the amount paid by top rate taxpayers has gone up in absolute terms, in real terms and as a proportion of the total Government tax take? The top rate taxpayer now pays a larger burden than he did when the previous Labour Government were in power. It is only a Labour Opposition who would seek higher taxes that yield less.

The Opposition have criticised us for the credit boom. They too often forget that, although private indebtedness is high, it is founded not on imports, but on the housing market. Apart from private sector indebtedness, the Government are in surplus, as is industry. That is a radical change from the 1970s when, although private sector indebtedness was not as high, the Government and industry were heavily in debt.

There seems to be a fundamental inconsistency in the Opposition's policies regarding spending and borrowing. They seem to believe that public spending is all right, but they bitterly criticise private spending, be it by private consumers or by private sector industry.

Of course there are problems, which have been adequately outlined this afternoon. Those problems relate to the supply side of the economy and are also largely caused by the fact that the Government—I believe unwisely—let interest rates drift too low in the past few years. I accept that it is far easier to say that with hindsight. This time last year, all the pundits were urging the Government to cut interest rates to avoid the problems of 1929, when the world moved into a recession because interest rates were not cut.

Earlier this year, there was a great wailing about the so-called strength of the pound, even though it was weaker than it had been two or three years earlier. As a result of complaints about the strength of the pound, the Chancellor was unwisely prevailed upon to cut interest rates, despite the fact that some had pointed out to him the fact that those countries with the strongest economies, the lowest unemployment and the best export records were precisely those countries whose exchange rates had risen consistently in the past 30 years.

It has been argued that a higher savings ratio is needed. Certainly an increase in interest rates will help to achieve that, as will lower taxes on savings. A feature of some of the most successful economies in the world is that they have virtually no tax on savings and, conversely, they have not given the tax breaks that many Western countries have given to aid consumption. That is important.

I was somewhat surprised to hear the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) complain that savings in this country were too low. When he was in government, the enormous taxes that were levied on anyone who saved as a result of direct taxes and inflation meant that it was almost impossible to save. The next time the right hon. Gentleman complains about the low savings ratio, someone should point out to him what happened in the past.

Virtually all the remedies that the Opposition have promoted over the past four years would exacerbate the current problems. In 1984, the Leader of the Opposition lauded to the skies the example of the American economy, which had gone heavily into budget deficit. He urged the Government to follow the American example and massively increase public spending and lower interest rates so as to bring the value of sterling down. By 1987, he seemed to have forgotten his urgent advice, especially when the chickens had come home to roost in the American economy. That advice, however, was offered not only by the Leader of the Opposition but by many of his minions and, I am afraid to say, it also emanated from the Conservative Benches. If that advice had been taken, our problems today would be infinitely worse. Our credit boom would have been even bigger and our balance of payments problem would have been significantly worse. Undoubtedly, inflation would also have been higher.

One of the most extraordinary aspects of the debate has been how, one by one, Opposition Members have got up and praised Governments who have been consistently Right-wing in their economic policies. They have urged the Government to use them as models. I was amazed that not only the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) but also about five of his hon. Friends praised Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan. Ever since the war, those Governments have been consistently Right-wing in all their policies. They have pursued low public spending policies and have been consistently pro-enterprise. They have had education policies—this is important—very similar to the policies which are now belatedly being pursued by this Government. They have had extremely sound financial policies with low taxes. In all cases, they have had compliant trade unionists. Sometimes those trade unionists have been compliant by consent but sometimes they have been made compliant by other means which I would not support for one moment.

The other thing that those countries have in common is either low taxes or no taxes on savings, unlike Britain in the 1970s. I find it extraordinary that Labour Members should suddenly laud economies which have consistently pursued policies which this Government have broadly begun to pursue during the past nine years.

Our economy is undoubtedly not perfect. It has suffered from too-low interest rates, and the supply-side miracle that some people were talking about last year has not yet happened. However, we are on the right track to cure our supply-side problems. After all, our economy did not go into decline all of a sudden in the 1980s, the 70s or even the 60s. Our manufacturing industry has had problems for

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about 100 years. Such deep structural problems cannot be cured in nine years. However, if we continue the policies that we have been pursuing during the past nine years, our supply-side problems will become a thing of the past. I sincerely hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will hold firm on interest rates, because if he does, our inflationary problems will also become a thing of the past.

7.21 pm

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): The Government have told us repeatedly—at least until the Prime Minister's address to this year's Conservative party conference—that the battle against inflation is the key economic target. They have also told us that, if inflation is not controlled, our economy cannot become competitive and British goods will be priced out of the world market. I do not disagree with the predicted consequence for our economy of a failure to control the rate of inflation.

However, where I do disagree—I believe that the majority of economic opinion in the country now disagrees also—is that I do not think that the Government can concentrate solely on one economic target. If the economy is to prosper, making our economy competitive means more than just giving consideration to the rate of inflation. Targets on industrial investment, on the amount of money which we as a community spend on training and on the amount of money that we spend on education, science and technology all affect the competitiveness of the British economy.

The Government have now been caught out after nine years. The months ahead will show that, because of their continued and sole preoccupation with the rate of inflation, they have failed not only to control that but to change other economic indicators. We have been told that, if we stick to the task of cutting inflation and if we take our medicine, things will work out in the longer term. We were also told—this is important—that only if we take our medicine and only if inflation is brought under control can things get better in the longer term and the economy prosper.

At this time, when statistical indicators show disturbing trends, the British people will be asking how the Government's record matches the claims that they have made consistently for nine years. It is easy to forget that against those claims the Government increased inflation from 8·3 per cent. in 1978 to 18 per cent. by 1980 following the imposition of the increased value added tax.

Mr. Morgan: And beyond.

Mr. Henderson: Indeed, as my hon. Friend says, they have increased inflation beyond even that amount.

The public will want to scrutinise the Government's record. They will want to know that, in the period 1981-85, our rate of inflation was consistently above the rates of comparable countries such as West Germany, the United States and Japan. They will also want to know that in the most recent period, 1985-88, when we have continually been told on television from the Tory party conference and elsewhere that the battle against inflation is being won, our rate of inflation has been appreciably higher than the OECD average. The public will also have heard that the reason why the battle against the supposed inflation in Britain is being won is the specific and particular policy pursued by the Conservative Government.

The Chancellor should now recognise that it is not only Opposition Members who are saying that there are other reasons for a movement in the rate of price changes in the 1980s. People in the City now recognise that the reduction in the absolute level of inflation in the United Kingdom in the 1980s had very little to do with the specific economic policies of this Government, and far more to do with the movement in commodity prices throughout the world.

The people whom the Chancellor was addressing in his Mansion House speech last week will now be raising questions about the credibility of the Government's economic policy and asking whether they can have faith in a Chancellor who predicts in April in the Red Book that inflation will return to 4 per cent. in the fourth quarter of 1988. What will the City friends of the Chancellor and the Economic Secretary say about those forecasts? What evidence is there that anything that has happened in our economy in the six months since April relates in any way to the Red Book predictions of March?

Many of us would like to have as an associate a friendly fly on the walls of the Treasury. I wonder what those friendly flies would have been saying in the past six months during which they would probably have seen officials scurrying through the Treasury in alarm because of what is happening to the economy.

If the record on inflation over the past nine years has not been all that is claimed, the record over the past six months is disastrous compared with the predictions that were made in the Red Book. In April 1988, inflation in the United Kingdom was comparable to the level of inflation in the United States, although it was considerably higher than in France and West Germany. By August 1988—the latest date for which we have comparable figures—our inflation rate had risen to 5·7 per cent. We know that it increased to 5·9 per cent. in September, but even in August it was 25 per cent. higher than the rate of increase in the United States—more than double the rate of increase in France and five times that in Germany.

Over the years, Conservative Members have said that at least the Italians have a worse inflation rate than we have, but even that is not true now. On the August figures, Britain's inflation rate is increasing faster than Italy's. People in this country must now be saying, "If inflation is out of control, if the Government's stated targets on inflation have not been met and if inflation is the key indicator in the Government's economic strategy, what about the rest of the strategy? Can any of the Government's claims be met?"

There is great concern among the Government's Back Benchers, some of whom have been remarkably silent this evening. I hope that that concern shows itself later in the vote. Like the general public, Conservative Back Benchers were told that, unless we get inflation right, nothing else will happen to make the economy work. After 10 years of selling that medicine, those Conservative Back Benchers now face the prospect that, because inflation is not under control, there will be no recovery in the manufacturing sector and no additional provisions for the National Health Service or for social services. We cannot expect extra funds for training, education, science and technology. British goods will still be priced out—will be further priced out—of world markets. The promises of so-called free-market supply economics have not lived up

to expectation. I know that it will stick in the gullets of many Conservative Members, but September 1988 marked the return of stagflation to the British economy.

7.30 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I add my tribute to the tributes already paid to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on his excellent maiden speech. He fought the Isle of Wight on two occasions and came nearer than anyone to unseating my predecessor. It was obvious from the excellent way in which he presented the facts, and from his mastery of them, that he has not wasted his time in the journey from the Isle of Wight to Kensington. I know the affection in which he is still held in the Isle of Wight from his young days and his young campaign there, and I am sure that the people of Kensington will find him a worthy successor to a leading parliamentarian.

The spectacle of the Opposition parties lecturing us on sound economic management is about as plausible as Jack the Ripper giving a lecture on flower arranging to the Women's Institute. Speaker after speaker has mentioned the contraction of the manufacturing industry and the lack of investment. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) referred to it when he opened the debate for the Opposition, and the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said that in his view manufacturing industry was pricing itself out of the market because of high interest rates. The facts clearly tell us otherwise. According to a National Economic Development Office report on the processing industries' investment forecasts for 1988 to 1992, the processing industries will be spending over £20 billion over the three years to the end of 1990. Even after netting out inflation, that is an increase in real terms of over 9 per cent. In anyone's language, that is a success story.

When my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) raised the question of child benefit and generously allowed me to intervene, the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) was heard to remark that I was reading from my brief from the Whips' Office. I am sure that my hon. Friends in the Whips' Office will be pleased to know that they have been accused of producing such an erudite publication. In fact, I was reading from *Hansard*, 17 May 1988, column 419, where it is reported that over £1·3 billion is paid as child benefit to families with incomes in excess of £20,000.

I wish to direct my remarks, however, not to child benefit but to the children of this country. The Government are pursuing a policy that is far more valuable than child benefit: that of reduction and repayment of the national debt. Much has been made in today's debate of whether the Chancellor was wise to reduce the basic rate of tax to 40 per cent. The fact is that lower taxation has led to a much higher—indeed, a record—yield in revenue to the Treasury, coupled with a successful policy of privatisation in which more than 18 organisations have been taken from the cloying hand of the state and the public sector borrowing requirement and returned to the free-enterprise sector. I believe that the current Budget surplus is on target to reach £10 billion. In that context, no one could suggest that it was imprudent of the Chancellor to cut taxation.

It is not just in cutting taxation that the Chancellor has achieved such success. He is using that Budget surplus to reduce the national debt, which will be of major benefit to our children and our children's children. We are the exception internationally. A recent report, published by James Capel, shows that the public debt as a proportion of gross domestic product has risen from 19 to 31 per cent. in the United States since 1979, from 15 to 26 per cent. in Japan and from 12 to 24 per cent. in West Germany. In Britain it has fallen from 46 per cent. to just under 40 per cent. That is the success of our Chancellor and of this Government's policy.

What a record that is: a reduced payment of interest on the national debt, allowing more money to be spent on the Health Service and our old people. That is our success, and that is the continuing programme of reform that the Government are pursuing. This will be of major benefit to generations to come. The Government are pursuing a long-term strategy for long-term problems, while the Opposition parties pursue short-term solutions for long-term problems.

7.36 pm

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): The debate has been characterised by a somewhat dull and under-confident performance by the Chancellor, and by an unusually large number of timid speeches from his erstwhile supporters on the Conservative Benches. We suspect that that is because many of them now realise that, as our manufacturing, industrial and technological base shrinks in world terms we have a Government who back not the industrialist but the financier; not the producer but the property developer.

The business expansion scheme, the subject of so much lemming-like investment in recent days and weeks, is being targeted not at the industrial and commercial infrastructure—whose BES limit was set at half a million pounds—but at the old and faithful allies of the Chancellor's Conservative party: the property developers, who can raise 10 times that amount, courtesy of the Chancellor. While the property developers' problems are being addressed by the Chancellor, ordinary property owners with mortgages have been forced to swallow a bitter pill. Most first-time house buyers have seen their mortgages rocket in the past six months, so that even those who did not borrow up to the limit of their repayment power have found that their family finances are now at breaking point. Many families with mortgages have gone beyond breaking point. While the average budget gain was £12 a month, millions of home-owning families have seen their mortgage repayments spiral by more than £30 a month as interest rates soar to levels well above those of our European counterparts.

The Chancellor, however, seems unconcerned about the consequences: the record mortgage defaults, the record repossessions and the record rise in the number of homeless families. Those families are the victims of what the Chancellor calls competition—competition in a housing market that has seen average house prices double in eight years and in East Anglia and the south-east, including Greater London, rise by over 160 per cent. After the tax cuts, the benefit changes and those mortgage rises, two thirds of Britain faces a fall in living standards. Some 19 million households and families are now worse off, or certainly no better off, after the tax cuts that have been the source of so much smug satisfaction on the Conservative Benches; and for the 3 million families who are £15 or

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more a month worse off, the Chancellor now seeks to freeze child benefit. That will affect 12 million children and 6 million mothers.

The hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs), a staunch supporter of the Government, inadvertently admitted the folly of the freeze by accusing Opposition Members of damaging speculation. If the freeze is damaging, will he vote against any freeze in child benefit? We shall see. At least the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) is honest enough to admit openly what the Prime Minister sought to obscure today, last week and since the commitment on child benefit in the manifesto. He told us earlier that there has been serious back-tracking on what was said in the Conservative party manifesto. Why? To save £210 million now and to introduce targeting later, not so that just a few of the rich will lose child benefit, but so that many people on low incomes will also lose.

If the Government want evidence that targeting means cutting payments even to those who qualify for allowances, they need only examine the figures on family credit that they accepted earlier this year. The number of eligible families was assessed at 470,000, but, because this is a targeted benefit, less than half received the benefit and allowance. Last week, in a written answer, the Minister said that only 200,000 of the low-paid—of the estimated 470,000 eligible to claim—had claimed. The effect of child benefit targeting would be similar. We oppose the targeting of child benefit, not because it would not go to the rich, but because it would not reach the poor.

The freezing of child benefit will have an equally detrimental effect. For the 80,000 mothers and 160,000 children in Edinburgh, a freeze would mean less to spend on electricity to keep warm and less to pay towards the cost of rent and mortgage rises. In Edinburgh alone, the Government will save up to £10 million—money which would have helped mothers, children and the local economy. The child benefit freeze means a callous cut in the standard of living of Edinburgh mothers, as it does for families throughout the country.

The Chancellor has failed those families, harmed home owners and tenants and damaged our economy. Today he has failed to answer the grave charges of my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), that inflation is higher now than in our competitor countries, that the damaging levels of imports are harmful to our economy, that the frighteningly high balance of payments defecit is out of control, that savings are falling and that we have a crippling level of interest rates. Like the Secretary of State for Social Security, the Chancellor has had his day. The sooner he goes, the better for all.

7.42 pm

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): Virtually the only speech from the Opposition which has borne on the general management of the economy was the opening speech of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). He suitably set off at a Stakhanovite pace, making one promise of doom and disaster every minute. Unfortunately, after some 20 minutes, his hammer grew rather worn and, having emphasised the importance of investment, he omitted to mention the basic investment of his side which is in viable alternative policies, so his speech began to lose much of its impact.

Virtually everything else we have heard from Opposition Members has borne on the social condition of the nation, as was well instanced in the immediately preceding speech. Opposition Members have no monopoly on social concern and the condition of Britain. We, too, are concerned. To take the current debate about child benefit, if there were no inflation, we would need no debate about the level of child benefit and or its uprating because that would not arise.

The Opposition are silent on macro-economic policy because they have nothing to say about it. A much more relevant indicator of the basic strength of our economy is seen in our constituencies, in the overall figures for economic growth and in the little anecdotes and experiences that we encounter. To take up the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) on the motor industry, I was particularly impressed by a recent visit to a high-tech engineering firm where I saw a job being prepared in prototype. I asked who it was for and was told that it was for Porsche. I then asked what Porsche was doing making it here and was told that the Germans could not get it right so it had to be brought here. That shows the animal spirits to which Maynard Keynes referred, and that the idea that the British economy can succeed rather than always fail is being re-established. That is difficult for Opposition Members to handle and even for some Conservatives and the public, but it is something with which we must come to terms.

What a contrast that is with the 1960s and 1970s, when the economy seemed permanently in a state of crisis, when troubles came not in single spies but in battalions, and when everything was shaken up and changed every 10 minutes. I hope that the Opposition will give credit to the Chancellor and his immediate predecessor for this period of stable, calm, economic policy. We have had a whole series of problems, but we have been able to deal with them firmly, steadily, calmly and one at a time. I am referring to the financing of the Falklands war, our response to the almost overnight halving of the oil price and our response to the October crash last year.

It seems that the present problem with inflation lies in the commendable motives of the Chancellor in responding to the events of last October. He was worried that that might create a slide into a slump. Accordingly, there was some indulgence, as he has admitted. It was monetary, not fiscal, indulgence, but it was indulgence all the same and it has now had to be clawed back at some cost.

Our balance of payments deficit has one particular strength, in that, unlike the almost endemic position of the 1960s and 1970s, this deficit does not answer to a corresponding fiscal deficit in Government and public finances. We have privatised the deficit, and, just as we have privatised industry and seen the benefits of that, equally, when the deficit is in private hands, all those holding it, individually and severally, are responsive to market pressures.

A Government-led deficit is one where the Government can make their own terms and continue without responding to the situation. In those circumstances it seems inapposite to wish to raise taxes and to unpick the good work we have done on incentives. When one examines the underlying motives of the Opposition for wishing to raise taxes again, one sees that they have little to do with the benefit to the economy, but reflect the desire

of the former Labour Chancellor to squeeze the rich until the pips sqeak. That would give them pleasure, no matter what happened to the economy.

Mr. Morgan: The hon. Gentleman said that there had been some indulgence. Is he referring to the top rate tax cuts, and if not, why not?

Mr. Boswell: If I referred to indulgence, I would refer to the extremely regrettable phrases used by the previous Labour Chancellor and the luxuriance of Opposition Members in claiming a monopoly of social concern. I, too, am concerned—not least, because I am anxious about inflation.

It is entirely appropriate to operate on credit, for reasons which have not been adequately analysed. The first and most obvious reason is that an increase in interest rates chokes off excess demand on spending. The second and more subtle reason is that it tends to increase the interest rate and in doing so increases the competitive pressures on British industry. We must always remember that, for every 1 per cent. of costs induced by a change in interest rates, there is some 4 per cent. increase in costs induced by a change in wage rates, with which industries can deal perfectly adequately alone. When industrialists come to me and complain, I tell them to look not at the mote in my eye but at the beam in theirs. Thirdly, an increase in interest rates helps to finance the deficit with which we must contend now.

I want to leave the Chancellor with two points for consideration. The first concerns public spending. There is a great endemic difficulty with spending Ministers. If things are going badly, they have a case for more money; if they are going well, they have a certain case for more money. I sometimes feel some sympathy with Treasury Ministers, who have to operate like the vice squad and hang around waiting for spending Ministers to do something. Sordid and difficult as that work may be, I ask them not to lose heart about it now. If there is to be extra spending for particular purposes, let us recover it elsewhere. Let us not indulge in excess spending which will bring back other problems.

Secondly, as some of my hon. Friends have said today, let us return to our main objective—tackling inflation. I do not share the view that the Government have given up, but I must regard their greatest achievements—admittedly at the time of the greatest problems—as having come in their early days. To confirm my confidence that the Government are prepared to meet and finally defeat this enemy, they will need to reduce average inflation over the period of this Parliament to a level below that which obtained in the previous one. As there is something of an increase now, there will need to be a commensurate reduction in subsequent years, with, I profoundly hope, a target of zero. That is the most urgent immediate action point for the Chancellor, who is handling the difficulties with calm and firmness. In doing that, there is no easy solution or free lunch—but equally, there is no other way.

7.51 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): There is much to be said on this subject, but I shall be concise because of the limitation on time. It is significant that so many Scottish Members want to take part in the debate. The view from Scotland is very different from that advanced by the Chancellor and Conservative Members. It is very different from the glowing report he gave of how well the economy is doing. The right hon. Gentleman is guilty of wanton complacency. So much can be seen by comparing his remarks with what is going on in Scotland.

I cannot be happy about the Scottish economy while Scotland is vulnerable to takeover bids by any outside predator who wants to come in. The Chancellor's response to my point, that the Government have the power now to prevent predatory takeovers such as the one aimed at Scottish and Newcastle Breweries, was incredible. He appeared to say that anything goes in such foreign takeover bids. I cannot believe that his response would have been the same to a foreign takeover bid for England's largest home-based manufacturing industry—yet this is the fate that awaits Scotland under this Government.

To judge from the Chancellor's remarks, we now have a Government committed to the creation of a branch factory economy, believing that to be a desirable economic goal. It is not, as Scotland knows to its cost. I again urge the Government to act in the Scottish and Newcastle affair before it is too late. If my advice is correct, Lord Young has powers under the Industry Act 1975 to stop the bid. In section 13, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has power to call the bid off if the takeover is

"contrary to the interests of the United Kingdom, or . . . any substantial part of the United Kingdom".

Scottish and Newcastle Breweries employs more than 22,000 people. The company is the largest single Scottish-based manufacturer, and action is required now.

I cannot be happy about an economy in which high rates of unemployment are endemic and there is such tragic waste of human resources. The Government get unemployment down from an all-time record high that they created to a level higher than that which they inherited and call it a triumph. Some triumph. They do that by creating Mickey Mouse training schemes and altering the method of counting the unemployed. I know that statistical bases have to be reviewed—but 18 times in nine years? If the rules can be changed so easily, anything is possible. In his bunker in Berlin in 1945 Adolf Hitler might have proved that he had won the war. Unfortunately for him and the Government, they face the same problem: reality.

The reality in this country is that millions of people want to work but cannot. Scottish unemployment remains stubbornly far higher than that of similar small European countries, in spite of Scotland's having massive oil revenues and resources. Factories and whole industries are closed down: the motor car industry at Linwood, aluminium smelting at Invergordon and steel capacity at Gartcosh. Now Ravenscraig and the whole Scottish steel industry are under threat from the Government's economic policies.

This Government have created an economic revival based only in one area—London and the south-east. Life is different in Scotland and various parts of the United Kingdom. I want to get one message across to the Government about this so-called United Kingdom. I cannot be happy about the way in which basic industries are being destroyed and not replaced with new ones providing jobs to take Scotland into the future. I cannot be happy while our small businesses and industry are crippled by rates that will be made worse by the Government's uniform business rate proposals, which will be a disaster for the rural areas of Scotland if they are imposed, and for the whole of Scotland if they are not. What would

[Mr. Andrew Welsh]

Conservative Members, who glorify high interest rates, do about agriculture in Scotland? It is burdened with debt; small and medium farmers face bankruptcy because of these high interest rates coming after a series of poor harvests.

Such economic mismanagement in the fifth richest oil-producing country in the world is almost incredible. It is a crazy mismanagement of the economy. If the Chancellor, to use his phrase, thinks the economy is overheating, he knows nothing about Scotland and cares even less. To speak of an overheating economy there or in other areas, such as the north-east of England, is a sick joke. We need Scottish solutions to a Scottish problem. We need to use our massive resources to create new jobs and industries to take Scotland into the 21st century. These the Government have failed, and are failing, to provide.

The Scottish National party seeks positive measures to get Scotland's economy on the move. We have outlined them clearly in policy documents and in Scottish budgets, explaining positively how the job can be done. The Government and the Chancellor have failed to deliver the economic goods for Scotland. They must be judged by that failure.

7.58 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Most hon. Members who have been present for most of the debate realise that the key question we have been asking ourselves is: does a large balance of payments deficit really matter? The Chancellor has berated those who have said that Britain is in a balance of payments crisis, describing them as prisoners of the past. The hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) repeated the phrase. He said that the trade deficit exists, but that it has been privatised, so it is up to the private sector to correct it with more self-discipline. I have news for the Chancellor: he is a prisoner of the past, and I shall explain why.

I was a civil servant in the Department of Trade and Industry in 1972 and 1973, during the first Barber boom. There were raging arguments between Treasury and Department of Trade and Industry civil servants on precisely the same issue: did the balance of payments deficit that we were running then really matter? The Treasury produced the wonderful argument that it did not matter, for the first time ever, because we had floated the pound, so it was up to the private sector to adjust, self-correct, and so on, because the pound would go down.

Mr. Boswell: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that at that time there was a considerable fiscal deficit on public finances, and in that respect it was different from the present position?

Mr. Morgan: Yes, I recall that there was a fiscal deficit; but the key point was that what the Treasury trendies were doing—and they are at it again now—was not making an objective judgment about whether the balance of payments deficit mattered, but finding an excuse for the balance of payments deficit that we were running.

If the Chancellor had thought when he made his Budget speech in March that it did not matter what size of balance of payments deficit we were running, he would not have said that he estimated that we would have a balance of payments deficit of £4 billion. He would have said that he did not care what the deficit would be because it did not matter as it had been privatised. In fact, at the time he thought that the balance of payments deficit was manageable at £4 billion. Now that it is suddenly expanding from £4 billion to the latest estimate of £13·5 billion—perhaps the Economic Secretary can confirm that —the story has changed. That is why the Opposition are suspicious.

Why has the story changed? Have the Treasury civil servants been working overtime, as they did in 1972 and 1973, to look at the balance of payments deficit and find the best policy prescription for the next three or four years given the present position, or have they been looking for excuses again?

It is not only Opposition Members who are deeply sceptical about the story that the privatised balance of payments deficit does not matter a damn. We heard it before, 16 years ago. Analysts working in the City, people working in banks and those who look at this country from abroad are saying, "What is this wonderful Walt Disney story that they have come up with, that it does not matter if the emperor has no clothes or if there is a new Turin shroud that the Chancellor can surround himself with, saying that the privatised balance of payments deficit no longer matters?" Of course it matters. We are buying goods from abroad which, if we were in balance, we should buy from home. If we did the latter, there would be another couple of hundred thousand jobs in industry in this country.

Another important aspect of the balance of payments deficit is that, after nine and a half years of the present Government, we have the legacy of their getting worried about inflation. The banking, financing and investing community are getting worried about inflation and the Government have had to restate that inflation is their top priority now. Inflation must be borne down upon, not necessarily solved. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) made it clear that he did not think that it would be solved, and he is probably right, but it must be the top policy priority.

Before the Government came to power in 1979, there were those wonderful advertisements saying, "Labour isn't working." The Conservatives talked about giving trade unions back to their members when they spoke on party political broadcasts, or they talked about curbing trade union power when they addressed the Monday Club. They said that, by all those changes in social attitudes and getting people to work together, they could run an economy with reasonably stable prices and much lower unemployment than at that time, when it was 1·15 million. Now, all of a sudden, nine and a half years later, they have had to put inflation back at the top of the policy tree, not with unemployment at half a million or three quarters of a million, which is what the Conservative prospectus offered in 1979, but with unemployment at two and a half times that level.

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): Can the hon. Gentleman recall a time when, under any Labour Government, controlling inflation and getting it under control was not top of the policy tree?

Mr. Morgan: The important thing is that the policy prospectus said that, one way or another, through social

and legal changes, it would be possible to solve inflation and have full employment, which was defined as a level of unemployment well below what it was in 1979.

This is the Phillips curve. I have not heard any Minister refer to it so far. There is a good reason for that: Ministers are deeply embarrassed about the state of that curve. The prospectus that the Conservatives sold to the British public in 1979 was that the Phillips curve—the trade-off position between low unemployment and reasonable inflation—would move to the left. In other words, unemployment would come down from 1·15 million to half a million or three quarters of a million. Instead, the Phillips curve has moved to the right. There is rapid wage inflation, which has nothing to do with the trade unions. It is largely in the self-employment sector, such as in the building industry, where labour is casual. That sector is characterised by phoney forms of self-employment. It is happening in the financial sector as well. That is where wage inflation is taking off. The Phillips curve, or the trade-off level between reasonable inflation and the lowest level of unemployment achievable, compatible with stable prices, has now shifted to the right, although the Conservatives said that they could successfully shift it to the left.

There is deep scepticism in the Opposition, the minor parties and, above all, throughout the country, particularly in the financial community. People are asking what the Government are playing at if, after nine and a half years in office, they are now in greater difficulties with higher unemployment and controlling wage inflation then when they came to office, despite having introduced innumerable anti-trade union laws. The Government have had all that time, with a comfortable majority, falls in commodity prices and the cushion provided by the oil prices, to make provision for social benefits and unemployment. Despite all that, nine and a half years later there is deep scepticism that the supply side miracle, far from working, has left us in the position where wage inflation is starting to take off and unemployment is still two and a half times what it was when the Government came to office. If that is success, I should like to know what failure is.

Mr. Janman: The hon. Gentleman referred to wage inflation. Is he aware that the general view is that the increases in wages—that does not necessarily equate with wage inflation—that are coming through in the private sector are being paid for by productivity increases? The problem is in the public sector where we have not had the correcting mechanism of reductions in head count, which should pay for the wage increases, nor have we had the productivity increases. Those public sector pay increases are directly related to public expenditure and the money supply as a whole.

Mr. Morgan: The hon. Gentleman should talk not to us, but to investment analysts and people in the financial community in the City to see whether he can persuade them of that.

Why is it that, in every speech, the Chancellor has to repeat the words that he used in the previous speech—otherwise the pound will fall and he will have to threaten to raise interest rates again? It is because people are so concerned that wage inflation is taking off. When that happens with unemployment at 2·5 million, that is bad news for a Government who promised in 1979 that wage inflation would not take off, even with unemployment well below 1·15 million. That is a measure of the Government's failure over nine and a half years. Their only epitaph will be, "Excuse the mess: we've got the Conservatives in."

8.9 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): It bodes ill for the Opposition to criticise the Government but to offer no solutions to our economic problems. At the last election, the Labour party said that it would increase public expenditure and lower interest rates. We argued in the House about the cost of those policies—about £34 billion. Such policies have proved to be the main cause of the problems that faced the United States Government 12 months ago and they had to take remedial action to deal with them.

The Opposition still do not accept that strong economies can produce good welfare systems and adequate standards of living. Because of their political philosophy, their bandwagon of ideas, the Opposition could never achieve what this Government have achieved. We should look, not just at the last six months, but at the last 10 years. The balance of payments problem is a problem of success, and so is the need to raise interest rates. The main factor in that success has been the supply side policy adopted by the Government. Seven years ago, 364 economists said that the Government's economic policy was wholly unacceptable and would not achieve anything. However, two economists disagreed and advocated a series of policies that we have pursued.

Our economy is highly successful. We have seen major reforms in the tax system that have created an atmosphere of enterprise, and there is greater investment by, and more money in the pockets of, our people. Eighteen companies have been privatised and there are nearly as many shareholders as there are trade unionists. The way things are going, there will soon be more shareholders than trade unionists. A major feature of Government policy is deregulation of prices, incomes, dividends, credit and foreign exchange. We have also seen the introduction of a competition policy in the public sector and a wider acceptance of freeing, through deregulation, competition in the private sector.

The Government's policy on trade unions has led to a reduction in the number of demarcation disputes in the private sector. It has also reduced the number of strikes and removed many of industry's industrial relations problems. My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) spoke about the improvement in productivity that has been created by the supply side policies of the Government. That is most important and has led to a successful economy.

We must look at the major successes. The profitability of companies is now 10·5 per cent., the best percentage for 20 years. The number in employment has risen by 2 million since 1983, and unemployment has fallen by nearly 1 million in the last two years. Living standards are at record levels because we have had nine years of sustained economic growth and record levels of investment in industry. Our share of world trade has levelled out for the first time this century and, if the Opposition look carefully at our level of world trade, they will see that it is slowly increasing. Those are not the problems of a failing economy.

Opposition Members should check in their constituencies on the number of new small businesses that have

[Mr. Kenneth Hind]

registered for VAT. There are now over 1,000 such businesses registering each week. Those are the problems, not of failure, but of success. The Government have followed policies such as those followed by Japan, Singapore and South Korea. Opposition Members have praised those economies, but if they were in government they could not follow such policies because of the low public spending and the downward pressure of deregulation on the supply side policies of those Governments. Enterprise economies have stemmed from such policies. Opposition Members criticise the Government in the short term and do not look at the long term. They should recognise that much of what has been achieved could not have been achieved by the Labour party.

There are signs that the economy has been overheating and the Chancellor has had to take action. He accepts, as do all Conservative Members, that interest rates were allowed to fall too far. Higher interest rates are beginning slowly but surely to cool the economy. The most important contributor to inflation is the price of houses. However, a survey by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors shows that in October house prices in the south-east are cooling. Over the next six months, inflation in housing will fall.

Opposition Members speak about the balance of payments, but they do not say that for many years there has been a need to expand the capacity of the economy. One of the successes of the economy is that it has been able to create record levels of profit, and that has led to investment in industry. Unfortunately, much of the profit has had to be used to buy capital equipment from abroad to increase the capacity that we need to improve the British economy. In the near future, that increased capacity will attack the problem of the balance of payments. A major problem will not arise, because the Government have a public sector surplus. If the Opposition were in power, that would not be the case. There will be no problem in financing the deficit, and the Chancellor is quite right to advocate that view.

The Government have never been deflected from their main aim of reducing inflation. Higher interest rates are directed at reducing inflation, the reduction of which has always been at the top of the tree, and we are seeing a high interest rate as a short-term measure to deal with the problem. Within 12 months there will be major improvements in the economy, and at that time the Opposition will be singing an entirely different tune.

8.17 pm

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): It is a measure of the lack of inspiration that Conservative Members evidently derived from the Chancellor's speech that so few of them have bothered to stay for the whole of the debate. They are not queueing up to defend the Government's record. The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) gave a new slant to the doctrine of everything being for the best in the best of all possible worlds when he said that everything good that happens is a direct result of the Government's policies, while the bad things have nothing to do with the Government, but are all right anyway because they are the problems of success. He told us to look in our constituencies for that success. In my constituency the jobs of 5,000 car workers are going precisely because of complacency and under-investment in the economy for which we attack the Government. Conservative Members have no answer to us other than to recite a dull litany of things that happened in the middle ages.

The Government have persistently under-invested in education, training, science and technology. If everything is on course, why have next year's grants for research councils been cut by 6 per cent.? Why is money not being spent on building up our science and technology infrastructure? Why has the manufacturing trade balance collapsed by £17 billion since 1979? It is plainly ludicrous for Conservative Members to continue to dismiss these things as the problems of success. They are not the problems of success. They are the evidence of failure.

We are told that no improvement in the balance of payments can be expected until well into the 1990s. That means 20 or so more months of appalling trade figures. This is no temporary blip as the Chancellor would have us believe. It is a return to the bad, old-fashioned stop cycle of the stop-go economic policies which were so discredited in the past.

We have pathetically low capital investment in manufacturing, which is still less than it was when the Government came to office, and barely 3 per cent. higher than it was during the deep recession of 1980. Some Conservative Members have vaunted high interest rates as the solution to all our problems. What will be their effect on the welcome but none the less limited recovery in capital investment during the past 12 months? They threaten to stop it dead in its tracks.

The high interest rate regime is a double-edged sword in the control of inflation. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) said that he agreed with the Chancellor, he agreed with the hon. Member for Wolverhampton South-West (Mr. Budgen) and he agreed with himself, that high interest rates would reduce inflation eventually. At what cost? How many more jobs will go unnecessarily through the deliberate choice of this crude weapon as a means of attempting to bring down inflation? Workers with any sort of bargaining position—there are plenty of them—will exert it to recoup the cost of higher mortgage repayments. The 9·2 per cent. rise in average earnings and the high rewards offered to some skilled workers in the south demonstrate the scope for that possibility.

Higher interest rates are intended to reduce demand, but any such reduction will be revealed in lower domestic production, whereupon we shall have higher unit costs and falling productivity. The only thing that can rescue the Government from the lower productivity and wage inflation caused by high interest rates is a switch from domestic to export production, but the dismal balance of payments figures that I mentioned offer no evidence of any hope that the Government have done anything like enough to restore Britain's international competitiveness to make that a reasonable or viable strategy. The consequence of the high interest rate anti-inflation strategy will be inflation in the short term. Putting prices up is a curious way in which to bring prices down.

Conservative Members have not considered the mismatch between demand for and the supply of labour in different parts of the country. It is as absurd as it is callous that overheating in parts of the south has been allowed to coexist with continuing recession in many other parts of the country. The Government are directly responsible for that. They deliberately reject regional policy. They have

cut regional grants by £700 million since 1979. For the south, they reject any housing policy that could secure some decent low-cost accommodation, thus contributing to a ludicrous price spiral for housing.

We have the obscenity of rapidly increasing house prices, a doubling of homelessness and slashed public housing. Far from doing anything to redress the imbalance, the Chancellor aggravated it in this year's Budget by channelling tax cuts to the wealthiest people in the south-east at the expense of the rest of society. It is little wonder, therefore, that there is escalating development pressure in the south-east, which imposes even more strain on our roads and other transport network and green belt than it does on the political credibility of the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Confronted by those constraints and the Government's inability to do anything about them, it is no wonder that Conservative Members have been so dull and unimaginative in their defence of the Chancellor's dull and unimaginative speech. At the Mansion House last week he said that the supply side revolution had been accomplished, but that much vaunted revolution has simply not materialised. We have witnessed an old-fashioned short-term consumer boom, which will be followed by an old-fashioned short-term economic stop.

One aspect of the debate has not received much attention today. It is what sort of economic growth we are talking about. In a fine maiden speech, the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) rightly referred to the importance of economic growth and its contribution to society. In debates such as this the House should consider what sort of growth we are talking about. It is high time that we challenged some of the outmoded indicators that are taken for granted as measures of economic achievement.

We cannot go on—the public do not want us to do it—including the production of pollutants as a positive economic output. It is counted in the Government's statistics as a good thing, but expenditure on cleaning up the beaches, which falls to the public sector, is counted as bad because the Government define public expenditure as bad. Nor can we continue to allow the manufacturer who produces five widgets and a lot of pollution to retain a competitive advantage over one who produces, at the same cost, four widgets and no pollution. If any credibility is to be attached to the Prime Minister's green conversion on the road to Brighton this year, we must look to the Government to come forward with proposals that put the cost on pollution. At present that is not reflected in market prices. There should be a tax on pollution, as well as regulations.

The Labour party recognises the contribution made by the market and competition to effective economic performance, but we also recognise what many Conservative Members have yet to learn, that economic performance embraces and is determined by a great deal more than that which the market can measure or that free enterprise can deal with.

The dead seals washed up on our shores, the hole in the ozone layer and the greenhouse effect are not reflected in market prices until it is too late. The market failures in the transport crisis that is evidently affecting the south will not be solved by further applications of the same free-for-all philosophy that clogged things up in the first place.

When it comes to pollution control and environmental protection—as with health, training, education and housing—the market, left to its own devices, messes things up. Moreover, it messes things up worst for people who have been denied the wealth that Conservative Members have so shamelessly channelled to the few. It messes things up and imposes the worst environment, just as it imposes the worst standard of living on the people who most need the increases in child benefit which the Chancellor and the Prime Minister seem determined to resist.

As people increasingly recognise the values of collective action, democratic planning and a sense of equity, which seem to have deserted the wilder idealogues on the Conservative Benches, and realise that we need to act together for a better and more just world for the future, and that we need to act in the interests of the whole community and not simply the smallest, richest part of that community, they will turn to a party which embodies those decent values and which can put them into practice in a way which the Government plainly have not, cannot and will not. The Labour party will.

8.30 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Two interesting features of the debate deserve comment. First, the Conservative Back-Bench attack, which appears to be petering out, failed to make any impression on the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). Perhaps the most notable failure was the Chancellor himself, who is clearly past his best. Secondly, the Conservative Back Benchers painted pictures of their constituencies that I suspect most of their constituents would not recognise.

People are always astonished at how the Government manage to wash their hands of anything that seems to go wrong, as my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) said. Whenever something is wrong, it is nothing to do with the Government; it is the fault of the market. High interest rates, crippling industry and increasing burdens on home owners are blamed on the market, yet they are a consequence of the Government's tax cuts earlier this year.

As the debate draws to a conclusion, we should examine the role of the market. Nowhere is the Government's view on the economy more clear than in the Department of Trade and Industry paper, "Mergers Policy", which asserts that public interest in employment, regional economic development and research and development does not typically diverge

"from the interests of private sector decision-makers"

That is nonsense. We know that public and private interest are often diametrically opposed, and nowhere has that been more clearly illustrated than recently in the case of Barlow Clowes. Did it have the public interest at heart? It had nothing but heart for its own pockets. In many cases the market seeks to reward those who want to look after themselves first. The market does have a role, but we do not want to live in a society in which we have to work for the market rather than the market being simply an instrument for regulating certain aspects of society.

I mention merger policy because in my constituency it is of the greatest importance at the moment. We are dealing with the takeover of Scottish and Newcastle Breweries by Elders, an Australian-based company. It is not an issue just for my constituency in Edinburgh; it is a Scottish matter and an issue for the whole of the north of Britain and for the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Darling: With respect, I shall not give way to the hon. Lady as time is short and a number of hon. Members have been waiting for some time.

Mrs. Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Darling: As the hon. Lady is on her feet, I shall comment on one point raised by the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh). He said that the Government would not have allowed it to happen to an English beer company. That is a little blinkered, because the Government were none too keen to help Rowntree, which is certainly an English company. This issue illustrates the difference in philosophy between the Conservative party and the Opposition.

I shall depart from that for a moment and deal with the morality of the market place which is important in relation to the Scottish and Newcastle takeover bid. Promises have been made—in many cases glibly—that are reminiscent of the promises made in the case of the Guinness takeover of Distillers. It is interesting that Guinness said that it was nothing to do with the Government. Guinness also said, "It was nothing to do with us; it was all the fault of Mr. Saunders. Mr. Saunders is being dealt with by the courts. Therefore, it is nothing to do with us." But it is a problem for the Government and for Guinness. Guinness broke its word: it has done nothing meaningful to bring its head office to Edinburgh. It is no wonder that those of us in Scotland doubt the promises being made by Elders, by Mr. Elliot, and, sadly, by my predecessor, who is prepared to sell himself to just about anybody prepared to offer the right price, that Elders is willing to set up its headquarters in Edinburgh.

In *The Canberra Times* of 20 October, I read a statement by the managing director of the Elders-owned Carlton United Breweries reassuring Australians that Fosters would not become MacFosters. It said that management of the other breweries within Elders would stay in their home country. Is it any wonder that we are sceptical? What happens in the market place is that promises are made here, there and everywhere to suit the listener at the time. We are not impressed by the promises, and today's formal announcement of the takeover bid convinces us more than ever that the bid has to be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

There is more to it, because referral is only the first stage. The DTI's mergers policy document is very much concerned with the short term, with here and now and the interests of private industry first and foremost. Nowhere does it cater for the public interest. Paragraph 2.2 states that some people consider that the spate of takeovers in this country

"encourages short term thinking and distracts incumbent managements from their real job of running their companies."

How true that is. Observing on the research that has been done, it states:

"The bulk of the evidence is that the commercial performance of enterprises post-merger has, more often than not, failed to live up to the claims of the acquiring firm at the time of merger."

That is illustrated in the proposed Elders takeover of Scottish and Newcastle. Wild claims are being made about a company that is well established and has flourished outside the south-east of England and that it should be supported because of that. Elders says that it can produce a fast return because it is interested in a fast buck. It has no long-term commitment to the United Kingdom, let alone Scotland. It is there to make money. It will stitch up the deal and then go on to make some other deal in another part of the world.

The Government take the view that private and public interests really have no difference. That is absolute nonsense. The document also makes some comments about asset stripping. Hon. Members will be aware that one of our concerns is that Elders will asset-strip Scottish and Newcastle. It has said that it will sell off the hotels and the pubs, just as British Aerospace is selling off the Royal Ordnance factories. We have come to expect such things, yet in the document the Government say:

"Some observers see such post-merger divestment as inherently destructive and apply the pejorative label 'asset-stripping' to it."

Asset stripping is asset stripping and cannot be called anything else. To call it "post-merger disinvestment" is to use a fancy form of words for something wholly destructive and distasteful. The Government's presumption that all it is doing is putting resources to a more efficient and profitable use and that somehow it will benefit the economy as a whole is the highest nonsense, and I suspect that most Conservative Members know it.

Scottish and Newcastle is one of the largest manufacturing companies in Scotland. It is likely to fall prey to Elders unless the Government are prepared to add some strength to the statement that is often piously made from the Scottish Office, that they are interested in Scottish-based companies remaining there and exercising control and decision-making, which is crucial. At the moment, although encouraging noises have been made by the Scottish Office, the Government's national policy flies in the face of all that. Their policy is that the free market rules and nothing ought to stand in its way. Edinburgh, Scotland and the north of England will lose out if the takeover bid goes ahead.

I hope that, when the Chancellor of the Duchy replies, he will accept that the Government's merger policy does not work because it leaves large parts of our economy exposed to creditors who will use the assets, sell them and move on elsewhere. Those companies would treat our well-established companies as doormats in order to get into the European market. I hope that the Government will accept that public interest is paramount. It should be incumbent on those who take over or merge with companies to establish that that is in the public interest. Elders should show that Edinburgh, Scotland and brewing within the United Kingdom will benefit, rather than someone's bank balance elsewhere in the world.

Too often glib promises have been made, dressed up in glossy leaflets and presented by flash advisers, who seem to flourish under this Government. Some have enjoyed public patronage. Some of these people are making rash promises that they have no intention of honouring. Indeed, they are incapable of doing so. The vast majority of our people have been left on the side lines. Their interests have not been represented by the Government. The Government mutter platitudes but do nothing to help those interested in this country's long-term economic development.

The true test of any Government is their legacy. This Government's legacy is a sorry one. They will leave a country pillaged by predators—people interested only in short-term gains who care and know little about the

companies with which they deal. The Government have acted as estate agents. They will sell anything they can and reap the benefits. The losers will be the people.

8.41 pm

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): The speech of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) was saddening. His simplistic view of the way in which the market works—equating the whole capitalist economy in Britain with one company which broke the law and which is taking investors for a ride—was not worthy of the House. It was a slur on the millions of managers, executives and owners of small, medium and large businesses who create the wealth that the hon. Gentleman's colleagues are only too eager to spend.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) seemed to think that the steady growth in the economy is limited to the south-east corner. I went to the midlands twice last week and it was a delight to see the arteries of capitalism pumping so enthusiastically at the motor show. I asked the managers and industrialists running the stands to compare the mood of confidence in the motor industry and in industry as a whole now with what happened in the mid and late 1970s, when we all suffered under the dead hand of bureaucratic Socialism. It was marvellous to hear them say how the environment had changed. It has taken a long time, but the environment has been turned round. It will go from strength to strength.

Everything is not perfect. We have not reduced public expenditure as much as we should have done and there is still far too much regulation, especially in the labour market. Wage councils, equal pay legislation and race relations legislation are all unnecessary evils with which the economy must contend. They prevent efficient utilisation of economic resources, particularly in the all important sphere of the labour market.

There have been many advances since 1979. Just over a decade ago, this country was heavily in debt. There was the appalling time when we had to be rescued by the IMF. We are now paying off our debt. Money that could be spent on essential social services, health and education is no longer spent on paying off debt interest.

A decade ago, under the Labour Government, there was a huge public sector borrowing requirement. As always, a Socialist Government were trying to spend more money than the country was earning. That was not surprising, given their policies which always strangle the economy's ability to create wealth. We now have a balanced Budget for the first time since 1969. Indeed, we are probably running at a surplus—another great achievement.

Personal taxation has been reduced. One Opposition Member bemoaned the fact that the top rate of income tax has been cut. His policies on taxation are sour, based on envy and downright stupidity. The revenue to the Treasury from the top 5 per cent. of income earners is increasing, which means that more revenue is available to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that that revenue should be spent on child benefit?

Mr. Janman: It should be spent on child benefit targeted on those in real need and should not be wasted on the present universal system.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) said that productivity has been increasing year on year.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Janman: I shall not give way, because of the time.

Productivity, not output, is the important measure. Any fool can make something. Any fool can make a lot of something. What is important is whether the product is of such a cost and of such a quality that the customer wants to buy it. Perhaps if Leyland in Oxford had done that, it would have been in the same position as Nissan in Washington and Ford in Bridgend. Because Leyland did not, it now has problems.

Even manufacturing output is at record levels, and increasing. We are all pleased that that is happening. Expenditure on the NHS and education is much higher in real terms than in 1979. A Labour Government cut nurses' pay. A Labour Chancellor said that nurses were not productive. A Labour Government cut the capital spending budget of the NHS by one third and closed scores of hospitals.

There is now record profitability. Labour Members may scorn it, but that profitability is the means by which industry, through the taxation system, contributes to public expenditure and to increased spending on social services, health and education. If that profitability did not exist, we would not be able to make those advances.

Since 1979, there has been a huge extension of consumer choice, with nationalised industries returned, rightly, to the private sector, with thousands of new businesses starting every week and with record levels of private sector investment. That is another healthy sign that the economy is sound and is continuing to improve.

Inflation is 5·9 per cent. too high and should be reduced to zero as soon as possible. It is vital that the good work done over the past nine years and the aims of the excellent 1981 Budget are not thrown out of the window. It is vital that we continue to keep a firm grip on public expenditure and continue to reduce public expenditure as a percentage of GNP. Individuals and individual businesses can spend far more wisely than politicians and bureaucrats in Whitehall.

More deregulation, especially in the labour market, is needed. We need aggressively to pursue our policy of denationalisation—I prefer that term to the American-sounding "privatisation"—and competition. The Government must not forget that the 1979 Convervative party manifesto referred not to a policy of denationalisation but to competition policy. When returning industries to the private sector, it is vital that we ensure that we also have increased competition and consumer choice.

Those fundamentals—returning industry to the private sector, enhancing competition, increasing consumer choice, controlling public expenditure and ensuring that inflation is kept under control—have been the ingredients of our success in the past nine years, and it is essential to keep to them in the future.

8.51 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I am sure that some Conservative Members in preparing for their return to the House will at least have glanced at the *Sunday Telegraph* colour supplement of 16 October which featured

"The Cabinet in the Year 2000"

with a large colour photograph of the current Chief Secretary as the future Prime Minister surrounded by his new Cabinet.

The Chief Secretary has been absent for most of this debate, but we are entitled to ask the proposed future Prime Minister to spell out whether he still believes that the young and the elderly in our society should be supported by contributions from general taxation or whether he favours phasing out child benefit and pensions. About 2·5 million children—a fifth of all children in our society—are living in families on less than half the average income for the year 1985. In the light of those figures, which are accepted by the Government, does the Chief Secretary stand by his statement in the journal *Poverty* in the spring of 1987? Three months before the general election, he defended child benefit as follows:

"I can tell you that child benefit will continue as a non means tested universal payment, paid to the mother and tax free. There ought to be no question about that."

That statement says nothing about targeting the benefit on those in need or about means testing it. We need to know whether the Chief Secretary still stands by that statement or whether he says one thing one day but does something different when it comes to setting the Budget. Can he reassure us that he has been actively resisting the Prime Minister's view that child benefit should effectively be phased out? Can he assure the 6 million families involved that they will not lose child benefit in the future? Or will he be telling half a million families with a million dependent children that they will soon be shifted to means-tested benefits?

In case anyone still believes that the Chief Secretary is a stout defender of the principle of supporting the poor in society from general taxation, perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will clarify his letter of 20 January 1986 advising the then Member for Taunton to tell a constituent that he is

"expected to exhaust his savings, look to his friends, relatives, existing bank or credit facilities, before seeking a loan from public funds."

The language is revealing. Behind it lies the withdrawal of the welfare state. Is that still the right hon. Gentleman's attitude? Is the Government's attitude that the poor in society should look after themselves and expect their families and friends to be responsible for them? How does the Chief Secretary justify the advice in that letter, in view of the policy of keeping interest rates high so that those in need cannot afford to borrow without incurring huge debts?

That hard view of self-help for the young and the elderly is being firmly translated into Government policy by the Chief Secretary, supported by his hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) whom the *Sunday Telegraph* shows sitting alongside the proposed Prime Minister as Secretary of State for Social Security. What are we to expect from him? There is a clue in a feature that he wrote for *The Guardian*, in which he says:

"An elderly woman finds managing on her pension and housing benefit difficult. She seeks additional help. Should her son step in if he is earning £30,000 in a good job? What if her son is a millionaire? What if she has chosen to collect old furniture or watercolours and has many thousands of pounds invested in them?"

Is that the reply that the future Secretary of State for Social Security intends to give to the 10 million people over pensionable age who form 18 per cent. of our population? Will they be told to sell their furniture and watercolours?

Mr. Redwood: I am delighted to hear the hon. Gentleman concede that the Conservatives will still be in power in the year 2000—on today's evidence, I am sure that we shall be—but is he really suggesting that we should have a welfare system that helps the millionaire?

Mr. Battle: The concession was that of the *Sunday Telegraph*—it is certainly not mine. If the hon. Gentleman's only response is that pensioners are living well, he should consider the fact that the majority depend on social security for 48 per cent. of their income. The hon. Gentleman was uncharitably described by the *Sunday Telegraph* as a

"desiccated Tory calculating machine".

I apologise on behalf of the *Sunday Telegraph* for that insult to the hon. Gentleman, but he should take the facts and figures into account before suggesting as a hallmark of social security policy the idea that pensioners should sell their furniture or their watercolours.

It seems that the Government intend to persist in divorcing the protection of the young and the elderly from the economy and in particular from the tax system. Will the Chief Secretary persist in telling the present Secretary of State for Social Security that there can be no uprating of child benefit and that there must be further cuts in housing benefit, which will hit pensioners hardest? Will he be telling his right hon. Friend that he has no intention of revising the inflation estimates upwards from 4·5 per cent. to 6 per cent. for the uprating of benefits? Will he echo the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) who said that repaying the national debt was far more important than child benefit and pensions? Are the poor to be downgraded, pushed into the margins and out of the main economic text and made invisible on the ground that the Government regard poverty as a statistical fiction?

The Government talk about improving incentives for the rich. The Government are addicted to a mechanistic view of the economy, adulating the market and the price mechanism, elevating the concept that "the price is right" as the supreme generator of wealth and uncritically worshipping the free market on the basis of an arithmetical equation and running the Treasury on a distribution method computed only by averages.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) expressed his concern for social cohesion in our society. I commend to him the following statement by writer Gregory Baum in an article entitled "Victims in the Affluent Society":

"A society that allows its institutions to produce such a gravely unjust distribution of wealth and power will generate a humanly restrictive culture, a culture that makes the victims invisible, that makes preoccupation with one's own success morally respectable, that reconciles people with social inequality, that persuades people that there is no humane alternative to capitalism, and that blesses the increasingly coercive measures necessary to preserve the social peace."

At the end of the day, although the Government herald the fact that the living standards of the majority in Britain may be rising, they are blind to the reality that a quarter

of our society is living on or below the margins of poverty —15·4 million people are paying the price for the Chancellor's great economic experiment.

The current public spending round is widely recognised as a crucial test of whether the Government have any intention of giving the poor a further share in the much vaunted growing prosperity. That will be measured in the benefits level statement later this week and in the Autumn Statement. It will be on the basis of the Government's contribution to date that the country will pass its judgment on the Chancellor's handling of the economy.

9 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I am happy to support the Government amendment because, without question, during my adult life this is the best Government that this country has had. *[Laughter.]* For the benefit of those Opposition Members who laugh, I shall explain why. It is the best Government because of the success of their economic policies. It is a non-interventionist Government, and I cannot overstate the importance of that.

The modest success that I have achieved in business over 30 years has been largely due to hard work and determination; it has had nothing to do with any assistance from the state. In fact, I might almost say that such modest success as I have achieved has been in spite of rather than because of the Government. They are the best Government because they have encouraged enterprise, which has led to greater productivity, healthier profits and greater prosperity for millions of people.

Such problems as we have are more those of success than of failure. If it is perceived that there is an excess of private spending, it is because of the new-found confidence of our society. I must tell my right hon. Friend the Minister that I regard it as one of our priority tasks that he and I, as individuals, persuade the population to follow the Government's example in exercising thrift— *[Interruption.]* I know that the truth is painful to the Opposition, but the fact is that we are balancing our budget, we are repaying debt and we are living within our means. I have great confidence in my right hon. Friend the Chancellor—confidence that is shared by many of my colleagues and his right hon. Friends. I am satisfied that the single lever of fiscal control that he allows himself, in in the shape of interest rates, is quite satisfactory.

I wish to make a suggestion, in two parts, to my right hon. Friend. It is an unorthodox suggestion—indeed, even a radical suggestion. However, this Government are a radical Government, and I venture to suggest that, while the Conservative party remains the radical party of British politics, it will continue to form the Administration for many years to come. I urge my right hon. Friend in his next Budget to give priority not to reducing income tax rates but to industry and the low-paid. That is something for everybody, one might say.

I want to see my right hon. Friend the Chancellor help manufacturing industry. He will be more aware than any of us of the amount that manufacturing industry currently contributes to the Exchequer in the form of pay-as-you-earn and national insurance. I want to see him reduce the burden of tax on the low-paid.

I want to see successful manufacturing industries retain more of the profits that they make, so that they can finance training and research and development, which many hon. Members have spoken about tonight. I want to see industry financing its own investment. All of that would be to the great benefit of employment and commercial prospects and to the future of our great nation. I shall say, before my right hon. Friend the Chancellor says it, that we already have one of the lowest rates of corporation tax in the world. However, even lower rates would make us even more competitive in the world and we would be even more successful in producing in our factories in the United Kingdom more of what we consume.

The other part of my proposition concerns those who move off the unemployment register into low-paid employment. There should be a neutral zone in which such people are not penalised by tax and national insurance which, for people who earn two thirds of the national average wage, amount on average to something over 20 per cent. of their earnings.

Those two propositions—reducing the burden of tax on industry and on the low-paid—are more important than reducing the basic rate of taxation. I am sure that there will be agreement by hon. Members of all parties that the better-off members of society have benefited considerably from the alterations in tax rates in the Budget. Let us, in the next Budget, help manufacturing industry and the low-paid. The dividends from that would be enormous in social, economic and—dare I suggest to Conservative colleagues—in political terms as well.

9.8 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): The problem during the debate has been one of people inhabiting different worlds. I have found it extremely difficult to recognise the world that has been described from the Government Benches. In the west of Scotland, we have lost 200,000 jobs since the Government have been in power. We continue to have an unemployment level of about 19 per cent., 42 per cent. of manufacturing jobs have disappeared in that time, and about one third of the population are officially classified as living at poverty level.

Now we find that we are entering a "temporary blip" —a cooling down of the economy—which means that, if there were a ripple effect from the south of England, it would not now reach Scotland. That is the meaning of the Chancellor's speech today. Those less prosperous parts of the country will continue to be less prosperous. The Government must abandon the pretence that private sector leadership will come in to deal with those less prosperous parts of the country.

We read nonsense written by organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry, which says:

> "Business must provide the leadership and vision to reverse the cycle of economic and social decline"

in those areas. There is not the slightest chance of that. If there were, why has it not happened already? Private business has, legitimately, one interest—to make a profit. If profit were there and visible, private business would be there already. There must be leadership by the public sector and state intervention. The Government know that, but they have not the honesty to admit that there must be such public sector leadership.

Experiments such as the enterprise zone experiment show us that. When the Foreign Secretary, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, first thought of enterprise zones, they were portrayed as examples of the free market economy —completely free of planning permission or any other controls. Such experiments have been a miserable failure. The enterprise zones that have had some success have been

[Mr. Tony Worthington]

precisely those that have been tried alongside agencies such as the Scottish Development Agency, which has invested considerable sums of public money.

In Scotland, we are often told about the role of enterprise trusts. We are told that they are the agencies of private business—Scottish business in the community. If a business wants to become involved in the community, we welcome that involvement. However, I have been examining the developing role of enterprise trusts in Scotland. It does not matter which trust one considers. All of them are funded essentially by central and local government. They are publicly funded agencies.

ASSET—the Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston Enterprise Trust—is funded by the Scottish Development Agency, Irvine development corporation, Strathclyde regional council and Cunninghame district council. Consider, too, the Greater Easterhouse initiative. That is funded by the Scottish Development Department, the SDA, Glasgow district council, Strathclyde regional council and the Greater Easterhouse partnership. In every case, the trusts are dominated by the public sector, which has to provide a framework and leadership for private industry to become involved. We need to recognise that it is state intervention that will lead to success.

I shall quote the words of a man in the investment world whom I respect; I worked alongside him in my previous existence in Strathclyde. Graeme Knox is the managing director of the Scottish Amicable Life Assurance Society. The thing about Graeme Knox is that he is honest about investment. In an interview in the present edition of *Scottish Business Insider*, he was asked a question that he has been asked many times: does he take into account the fact that there should be investment in Scotland? For Scotland, one could substitute Wales or the north-east. He says:

"Scottishness is not a factor in investment decisions . . . Personally, I am as parochial as the next Scot, but we are a British company operating worldwide. The best way that we can serve Scotland is by being successful. To syphon sums of money into inferior returns is the way to death."

Graeme Knox also says that Scottish Amicable has to compete with other investment houses because if it does not achieve a return on the money new funds will not come to it. It is perfectly legitimate for Scottish Amicable to say that.

I hark back to the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling). There is a division between private and public interest. We are experiencing the consequence of the investment decisions of Graeme Knox and the managers of all the other finance houses: 47 per cent. of construction is now taking place in the south-east of England; the business expansion scheme is concentrated in the south-east; venture capital is concentrated in the south-east.

The limit to Graeme Knox's remarks is that Scottish Amicable can survive in a desert: it can survive and prosper amid mass unemployment, and it does not need to be in Glasgow at all. Scottish Amicable does not even need to exist in its present form to prosper. It may be taken over by another company and it will thrive, but what will happen to those who are left behind? That is the point that the Government are missing. We need public sector leaders.

We must have much more of an interventionist policy. The latest example is that of the Scottish and Newcastle Breweries takeover, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) referred. If one had to find one reason why the Tories are doing so badly in Scotland, one need only point to the behaviour of two previous Conservative Members of Parliament, Sir Alex Fletcher, acting directly for Elders IXL, and Mrs. Anna McCurley, acting for John Courage Ltd. What one hears is the disgusting clink of 30 pieces of silver—*[Interruption.]* What is being revealed is that, if people will pay the money, some will take it and hang the consequences.

9.15 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I begin by adding my congratulations to those that have already been offered to the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn), who impressed the House with an excellent maiden speech. He spoke eloquently and without notes, and, I thought, with a hint of independent thought that may make him worth listening to on future occasions.

We have had such an excellent debate that it fully vindicates the decision by the Labour party to hold this debate today. The theme, perhaps surprisingly, has been the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The plot has been the story of how the miracle worker of March has become the apologist of October. The Chancellor has become an apologist for an economic policy that has brought the economy teetering to the brink of soaring inflation, of dizzying trade deficits and of rising unemployment.

Not surprisingly, the Chancellor has been denounced by Opposition Members, and for very good reason.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: He is not here.

Mr. Gould: As the hon. Lady says, the Chancellor was not here to hear that denunciation in its entirety.

The debate was interesting because of the hints of disquiet that appeared in almost every speech from Conservative Members. We heard those hints of disquiet, for example, from the hon. Members for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and for Thurrock (Mr. Janman). A perhaps plainer statement of anxiety was delivered by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen). Of course, from outside the Chamber, we have heard veritable blasts of criticism from the right hon. Members for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmore), and for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath).

I am glad to see that the Chancellor has arrived in the Chamber in time to be commended for the fact that, perhaps uniquely on this occasion, he has admitted to a little misjudgment. It was a confession of error that was made grudgingly. It was a confession of error which—when he was challenged to repeat it—he partially withdrew, but nevertheless, a confession of error it was. From the lips of the Chancellor, that is a minor miracle of modern politics.

The charge against the Chancellor is simply that he has lost control of the economy, because first he engineered a pre-election boom, and then, as he confessed, he misjudged the consequences of the October stock market crash and therefore presided over a credit explosion. I am a little chary about using that phrase, because the unwary might assume that there may be something vaguely meritorious about a credit explosion. Perhaps a better phrase would be

that he presided over a borrowing binge, which has stoked up asset inflation and has persuaded people that their assets, which are appreciating so rapidly, entitle them to borrow yet more.

To compound that error, the Chancellor made the fatal mistake of his Budget judgment. In his Budget, he stoked up demand yet further by giving tax cuts to the rich—tax cuts which they, the high-spending consumers, not only used directly to spend on imports and consumption, but which they then used to persuade themselves that, with further tax cuts yet to come, they too could borrow yet more. That is where the demand has come from, and that is where the Chancellor has lost control.

The result has certainly been a boom all right, but it is an unsustainable and unbalanced one. That has been the theme of virtually every contribution to this debate. That boom has been unbalanced, first and most cruelly and unfairly—as my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has pointed out—between the rich and poor. The tax cuts have gone to the rich and the penalties have gone to the millions of low-paid and poor families of this country. That is the cruel injustice of the decision that we believe is about to be announced on child benefit.

The boom is also unbalanced as between north and south. Some hon. Members have tried to suggest that the problem of regional imbalance is no longer with us—what nonsense. We have the obscenity of economic decisions being made by south-east politicians in the interests of the south-east—the so-called overheating south-east—while jobs, economic power and economic decision-making are still ebbing away from the north of England, Wales and Scotland.

The boom is unbalanced as between private sector and public sector expenditure. Public expenditure has been screwed down and public services have been starved of funds while the private sector and the private financial institutions have been allowed to create tens and tens of billions of pounds of new credit. That is where the imbalance lies.

The imbalance in the boom has also created, most seriously, a further imbalance between consumption—that is where the personal sector credit has gone—and investment. I shall discuss investment levels later.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: I am short of time, and I shall not be giving way.

To say that the boom is unbalanced is simply another way of describing an extremely familiar phenomenon—the good old-fashioned stop-go cycle. It may be more accurate to describe it as a go-stop cycle. So far, what we have had is the go. There has never been any difficulty in, there has been no magical mystery and no credit to be gained from, stoking up demand—any idiot can do that. There are idiots one could point to who have done precisely that. The trick has always been to match that demand from British industry, to meet demand from British supply and British production. That is where we have so miserably failed.

Ironically, the nearest parallel to the experience of the past two years are the much reviled years of the Heath-Barber boom. The period of 1972-73 is that which most closely parallels the rake's progress of the Chancellor. How scornful they were about that experience; how rigorous they were going to be in avoiding those mistakes. Yet here we are, with the Chancellor presiding over a demand explosion that is simply out of control. We have a demand policy that, at the very best, has been widely inconsistent as between the monetarist madness of the early 1980s and the Barber-type splurge of recent years.

Even that is only half the story. It suits the Chancellor very well to plead guilty to what I regard as the lesser charge—that he has allowed demand to rise too rapidly over the short term. Therefore, he has been able to say, "Yes, I was wrong. I did make a mistake." It is very pleasant to hear that. The Chancellor, however, can also say, if we let him get away with it, that therefore the problem is only temporary and that it can be reined back. The Chancellor can say that it is only a blip and that interest rates will eventually deal with it, even if the blip turns into a rather elongated bleep. However, Opposition Members will not allow the Chancellor to escape with that. The truth is that his misdemeanours and felonies have been more serious. They are longer in term and more deeply seated than simply failing to keep short-term control over demand.

The Conservative Government came to power committed to strengthening the supply side of British industry, so that we would never again run into that imbalance between demand and supply which had so disfigured earlier Conservative Governments. However, the first effect of Tory policy was paradoxical, because it did not strengthen the supply side but wiped out 20 per cent. of Britain's manufacturing industry. We are still paying the price for that calamity. We are still saddled with industry which is not leaner and fitter but smaller and weaker and which is unable to meet the rise in demand when it occurs.

The Chancellor may believe that he has enjoyed——

Mr. Quentin Davies *rose*——

Mr. Gould: No, I shall not give way.

The Chancellor may believe in his propaganda about the supply-side miracle, but very few other people will believe him. Rising demand has simply shown that the supply-side failure is complete. Much has been made—the Chancellor was at it again today—of the so-called productivity gains. Those productivity gains demonstrate nothing more than the fact that it is possible to produce the same output with less labour. All that means is unemployment unless we secure the answer to the problem of increasing output, which is the one thing that the Government have not yet managed to achieve.

It is our competitors, not British industry, who have met the increased demand which the Chancellor has unleashed. Imports have surged; exports this year have actually fallen and exports of manufactures have stayed flat. The benefits of the growth of which the Chancellor is so proud have gone largely to foreign economies rather than to our own. Supply-side figures explain why our trade deficit is so terrifying and why it is a concealed manifestation of the nascent inflation problem.

Our inflation rate is already higher than that of our major competitors. It is already rising sharply. We are told that it is the centrepiece of the Government's economic strategy, that it is the great jewel in the crown of the Government's economic achievement, yet it is higher today as a proportion of the average of the leading

[Mr. Gould]

industrial countries than it was in 1979. It is between three and six times higher than the inflation rates of our major competitors. We are now at the bottom of the league of G7 countries in terms of inflation. That is why the indices of competitiveness—not indices which I bother to keep, but those which the Government keep—show conclusively that British industry is less able to compete in international markets today. That is why our share of world trade is down to 6·9 per cent.—its lowest level ever.

Earlier today, the Chancellor attempted to get away with arguing that those figures were in some sense faulty or unreliable, but the fact is that they are the best figures we have, and they show our share of world trade slipping disastrously. Because of that loss of competitiveness, we are now staring in the face a terrifying deficit in our balance of payments, a deficit of £15 billion in manufactured goods and virtually the same size deficit in trade generally.

Attempts have been made by the Chancellor as well as by other Conservative Members to argue that somehow that trade deficit does not matter. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East said when he opened the debate, that is a remarkable claim. This would have been the first occasion on which a balance of payments deficit had been so regarded, notwithstanding the fact that it is by far the largest in our recorded history.

Of course the balance of payments deficit matters—first, because it shows that the economy simply cannot pay its way. It is the best indicator we have that the economy has lost competitiveness and cannot hold its own. Secondly, it matters because it represents a turnaround in our trade and manufactured goods worth approaching £18 billion or £19 billion. If we were to produce that volume of goods in British factories, it would take over 1·5 million British workers.

Thirdly, it matters because of the response that the Chancellor is compelled to make to that incipient and growing problem. Interest rates are being forced up, which means that the hopes of industrial expansion referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) must be dashed. Finally, it matters because in the end it will mean a loss of confidence in the Chancellor's and the Government's handling of the economy. Sooner or later, that policy will come crashing down around the ears of the Chancellor, and that is when we shall all have to pay the penalty for his foolishness and his mistakes.

After nine years of North sea oil, privatisation, deregulation, selling off public assets, attacks on trade union rights and trying to shift the balance of industrial power, the supply-side problems remain unresolved. British industry is no more able to increase output or to meet that demand than it was when the Government came to power. Here we are, nine years after the unprecedented opportunity of North sea oil, representing billions of pounds. Those billions of pounds have gone into paying for unemployment, investment abroad and tax cuts that have sucked in imports. They have gone everywhere but where they truly matter, and where they could have done some good in restructuring British industry and preparing our economy for the 1990s.

The consequence of that wilful failure is that we are now in no condition to face the 1990s. We shall then be in a much more difficult and competitive world. We shall not have the cushion of oil. We shall have a much more competitive environment, with the internal market and newly industrialising countries coming on stream. We shall have to embrace a new technology for which we are woefully unprepared. We are simply failing to invest in the science, research and development and training that our competitors are undertaking.

The problem is that the greatest obstacle to our future in the 1990s remains Government policy. By pushing up interest rates, the Government ensure that they are using the weapon least suited to our real problems and most damaging to the supply side of British industry. Moreover, the Chancellor is again showing his predilection, and the predilection of the Government, for taking short-term monetary measures rather than dealing with the longer-term needs of industry.

What a gyration there has been over monetary policy. The Chancellor has taken up and abandoned monetary targets with bewildering rapidity. He has tried sterling M3 and sterling M1: we have gone down a veritable spaghetti junction of monetary targets. Even M0, so long the favourite, is now misbehaving.

Even on the exchange rate—which we must assume is now his major monetary measure—the Chancellor is shown to be a man of straw. Six months ago, he was telling us that he had a target of 3 deutschmarks to the pound and that a range of 3 deutschmarks 10 pfennigs was unsustainable. Now he is telling us, in response to pressures from the markets, that he will put up interest rates yet again to hold the pound at around 3 marks 15 pfennigs. On exchange rates, the Chancellor cannot be accused of being a yes man. When the boss says no, he says no.

The Chancellor has a reputation as something of a card player. That conjures up a rather attractive, if rakish, image of a sort of riverboat gambler, but I have concluded that the Chancellor's pet and most expert card game is not poker but building card houses. Initially, he helped to create a ground floor of cards based on ludicrously tight monetary targets and weakening the supply side of our economy. When that proved disastrous, he switched, and created yet another rather less stable tier to that already unstable foundation. He created a tier of soaring demand which sucked in imports and made the structure even less stable.

When that started to look threatened and seemed on the point of collapse, the right hon. Gentleman built yet another layer of cards, trembling this time. He built on the old mistakes of high interest rates and an over-valued exchange rate, doing yet further damage to the foundations of our economy. Now, when that threatens to make the structure even more unstable, he tells us that he will create a fourth storey, of higher interest rates. Those cards are teetering and trembling and cannot be sustained for much longer. When they collapse, everything will collapse and then we shall discover that the stakes in the game he has been playing have been not chips in some poker game, but real jobs, living standards and lives. That is what the Chancellor is risking and gambling over.

The Chancellor stands indicted of far more than just losing control of the market. His crime is the short-sighted, irresponsible approach to the task of building the real strength of the economy. A loss of control of demand can be corrected—not without pain or a renewed threat of rising unemployment, but eventually it can be corrected.

His real failures will, however, subsist for a long time. The price that people will have to pay for those failures will subsist for a long time. There is only one corrective for those errors—a new Chancellor, and a new Government.

9.36 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Anthony Newton): Several right hon. and hon. Members on both sides have extended their good wishes to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) in his absence and I certainly wish to add mine, especially as I come relatively fresh to these debates and have not so far had an opportunity to cross swords with him. We hope that he will make a rapid and complete recovery to return and take part in our debates.

I should like, too, to join hon. Members, again from both sides, who have been rightly complimentary about the distinguished maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn). I have listened to a fair number of such speeches, not all of which have conformed with what used to be taken to be the conventions of maiden speeches, and this was a maiden speech of high quality and in the best traditions of the House, both in the way that he phrased his points and in his tributes to his predecessor. I join those who congratulated him on it and said how warmly they look forward to hearing him take part in our debates. *[Interruption.]* Is the hon. Gentleman looking for a compliment?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The right hon. Gentleman has got plenty on looking after Lord Young.

Mr. Newton: I was interested in my hon. Friend's references to the ethnic minorities in his community and the undoubted urban problems of much of the area he represents. They are a particular concern of mine, as I am responsible for the co-ordination of Government policy in inner-city areas. It may help him to know that tomorrow we shall launch a joint development fund of some interest in his constituency. It has been put together by the North Kensington task force and the Midland bank to help his area—just as we have helped so many others—provide new funds and encouragement for the launch and expansion of small businesses, which are so strong a feature of the economic recovery that is taking place.

The fundamental weakness of the case that the Opposition have sought to deploy in the debate was most clearly revealed in the somewhat tortured metaphors used by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). No Opposition Member has shown any sign of being able to dispute the central facts of the change from stagnation to resurgence in the British economy in the past eight or nine years.

We are now in the eighth successive year of an economic growth that has averaged 3 per cent. That is the longest period of such growth for half a century.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): What about youth unemployment?

Mr. Newton: We have not only kept up with what others have achieved; we have grown faster than all other major European Community countries since 1980.

The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) intervened from a sedentary position a moment ago, asking about unemployment. I shall tell him about unemployment. Adult unemployment has fallen for 26 months in succession, by almost 1 million—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Morgan *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) was listened to with respect. The Minister should have an equally fair hearing.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): What were the undoctored unemployment figures in 1979, and what are the doctored figures now?

Mr. Newton: The real comparison to draw between 1979 and now is the fact that unemployment was rising then and is falling now—*[Interruption.]* The Opposition do not want to hear these facts because they do not like them, but they are the true facts about the British economy.

The unemployment rate has fallen faster over the past year in this than in any other major industrialised country.

Mr. Barron: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Newton: I shall not.

Mr. Barron *rose*——

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman made his intervention sitting down. I have dealt with it, and as far as I am concerned he can stay sitting down.

Quite apart from what has happened to unemployment since 1983, there has been a sharply rising trend in employment. It is up by more than 2 million, which again is more than in any other European country. One of the most striking features about this—it links in with what I said a moment ago to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington—is that self-employment has risen every year since the Government came to office, with a total increase of about a million, which is a figure more than 50 per cent. higher than before and six times as much as in the previous 30 years. It is from that that a great deal of our new employment and economic strength comes.

Mr. Morgan: I realise that the right hon. Gentleman is new to this subject and that he may be the first Newton to try to defy the law of gravitas. It is not good enough to attempt to use a base of 1983 for these employment statistics. All that he demonstrates by doing that is that if the Government do as much damage as they can in their first two years they can then attempt to get the credit for repairing some of it in subsequent years.

Mr. Newton: What I am demonstrating as much as anything else is that it took some time to overcome the legacy that we acquired from the previous Government.

On unemployment and employment, the comparisons with our neighbours and competitors and, indeed, our friends in Europe, stand up to comparisons of any type. If one looks at unemployment changes in the latest month for which the figures are available compared with a year earlier, one finds that the position in the United Kingdom is markedly better than in any other of the main OECD competitor nations. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Dagenham wanted the figures of the change in the unemployment rate over the latest month——

Mr. Gould: That was not the question that I asked. The question that I asked was whether the Minister would give us the rates of unemployment in the EEC countries, not

[Mr. Gould]

the rate of change, because the latter would obscure the fact that the Government have created a level of unemployment that no advanced industrial country has experienced in modern times.

Mr. Newton: I can well understand why the hon. Gentleman does not like the figures of change for the latest month compared with a year earlier. If he does not like those figures, I shall give him some of the latest figures for the actual rates. In Spain, the unemployment rate in May was nearly 20 per cent. In France, in July, it was 10·5 per cent. In Belgium, in July, it was 10·3 per cent. In the Netherlands, in July, it was 9·5 per cent.; and in the United Kingdom, in July, it was 8·2 per cent.

The Opposition motion states how the Government's policies have

"damaged the country's trading and industrial interests".

But the plain fact is that the growth in output and the fall in unemployment that I have described and the rise in living standards that has taken place could and have been possible only because of the huge improvement in performance of those trading and industrial interests.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the fact that the Leader of the Opposition, who takes great pride in using unparliamentary language—I think that he is the first Leader of the Opposition ever to have done so—was making a sedentary intervention? He said that growth used to happen every year. Will my right hon. Friend make some comparisons, for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, between what the growth rate has been recently and what it was under the previous Government?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I have already given precisely those comparisons and discovered that the Opposition have no desire to listen to them, which is not surprising.

It is the strengthening of those trading and industrial interests of which the Opposition motion speaks that can be seen clearly in many of the other facts and figures about what is happening in the British economy. The productivity of manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom has improved by no less than one half since 1980, and again, that is a rate of improvement matched by no other industrial country. Manufacturing output is running at all-time record levels and in the three months to August of this year it was 7 per cent. higher than in the same period a year earlier.

We have heard much talk in the debate about the level of investment. Our investment intentions survey in June showed that manufacturing investment this year is likely to be no less than 16 per cent. higher than in 1987. All the latest signs are that an increase of that order will be achieved.

In his speech my right hon. Friend the Chancellor spoke about the quarterly industrial trends survey for October published this morning by the Confederation of British Industry. It starts by saying that the survey shows that "business confidence remains good". About manufacturing, the survey says:

"For the fifth survey in succession, manufacturing employment continues to increase: a balance of +4 per cent. of companies report increases in their workforce over the past four months, indicating a slightly more moderate rate of growth than surveys earlier in the year. Job gains are expected by a balance of +4 per cent. of companies over coming months. The fastest rate of growth is indicated by smaller firms."

Opposition Members asked about exports. Today's survey said:

"Optimism about exports has improved further since July. A balance of +7 per cent. in October compares with a +8 per cent. in the previous survey, although the rate of growth in export orders has slowed in the past four months."

When I saw the CBI survey this morning, which reported the news which I hope I have given to the House in a balanced way, I thought that it might be interesting to look back at one of the surveys for the early part of 1979. I shall read two sentences from the survey of January 1979.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): What about 1066?

Mr. Newton: It says:

"Confidence within manufacturing industry,"—

that is the great totem pole of every speech by Opposition Members—

"which, as the chart shows, has been extremely hesitant over the past couple of years, has turned down."

That was the position in the early part of 1979.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Newton: In their speeches the hon. Members for Dagenham, for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) and for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) queried the extent to which the fall in unemployment, the rise in output and the increase in Britain's prosperity were being spread around the country. The hon. Member for Dagenham spoke about how the prosperity in the south was accompanied by what he described as continued decline in the north.

The resurgent prosperity of the economy is spreading from one part of the country to another, and that is shown clearly in all the statistics. From March 1986 to September 1988, the unemployment rate in the north generally fell from just over 13·5 per cent. to just over 10 per cent. Over the last year, the largest falls in the rate of unemployment have been recorded in the west midlands, Wales, the north and the north-west. If anyone doubts that, he has only to consider the decision, which has been referred to several times today—the latest decision among many, including that of Nissan in the Sunderland area—of Ford to locate its major new investment at Bridgend in south Wales.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): The right hon. Gentleman referred to the north-west. I dispute the figures that he gave. In the inner city of Manchester, male unemployment is 36 per cent. and still rising.

Mr. Newton: What I said, and what is true, is that unemployment is falling throughout the country, and the largest falls in the past year have been recorded in the regions, including the north-west.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): We have all listened closely to the Minister and the detail that he has given. Can he tell us before the debate ends whether he considers a balance of payments deficit at an annual rate of £12 billion to be evidence of the Government's success, or of the Government's failure?

Mr. Newton: What I will tell the right hon. Gentleman is that the balance of payments position reflects the strong growth of the British economy, including the strength of

investment. A substantial part of those figures represents semi-manufactures and capital goods. What is more important—perhaps it is the most significant point for the right hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and hon. Friends—is the difference between the present balance of payments and that which brought the economy to a grinding halt under a Labour Government, when the International Monetary Fund came in, and the greater confidence that today exists throughout the world in the capacity of the British Government and the strength of the British economy.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about this debate is the fact that there is no other legislature in the world in which this discussion about the British economy could have taken place. Every other country is discussing in terms of admiration, and sometimes envy, the British economy's transformation during the past nine years. They are discussing what they can learn from how we have changed what was universally regarded as the sick economy of Europe in the 1970s to one of the strongest economies in the world in the 1980s.

We have not learnt a single thing today about what the Opposition would do. We have not heard a word about what policies they would pursue which are different from the policies that landed us in the stagnation and inflation of the 1970s. All that we have learnt is that the British Labour party does not like success, does not understand success and does not know how to maintain success.

Question put, pursuant to the order of 21 October, That the original words stand part of the Question:

The House divided: Ayes 213, Noes 322.

Division No. 452] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Cleiland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony

Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Killedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to the Order of 21 October, and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

'That this House congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its economic policies which have led to unemployment falling faster than in any other major country, manufacturing output at record levels and investment rising rapidly; welcomes the Government's achievements in restoring the public finances to such strength that the national debt is being repaid, while at the same time income tax rates have been reduced and public spending on priority programmes has been increased; commends the Government's firm stand against inflation and the action it has taken to secure monetary conditions that will exert further downward pressure on inflation; and applauds the Government's supply side policies which have enabled British industry to be more profitable than at any time for nearly 20 years and have led to manufacturing productivity growing faster than in any other major country during the 1980s.'.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Road Traffic Bill *[Lords]*, the Road Traffic (Consequential Provisions) Bill *[Lords]*, and the Road Traffic Offenders Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Orders of the Day

Road Traffic Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

10.13 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will Members not staying for the debate on the consolidation Bills please leave quietly?

The Solicitor-General: There are, in fact, three Bills relating to road traffic matters before the House, and with permission I shall speak to all three, as they should be considered as a unity.

The three Bills, taken together, amount to a consolidating measure. The principal subject matters are, first, the Road Traffic Act 1972—which, although itself a consolidation, has been considerably amended—secondly, part III of the Transport Act 1982, which set up the new procedure of fixed penalties for certain driving offences, and, thirdly, the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 relating to the prosecution and punishment of offenders.

Where this consolidation differs from previous measures is in its structure. The Road Traffic Bill follows the structure of the 1972 Act, but the opportunity has been taken to simplify its provisions where possible. All the provisions of the measures to be consolidated that relate to prosecution and punishment have been brought together in the second Bill, the Road Traffic Offenders Bill. The third Bill is ancillary to the other two. It contains the necessary repeals and transitional provisions as well as provisions in existing legislation that have not yet been brought into force and that would have been misleading if included in the text of the main Bill.

Not only will the division into separate Bills make each of more manageable size: it should also prove of considerable assistance to the courts' practitioners and all of us affected by the law relating to road traffic. I hope that the House will agree that it is a helpful innovation in the statutory process.

In preparing the consolidation, the Law Commission and the Scottish Law Commission issued a report in which they made a number of recommendations for amending the existing legislation, and those amendments appear in the Bills. All three Bills were referred in the usual way to the Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills during their passage in another place. The Committee reported that the recommendations of the Law Commissions were necessary to produce a satisfactory consolidation of the law and that the three Bills, taken together, amounted to a single consolidation.

I should tell the House that a small number of further amendments will be brought forward. They will make minor corrections and deal with the commencement of the consolidated legislation. It is also hoped that they will bring into the consolidation the provision of the Penalty Points (Alteration) Order, if approved by Parliament in time for inclusion in the consolidation.

[The Solicitor-General]

As always, our thanks are due to the Law Commissions and to the draftsmen for their excellent work in the process of keeping the statute book in modern and accessible form.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that it would be for the convenience of the House to take the three Bills together, although I shall put the Questions separately.

10.18 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I, too, congratulate the draftsmen on their energy and style. I cannot disagree that the Road Traffic (Consequential Provisions) Bill sits happily as a separate Bill. However, I think that many practitioners would have preferred the Road Traffic Bill and the Road Traffic Offenders Bill to have been together. In both prosecuting and defending offences, it is inevitable that one needs to look at both statutes during proceedings. I think that that must also be true for the police. The Bills are bound to be found together in "Stone's Justices' Manual" and other textbooks on the law. It might have been better to have had the two together. They will come fairly high up the league table, although not as high as some of the Revenue consolidations which find themselves in a single Bill.

With that reservation, we welcome the consolidation of the law, which makes it easier to follow and its understanding that much easier. I am therefore happy to welcome the Bills.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—[Mr. Fallon.]

Committee tomorrow.

ROAD TRAFFIC (CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISIONS) BILL *[LORDS]*

Bill read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—[Mr. Fallon.]

Committee tomorrow.

ROAD TRAFFIC OFFENDERS BILL *[LORDS]*

Bill read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—[Mr. Fallon.]

Committee tomorrow.

Wakefield Health Authority

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

10.20 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): I propose to raise a number of issues concerning the background to the removal of Sir Jack Smart as chairman of Wakefield district health authority. I should like to make it clear at the outset that I hold no particular brief for Sir Jack. Over a year ago, I called for his resignation as chair of the Wakefield health authority because of his refusal to defend my constituents in Wakefield against the cuts in the National Health Service being pursued by the present Government. Nevertheless, I feel strongly that Sir Jack's sacking in no way solves the serious problems that have arisen in Wakefield health authority.

My specific concern relates to the introduction of cook-chill catering. The Minister will be aware that I have been pressing for an independent public inquiry on this issue since July last year, but to no avail. Lord Skelmersdale, the then joint Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State wrote to me in a letter dated 31 July 1987:

> "Assessing the costs of the introduction of cook-chill must remain a matter for the individual health authorities concerned acting on the advice of their officers".

The Minister is aware from extensive correspondence and meetings with me that Wakefield health authority has stumbled from one financial crisis to another in recent years, with numerous cuts, closures and bed reductions.

I remind the Minister that in April 1987, £1·4 million was cut from the revenue budget and in August 1987, a further £1 million package of cuts was brought before the district health authority. We have had a number of examples, of which the Minister is aware, of urgent operations being cancelled—in one instance, for lack of £140,000 revenue to pay for 13 nurses in a neurosurgical unit at Pinderfields hospital. Against that background it should be a matter of deep concern to the Government that, through the most incompetent management advice, a cook-chill system estimated to cost £1 million in capital terms in fact cost £1·5 million and that the anticipated revenue savings of £300,000 per annum from cook-chill turned out to be £400,000 per annum additional revenue expenditure to be taken from a desperately hard-pressed patient care budget.

The central responsibility for the introduction of cook-chill in the Wakefield health authority area rests with Mr. Brian Birchall, the district general manager appointed to the authority in April 1985, folowing the Griffiths management restructuring. Despite the fact that the Stanley Royd inquiry had not reported, he persuaded the Wakefield health authority in July 1985 to confirm a district management team decision to invite Tricon, a food services consultancy firm, to examine the possibility of installing a cook-chill system at Stanley Royd. Tricon's report was presented to the district health authority in February 1986. By a small majority—I was in the minority as a member at the time—approval was given to the district general manager's proposal to establish a districtwide system of cook-chill catering.

It is crucial to my point that one of the objectives outlined in Mr. Birchall's report was

"to create a viable unit of business as recommended by the latest guidance issued by the DHSS in respect of competitive tendering."

That is important in the context of some points I shall be making later.

Since that time, Sir Jack Smart has claimed that Mr. Brian Birchall was—to use Sir Jack's words—"foisted" on to the Wakefield health authority as its district general manager and that the authority was "duped" into accepting cook-chill.

Clearly, a number of fundamental errors, which were certainly the responsibility of Mr. Birchall, were made in the introduction of cook-chill in Wakefield. I shall give three specific examples. First, the district health authority's control of infection officer and committee, its consultant microbiologist, Professor Lacey, and most of its clinical staff were not aware of the cook-chill proposals until March 1987, when the catering staff refused to operate the system, on the grounds that it was unsafe. Secondly, I believe that it is an important fact that the proposals brought forward by Mr. Birchall clearly contravened the 1980 DHSS guidelines on cook-chill, with a number of serious errors. Thirdly, numerous additional costs that should have been anticipated were not considered in Mr. Birchall's original report.

In the time available, the subsequent events are far too numerous to mention. The important matter that needs to be dealt with by the Minister is that in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), we have a new £1 million cook-chill central production unit which has been stood doing nothing for nearly two years because of the serious errors to which I have drawn attention. I believe those errors are the responsibility primarily of the district general manager. It is important to speculate about the extent of interest charges that must have accrued during the period that this valuable building has been empty, because that will be a drain on our local National Health Service budget.

I believe that the role of the Yorkshire regional health authority has been important in this matter. I should like to ask the Minister a number of specific questions to which it is crucial that she replies this evening.

First, why did the Yorkshire regional health authority invite Mr. Brian Birchall, the general manager of the Wakefield health authority—whose record on cook-chill in that authority was, frankly, a shambles—to chair the regional health authority's catering sub-committee that pressed ahead with the introduction of cook-chill catering throughout the Yorkshire region?

Secondly, why did the regional health authority inquiry, which led to the removal of Sir Jack Smart as the chair of the Wakefield health authority, fail to look at any of the issues—especially cook-chill—that were at the root of the conflict between the Wakefield district's general manager and its chair?

Thirdly, why has the regional health authority failed to respond to or contradict any of the detailed evidence concerning costings of cook-chill in Wakefield that was presented to its inquiry by the Wakefield health authority's former consultant microbiologist, Professor Richard Lacey?

Fourthly, why, after refusing to give additional money to the Pinderfields neurosurgery unit, and saying that Wakefield health authority should spend its share of the 1987 non-recurring revenue grant on cook-chill, did the regional health authority take the unprecedented step of making a grant of £350,000 to the Wakefield health authority for the introduction of cook-chill earlier this year?

Fifthly, why, after all the grave doubts about the suitability of cook-chill for hospital catering in general, and then clear evidence of the huge cost of implementing cook-chill which would result in diversions of funds from patient care, has the regional health authority pressed ahead with the decision to implement cook-chill across the region?

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Is my hon. Friend aware that for some months I have been trying to discover which members sat on the sub-committee that took the decision that the new general hospital in Halifax would not have a production kitchen but would, in fact, have a cook-chill reception unit, and thereby allow privatisation to enter by the back door? I have made numerous requests, both to the regional health authority and to the Minister, and this week I received from the Minister a rude reply to my request for the names of the members of that sub-committee. The constituents in Halifax think that there is something amiss. They smell a rat. I wonder whether my hon. Friend is aware of that and will take that matter on board.

Mr. Hinchliffe: With respect to my hon. Friend, I have been sniffing those rats a little longer than she has. I hope that the Minister will respond to my hon. Friend, because the issues that she has raised about cook-chill in Halifax directly concern the people in Wakefield to whom I have referred.

The answers to the points that I have raised about the Yorkshire regional health authority lie in the crucial importance of cook-chill to companies tendering for National Health Service catering. It is a fact that private catering companies much prefer to mass-produce food from cook-chill units. They are happy to sit back and see vast amounts of public money, which should be spent on patient care, being used to install the facilities and equipment that they need so that they can move in and make a killing. Every year in the Yorkshire region, 10 million meals are produced—there is one hell of a killing to be made. Huge profits can be had; that is why this is such a ball game for the catering companies.

In Wakefield and the Yorkshire region, there are strong suspicions that certain parties to the issue are putting their commercial interests and concerns before the interests of NHS patients. That is the crux of the matter.

Two specific people should be mentioned in terms of Wakefield. Given the clear enthusiasm of the Yorkshire regional health authority for cook-chill, the business interests of the chair of that authority, Mr. Brian Askew, are of direct relevance. He is a director of the Sam Smith brewery in Tadcaster, which, of course, has recently developed significant catering interests.

The second person, to whom I have already referred and who has done more than most to promote cook-chill vigorously in Yorkshire, is Mr. Brian Birchall. Prior to coming to Wakefield his business background was at senior level with United Biscuits. That company has a large number of important catering subsidiaries.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): It also has friends in the Tory party.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Yes, it is close to the Tory party.

[Mr. Hinchliffe]

It is important to note that United Biscuits has recently opened a chilled food division based on South Humberside. Obviously, that division will be ideally placed to tender for the provision of cook-chill meals to hospitals throughout the Yorkshire region.

It is my sincere belief and the belief of many people in my area—people who have been silenced on this issue as the result of legal threats by Mr. Birchall—that Mr. Birchall has done a job, not for the NHS or the people of Wakefield, but for contacts within private industry who stand to gain substantially from his efforts on cook-chill. No doubt he also stands to gain because, at the end of his general manager contract, he will be ideally placed to obtain an extremely lucrative position advising private caterers about providing catering for the NHS.

The Minister may say that I am putting two and two together on the latter points that I have raised and making five. If that is her belief, she has a clear course of action open to her—to look at my allegations and the scandalous misuse of NHS resources in paving the way for privatised catering. The Minister can act, as a matter of urgency, by setting up a full public inquiry into this affair, including the role of the regional health authority. If she fails to do this, people will draw their own conclusions.

10.34 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Does the hon. Member have permission to intervene?

Mr. O'Brien: Yes, Sir. I wish to speak in support of my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) because the headquarters and the kitchen that has been built, but which is not in use, are in my constituency and service several hospitals in both the Wakefield and Normanton constituencies.

In my opinion, and in the opinion of many of my constituents, the situation that has developed in the management of Wakefield health authority leaves a lot to be desired. That situation appears to be deteriorating, and has deteriorated during the past few months. Constituents have complained to me that a whole ward has been disturbed at 11 o'clock at night in order to admit some patients by removing others from the ward. That demonstrates the acute shortages of accommodation and of effective management in Wakefield health authority.

Furthermore, the inquiry that was held at the behest of the regional health authority was nothing more than a kangaroo court because, when members of Wakefield district health authority were invited to give evidence which was heard by the committee—evidence which made allegations against the former chairman of Wakefield health authority, Sir Jack Smart—the people giving evidence were never identified and the person about whom the allegations were made was never given the opportunity to reply to those allegations.

I ask the Minister: where else but in Wakefield, where else but under the management of the Wakefield district health authority and where else but in the Yorkshire region under the chairmanship of Brian Askew, can such things occur?

An undemocratic inquiry was being held because the managements of Wakefield health authority and of the regional health authority wanted to remove a member of the Labour party from the position of chairman of the district health authority—indeed, the last remaining chairman of a district health authority who was a member of the Labour party. One must assume that the whole situation is politically motivated.

The inquiry was totally against natural justice and against the democratic procedures that we cherish so dearly in this House. If the Minister is to be fair to those procedures, to the Health Service and to the people who use the services of Wakefield district health authority, the present situation cannot be left unchanged. A kangaroo court was held to dismiss the chairman. People gave evidence and remained anonymous. That is reminiscent of South Africa, where people give evidence facelessly behind locked doors. Here, that evidence has been used against the people who are administering the health authority.

If the Minister thinks that all that is rubbish, why does she not accept the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield and conduct an inquiry into what is happening in Wakefield? That is the only way in which we can have a clear approach to this matter.

I turn now to the issue of cook-chill. There is room for further investigation there, because when the appointment of Tricon was originally vetted by the then administrator, Mr. Pritchard, the total cost was less than £8,000. However, when the district general manager was appointed, the cost increased to £49,400, without any invitation for tenders and without approval by the health authority on the question whether the increased expenditure was justifiable. The district general manager took that decision to increase expenditure to nearly £50,000. After that commitment, the health authority had to approve it.

I appeal to the Minister not to allow this to continue. Until we have some clarification, it will go on for a long time. It is important to clear the matter up, and the Minister should make that her responsibility.

10.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Edwina Currie): Let me start by offering the usual courtesies and congratulating the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on winning the ballot. I know that he tries to take an interest in the health of his constituents, which is probably amply demonstrated by the fact that in the current Session of Parliament he has tabled 115 questions on health-related matters and thus kept Ministers well aware of his existence. He was a member of the health authority before the last election, and participated in much of the discussion leading up to the sort of decision with which the authority is now faced. The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) asked to see me last September to discuss health matters relating to their constituencies, and I believe that we had a very useful meeting.

This evening's debate takes place against a background of significant increases in National Health Service funding. This is now the country's second largest programme of expenditure, after social security. Last year—the 1987-88 financial year—the nation spent over £21 billion on the NHS. This year, spending in the United Kingdom is expected to top £23·6 billion. The Secretary of State's announcements at Brighton recently bring the total

amount to be made available for nurses' pay this year to nearly £1 billion, and the total amount spent on the Health Service is over £2 billion more than last year's figure.

As for the Yorkshire regional health authority, back in 1982-83 its gross revenue spend was under £600 million. By last year it had risen to £817 million—a cash increase of 40 per cent. and a real-terms increase of 11 per cent. For this year its initial revenue allocation is a further increase to £889 million. Taking into account additional money for nurses' pay, £330 million spent by the family practitioner services and the result of its own efforts such as income generation and land sales, spending in the Yorkshire region in 1988-89 will top £1,219 million, the largest amount ever spent on health in Yorkshire. It involves more staff, better hospitals, more equipment and—most of all—more patient care. I am looking to see whether the hon. Member for Wakefield is nodding but he is not. He probably does not believe me, but I must tell him that it is true.

I visited the Yorkshire region on 23 September and saw the new Dewsbury general hospital, recently completed at a cost of £18 million. We broke the ground for phase 3 and the new psychiatric wing there, costing a further £4 million. That is far better than any Labour Government has ever been able to do for the people of Dewsbury and the surrounding area. We took part in the formal opening of the Yorkshire Heartbeat programme, which will probably do as much to improve the health of local people as almost all the rest of the Health Service's activity put together.

Wakefield health authority's funding has also increased. Its initial cash allocation for 1988-89 is now over £50 million. On top of that, a considerable extra amount will come its way as a result of the clinical grading review and other items—for example, £61,000 from the waiting list money for this year for gynaecology.

The hon. Gentleman has not referred to the plans—of which is he probably aware, although they are still at an early stage—to spend £14 million on improving services in Wakefield on the site of Pinderfields hospital. Among other things, it will enable the centralisation of the maternity service on the main hospital site, thus providing a much enhanced quality of care. Wakefield has been looking after the hon. Gentleman's lady constituents far better than used to be the case. I hope that he recognises that.

I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows that over the past five years the number of in-patients treated in Wakefield has increased by 23 per cent., the number of out-patient attendances has increased by over 16,000 to over 140,000 per annum, and the number of day cases per annum has doubled. The waiting list is not only under control, but a great deal better than the England average, and it is a commendable reflection on what has been going on there.

Let me turn to the dismissal of Sir Jack Smart. The hon. Gentleman said that his sacking in no way resolved the matters facing Wakefield health authority. I wrote down what he said. How right he is. That was the only sensible comment that the hon. Gentleman made. The removal from office of Sir Jack Smart cannot come as any surprise to those familiar with the long and unhappy saga surrounding Wakefield health authority. He was dismissed from the chairmanship of the health authority on 3 October because for him to continue in office would not have been in the best interests of the Health Service in that district. The decision was based not solely on the regional health authority inquiry, but on a wide range of considerations over a considerable period. The hon. Gentleman may recall that a motion of no confidence was passed against Sir Jack Smart by his own health authority while he was in the chair. That situation could not continue.

I speak of Sir Jack in sadness rather than anger for he has given many years of sturdy public service to the Health Service and elsewhere. The members of Wakefield health authority, who carry collective responsibility, should not seek to fix the blame on one man. What patients there need is leadership and decisions taken in the interests of patients, not in a factional or partisan mode. The behaviour of some people on the authority has been a disgrace and is probably best put behind them.

The health authority is now faced with a large group of decisions which it is required to take, not least about cook-chill, Snapethorpe hospital, the appalling levels of heart disease and the high rate of measles and other preventable diseases. Ministers now hope that the authority will get on with those matters and put its troubles behind it.

I remind the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), who spoke so eloquently in favour of Sir Jack Smart, that it was his hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield who, according to the *Wakefield Express* of 4 September 1987, wrote to Sir Jack urging him to resign, saying:

> "I have to express my total lack of confidence in your chairmanship."

Labour Members may like to discuss that between themselves. We are now proceeding with the careful consideration of the appointment of the new chairman and hope to make an announcement shortly. Ministers are satisfied that correct procedures have been followed in the dismissal of Sir Jack, and there will be no further inquiries.

The previous vice-chairman has also given us good service. His term of office came to an end on 30 September, and we would like to put on record our thanks for his many years of service. Health authority members will have an opportunity to elect his successor at a meeting on Friday 28 October, and we hope that they will get on with that, too.

Opposition Members know that Yorkshire regional health authority established a group of acknowledged experts to advise on the safe introduction of cook-chill. I have here the group's report, which was published on 30 September 1987. It confirmed the safety and value of cook-chill in general and concluded that Wakefield's proposals were satisfactory, subject to some further work. Wakefield health authority got on and did that further work and produced a revised policy which satisfied the expert group. This includes the regeneration of food at ward level. Its implementation was agreed on 29 July when additional capital funds of £350,000 were provided by the regional health authority.

Our view has always been that issues to do with cook-chill are essentially local ones for local managers to sort out and we expect them to get on with it. *[Interruption.]* By "them" I mean the health authority, not just the district manager or a single individual. The efforts made tonight to pillory individuals are a disgrace. To cast those slurs on individuals in this Chamber is an abuse of parliamentary privilege and I would have thought that it was against all the principles of Socialism.

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

The Wakefield health authority, in its paper to its own authority, says that it anticipates savings of at least £200,000 a year. The main effect will be a reduction in the number of posts needed to operate catering, a reduction in the amount of overtime, and so on. That, of course, will affect members of NUPE.

What the hon. Members for Wakefield and for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) forgot to tell the House in their allegations about the interests of other people outside, who cannot respond, is that they are supported by NUPE. On that sort of basis I would have expected them to say that those who have paid their election expenses are concerned about their jobs. That is a legitimate concern, but it also reflects on the important fact that the health authority will have a substantial additional sum a year to spend on patients. In the end, we are here to look after patients, not the full-time officials of NUPE, COHSE and one or two other unions.

A prominent Health Service publication likened events in Wakefield to a Health Service soap opera—"Dallas" without the sex. This was a sad event. Ultimately, it is our responsibility to all involved to ask them to examine and readjust their motives and attitudes and to give the Wakefield district health authority a fresh start, for the sake of those who have been largely forgotten in all this and barely mentioned by Opposition Members in their tirade against good and honourable men and women in Wakefield. We have to think about the patients and patient care, and that is what I propose to do.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at ten minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 26 October 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

HARWICH PARKESTON QUAY BILL.

Lords amendments agreed to.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Inner Cities

2. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further plans his Department has to revitalise the inner cities.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Tony Newton): We shall continue to build on the extensive range of initiatives which make up the Government's Action for Cities programme.

Mr. Hughes: I congratulate the Chancellor on his appointment, if not on that reply.

The right hon. Gentleman will know that I have written to him about the employment effects of urban development corporations, as evidenced in the third report of the Select Committee on Employment. Will he have urgent consultations with Ministers in other Departments to reverse the pattern of job losses for local people under the London Docklands Development Corporation? Will he take specific interest in the planning application for Bombay wharf and surrounding area, which now threatens 70 traditional jobs for local people? Will he give some sign that we will get jobs for locals, not just for people coming in from outside?

Mr. Newton: I recall my correspondence with the hon. Gentleman, in which he will remember I made two points. First, I am responsible for the programmes and keep closely in touch with my Government colleagues who are concerned with them, but, secondly, the specific issues the hon. Gentleman raised about the Select Committee's report are really matters for the reply of the Department of the Environment to that report. He will understand that I would not want to pre-empt that.

The hon. Gentleman somewhat overplays his hand on local jobs. I understand that it is thought that among the projects that the LDDC has promoted since 1981 a total of 1,560 local jobs have been preserved and 2,120 created by LDDC grants to 200 firms. That is part of a much wider job creation which everyone would agree has occurred as a result of the LDDC's activity.

As for the hon. Gentleman's specific planning point, he will understand that I have no information about it this afternoon, but I shall look into what he said.

Mr. Chapman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that environmental improvement schemes, often at very little cost, can frequently be the best initiatives to encourage people and businesses into derelict inner city areas? May I have my right hon. Friend's assurance that his Department is keeping in touch with ministerial colleagues at the Department of the Environment to promote initial environmental improvement schemes, often using local labour?

Mr. Newton: Yes, indeed, in general terms I can give that assurance. I add the hope that the various private sector initiatives, which are now becoming an important and useful feature of inner city action, will also take my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Loyden: Can the Minister be satisfied with the levels of unemployment in most inner cities? Is he aware that the money that is now going through various Government agencies is having virtually no impact on hard core unemployment in those cities? When will the Government realise that unemployment will not be shifted off the agenda by their silence on these issues?

Mr. Newton: No, I am not satisfied with the level of unemployment in inner city areas. The purpose of a large number of our programmes is to reduce it. I am happy to say that they are doing so with increasing success against the background of general economic resurgence. I shall not weary the hon. Gentleman with a lot of statistics, but the task forces, for instance, which report direct to me, have already been responsible for the creation of significant numbers of jobs in inner city areas.

Mr. Roger King: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the enormous investment going into the city of Birmingham, almost all of it from private enterprise? About £1 billion is being spent to revitalise the city centre. Does my right hon. Friend agree that good and successful city centres have obvious repercussions for inner cities because they provide jobs and opportunities in the right environment for continuing investment?

Mr. Newton: I agree with my hon. Friend and would also put the point the other way around. There is now a much better climate of confidence for new investment in our economy, and that is a significant advantage for inner cities and one reason why I am glad to see the private sector beginning to come in behind so many of our initiatives.

Mr. Cabom: On the matter of financing, can the Minister explain the position in Europe about the integrated development operations programmes, especially in relation to article 15 and the local authority element that it contains? Does he not think it stupid that this row has been going on for so long while we are putting at risk hundreds of millions in regional development fund and social fund grants because of the Government's vindictive attitude to local authorities?

Mr. Newton: In no sense do the Government have a vindictive attitude towards local authorities. I have emphasised many times that where local authorities are prepared to work in a practical way with us, we are more

than willing to work in a practical way with them. The matter that the hon. Gentleman raises will be looked at against that background.

Enterprise Initiative

3. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many applications have so far been received for consultancy projects under the enterprise initiative.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): My hon. Friend will be aware that the enterprise initiative includes assistance with consultancy projects in key management skills essential for a competitive business. Those skills are marketing, design, quality, manufacturing technology, business planning and financial and information systems. In the nine months since we launched the enterprise initiative my Department has received over 12,500 applications for assisted consultancy, demonstrating strong business support for the service.

Mr. Hayward: In welcoming my hon. Friend to his new job, may I ask him to note that there are more Scots on the Tory Benches at the moment than on the Labour Benches? They are clearly worried about Govan. I should like to ask my hon. Friend about the effect of the enterprise initiative. Was it not originally intended for small businesses, and is it working in that way for the benefit of small businesses, and not for the benefit of medium-sized and large businesses?

Mr. Forth: The general response shows that we are meeting the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises. Over 90 per cent. of the applications for assisted consultancies have been from firms with fewer than 100 employees. We are on target to fulfil the promise in the White Paper of supporting 1,000 consultancies every month. I hope my hon. Friend accepts that that is good news and will carry that message back to his constituency and encourage as many companies as possible there to make applications.

Mr. Oppenheim: Has my right hon. Friend noticed—sorry, I am jumping the gun slightly. Has my hon. Friend noticed that his enterprise initiative is being emulated as far away as on the other side of the world by the Socialist Government of New Zealand, who are proposing to privatise their state airline? Has my hon. Friend had any representations on that specific subject from anyone on the Opposition Front Bench?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend will not be surprised to hear that representations from the Opposition on such matters are few and far between. I think he will agree that their ideas on these matters, if they ever existed, have long since run out and they have come to accept that the initiatives that we are taking under the enterprise initiative have been, and continue to be, a resounding success.

Manufacturing Output

4. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the most recent figure for output in manufacturing industry; and what was the figure for the same month in 1973.

14. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest figures he has for the output of manufacturing industry; and what was the comparable figure one year ago.

Mr. Forth: In August 1988 manufacturing output was at a level of 116·9, based on 1985 equal to 100. This is 5 per cent. more than the level of 111·1 for August 1973, but my hon. Friends will appreciate that monthly data can be erratic. A firmer based comparison would be that in the three months to August 1988 manufacturing output was 3·5 per cent. higher than in the same period in 1973. It was also 7 per cent. higher than in the three months to August 1987. Manufacturing output is at its highest ever level.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. Friend feel that manufacturing industry has expanded in a satisfactory manner over the past 15 years?

Mr. Forth: The record shows that, for example, between 1973 and 1979 manufacturing output fell by 4 per cent. However, having gone through a world recession, having restructured British industry and having achieved unprecedented levels of productivity and profitability, we are now well on the way to having an outstandingly successful manufacturing sector.

Mr. MacKay: Are not rising unit labour costs the biggest dangers to manufacturing industry, and are not the essential tasks of the Government to make sure that inflation remains low and that wage increases are kept to a minimum and based on productivity increases?

Mr. Forth: Yes, my hon. Friend has characteristically put his finger on an important problem, which is that whereas the Government accept full responsibility for keeping inflation as low as possible, and are doing so now, the private sector must bear the primary responsibility for wage restraint. Any increases in productivity may be prejudiced by excessively high wage settlements, which are causing much concern.

Mr. Kennedy: The Minister correctly warns about the erratic nature of some of the comparisons on manufacturing output. However, we should not be blind to the errors that occurred between 1979 and 1981, when two massive deflationary Budgets did so much damage and caused so much destruction in the manufacturing base. Is it not significant that many of the Government's figures, as shown by the Minister's response, are based on events since 1981 and not on events since 1979, when the Tory Government came to power?

Mr. Forth: I agree that the basis of comparison is of the essence, but I ask the hon. Gentleman to consider both the position that we found when we inherited Government in 1979, and the background of world recession. I hope he will agree that the progress that we have made since then has been remarkable, and the figures on manufacturing output, productivity and profitability show that we are on a long trend of success that will continue, even according to the Confederation of British Industry, into the foreseeable future.

Dr. Reid: Is it not a pathetic reflection on the Government that manufacturing output is only now back to the level that it was when the Government came into power? Is the Minister proud of the Government's three records in manufacturing industry, which have produced

the first manufacturing deficit in our trade, the worst in one single month and, this year, the worst in one year? Will not the privatisation of industries such as steel make things even worse, by allowing firms to go for short-term profit, private closures and more steel imports?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman seems to forget that the world continues to change and progress and that if we do not change and progress with it we have little or no chance of surviving. He must come to terms with that and realise that unless the private sector continues to change, to invest and to improve productivity, we shall have no chance of competing in an ever more competitive world.

Restrictive Trade Practices

6. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what measures he intends to implement to tackle restrictive trade practices in the professions.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): The Government have proposed radical changes in the restrictive trade practices legislation. The exemptions enjoyed by professional services and other sectors of the economy under the current legislation will not be carried across into the new legislation without the merits of each having been established afresh.

Mr. Knight: Are there not still many restrictive practices in the professions, and is it not wholly desirable that they should be subjected to objective scrutiny to ascertain whether they are operating in the public interest? Will my hon. Friend confirm that nothing is to be regarded as sacrosanct? Does he agree that a good professional does not need the protection of a closed shop and that the only criterion that the Government should use is the interests of the customer?

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend is right to say that there are still a good many restrictive practices in the professions. The purpose of the new system of control that we proposed in the Green Paper earlier this year is to ensure that there is proper scrutiny of those restrictions so that the overall public interest can be established. It is, of course, necessary to balance the need for competition, so that consumers have access to a wide choice of services at the lowest practical cost, with the requirement for professional standards to remain high, and to ensure a proper degree of consumer protection.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the Minister examine the position of estate agents, particularly in respect of the practice of gazumping and the selling of houses when the would-be purchaser believes that a sale has been arranged prior to the contract? What will the Government do about that?

Mr. Maude: The question that I have been asked is about restrictive practices in the professions. *[Interruption.]* The point made from a sedentary position is right. Estate agents are not subject to any sort of closed shop. The point raised by the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) is widely discussed and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs is looking into the matter.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my hon. Friend agree that many of us welcome the proposal of our noble Friend in the House on Lords concerning solicitors and members of the legal profession, which will come as a shock to some of them, who will have to earn a living for once? Does he accept that what we need to do, for those who are so keen on the Common Market, is to look at an early stage at the restrictive practices that exist in Europe, which, frankly, will be much more damaging to this country than many of the other stupid things that the Common Market wants to do?

Mr. Maude: Speaking as a retired lawyer, I take my hon. Friend's remarks somewhat amiss, but I assure him that the pressure to review and look afresh at restrictive practices in the professions does not flow from the European Community. We want to establish a proper system of scrutiny for professional restrictive practices, to make sure that the public interest is properly answered.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Is it not right, now that so much damage has been done to British manufacturing industry in the name of competition, to tackle and end the monopoly of barristers in the higher courts, to allow them to set up in practice wherever they want and in whatever combination they want with other professions, to break the restrictive practices of solicitors and to impose effective and powerful competition on estate agents, rather than talking about a mere code of practice?

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman will know that my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor proposes to publish a Green Paper on the legal professions generally, plus two specific consultation papers on two specific areas, in the new year. I shall make sure that his attention is drawn to the hon. Gentleman's comments.

Mr. Baldry: Does my hon. Friend agree that, although consumers can benefit from competition, they are protected by professional skills, qualifications and standards? The consumer wants competence as well as competition. Our hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak would not want his appendix taken out by a layman. He would want it taken out by a doctor. Likewise, he would be pretty apprehensive if his will were drafted by someone who did not know what he was doing.

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend is quite right. He puts the balance correctly and it is precisely so that such a balance can be drawn between the interests of the public, in having proper high standards and a decent level of competition so that choice is wide and costs are low, that these new procedures have been suggested.

European Single Market

7. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further action his Department is taking to ensure that all parts of Britain benefit equally from the introduction of the European single market.

Mr. Maude: Economic studies indicate that the completion of the single market will give a significant boost to Community GDP and employment. I expect firms in all parts of the United Kingdom to share in this, and the aim of our "Europe—Open for Business" campaign is to encourage firms, wherever they are located, to take action to exploit the opportunities that the single market will bring.

Mr. Wallace: Will the Minister give me an assurance that, when 1992 comes and those opportunities are available, firms in my constituency of Orkney and Shetland will be competing on an equal basis with similar firms in the south, and if not, why not?

Mr. Maude: There is nothing in the Government's power to put firms in each part of the country on an equal footing. We cannot alter geography. That lies well beyond our powers, but we can make sure that the opportunities available to firms in the regions of the United Kingdom are accentuated to them and that they are aware of those opportunities and take steps now, as they should be doing, to prepare themselves for it.

Mr. Aitken: Is my hon. Friend able to confirm the embarrassing report on the front page of today's edition of *The Guardian*, which states that under the Single European Act's majority voting powers the EEC will compel the British Government to spend £6 billion of taxpayers' money on social projects in Labour-controlled inner city areas? Does not this latest Delors initiative confirm the view that the EEC juggernaut is rolling wildly out of control? What do the Government propose to do to stop it?

Mr. Maude: The general view is that the EC machinery is under better control now than it has been for some time. The steps that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has taken to ensure that there are proper reforms where they are needed have led to considerable improvements.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The Prime Minister has said that she does not want the European single market, or anything connected with the EEC, to destroy the distinctive character of British banks. To fulfil the Prime Minister's pledge, will the Minister give an undertaking that a European or foreign bank will not be able to take over the Girobank? When are we to have a statement on who is on the short list to buy the Girobank? What is the delay? What has happened?

Mr. Maude: I cannot help the hon. Gentleman on the last part of his question. As for the first part, he will recollect that when my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), who is now Secretary of State for Health, made an announcement on the issue earlier in the year he set out clearly the terms on which Girobank was being offered for sale.

Mr. Conway: In helping British firms towards 1992, will my hon. Friend tell the House whether his Department is actively monitoring some of the more unfair trade practices of some of our so-called European allies, especially France?

Mr. Maude: We try to monitor unfair practices elsewhere, but we depend heavily on British firms which come across evidence of unfair trade practices to tell us about them and supply information. We are certainly prepared to do what we can to investigate such practices. We are pressing hard for action to be taken against them wherever possible. We cannot act unless we know what is happening.

Mr. Gould: Which sectors of British industry has the Minister identified as being gravely at risk from the increased competition that they will face after 1992, instead of having glowing prospects? Or are the salesmen of the Department of Trade and Industry, including the head salesman, so busy with their advertising campaign that they have not bothered with this essential work?

Mr. Maude: The days when the Government of the day tried to pick winners in that way have long gone. The record of the Government whom the hon. Gentleman supported in the 1970s in trying to pick the sectors that would be the ones for the future was a disastrous failure. Highly competitive firms that prepare now for the opportunities and challenges of the single market will do well. Firms that are less competitive will do less well in what will be an increasingly competitive market.

Mr. Batiste: My hon. Friend has said that the Government cannot alter the geography of the United Kingdom. Will he ensure that industry, wherever it is situated, will have equal access through the Channel tunnel, when it is built, and through the transport infrastructure, without unnecessary and bureaucratic red tape? Will he assure the House that when the tunnel is built we shall not substitute a new barrier for northern industry on the Thames?

Mr. Maude: I can assure my hon. Friend that it is the Government's intention that when the arrangements are completed the checks and hindrances on transport between the United Kingdom and the continent will be as minimal as is practicable.

CBI (Northern Region)

8. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what subjects were discussed at his last meeting with the northern region of the Confederation of British Industry; and when he next proposes to meet the northern region of the Confederation of British Industry.

Mr. Newton: I have not yet met the northern chamber of the CBI, and have no present plans to do so. However, when I was in Newcastle on 21 September I met the chief executive of the Newcastle initiative, the first of the special CBI task forces to enhance the private sector contribution to regenerating rundown inner city areas.

Mr. Cousins: As the same task force has identified Newcastle as a future centre for Japanese-based financial services, and as the Japanese and Australian Governments are talking about having a fully cabled technocity in Australia, will the Minister give such a scheme for Newcastle his personal leadership and commitment?

Mr. Newton: The whole point of the encouragement that we have given to the CBI and other private sector initiatives is to do with our belief that the active and wholehearted involvement of the private sector is the key ingredient in the regeneration of inner cities. I have given my encouragement to the CBI in that respect, but I do not wish to imply specific Government backing for a specific scheme, for which I have not received details.

Mr. Devlin: If my right hon. Friend should have such a meeting with the northern region of the CBI, will he discuss with it the importance of industries that are based in the region, which have head offices in the region and which have invested great sums of money in employment schemes in the region? In particular, will he discuss the case of Scottish and Newcastle Breweries, which is now

facing a major threat from Elders IXL, which could have the most deleterious effect on employment prospects in the north-east?

Mr. Newton: I assume that the main thrust of my hon. Friend's question was the second part of it. I can say only that the proposed acquisition is being examined in the normal way by the Director General of Fair Trading, who will advise my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on the question of reference in due course. As I am sure my hon. Friend knows, any representations that he or anybody else wants to make should be made to the Director General of Fair Trading at this stage.

Action for Cities

9. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the response to his "Action for Cities" breakfast presentations.

Mr. Newton: Of the 1,200 senior business men who attended the six presentations held between mid-April and the end of June, about a quarter made specific offers of help. Those offers included managed workshop space, industry-education links, secondments and free advice to inner city businesses, and are all being followed up.

In view of the success of these presentations, I have decided to hold an additional one, for the east midlands, on Tuesday 6 December.

Mr. Wardle: I am grateful for that reply. Is it not encouraging that the private sector's response to "Action for Cities" has been so positive? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the CBI's recent publication "Initiatives beyond Charity" and the work of business in the community are particularly helpful in that regard?

Mr. Newton: I agree with my hon. Friend. I want to add a few words about the work of Phoenix and, not least, the work of chambers of commerce up and down the country. All those signs of private sector involvement and a recognition of the economic advantages, as well as other factors, to the private sector are very welcome.

Mr. Madden: Does the Chancellor agree that for the Government to spend thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money on giving free breakfasts to business people while Bradford Tory council is increasing the cost of school dinners to 80p a day tells us all that we need to know about Conservative party values and priorities? If he wishes to dodge answering that question, will he tell the House how the Bradford Tories' plans to sack 9,000 men and women will revitalise Bradford's inner city areas?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has very little to do with breakfast, I would say.

Mr. Newton: I would not wish to dissent from your judgment, Mr. Speaker, that the question had very little to do with Bradford. Having visited Bradford and seen the major redevelopment now under way by Gratton of what was formerly a collection of derelict 19th century sites—and which is one of the most impressive pieces of housing renovation that I have seen—I have no doubt that the Government's programmes are having their effect.

Mr. Dykes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that to get business enmeshed in the initiatives has been a most useful exercise? However, will he carry out an important task? Will he liaise closely with the Department of Education and Science and his ministerial colleagues there to ensure that the third city technology college gets off the ground in the near future? It is promoted mainly by a large national retailing group in the Bradford area and it will do a lot of good for general urban regeneration in the area as well as for initiatives taken by my right hon. Friend's Department.

Mr. Newton: I shall continue to liaise closely with my colleague the Secretary of State for Education and Science and with other relevant colleagues, and I shall draw their attention to what my hon. Friend has said today.

British Shipbuilders

11. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the chairman of British Shipbuilders Ltd; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Newton: I last met the chairman of British Shipbuilders on 17 October. We discussed a range of issues of current interest to the corporation, including the position on the disposal of its subsidiary companies.

Dr. Godman: It is not for me to praise the chairman of British Shipbuilders—he might suffer a wage cut as a result—but may I say to the Minister that one of the proposed sales, Clark Kincaid, would be aided immeasurably if the yard were to secure the Kvaerner engine order? Will the Minister give every support to Mr. John Lister with regard to the order for the Mauritian ferry? I believe that there is aid and trade provision agreement funding to be obtained for that ferry. Both those questions are of critical importance to my constituents who work in Kincaid and Ferguson. May I remind the Minister that when those yards are sold off, as with other acquisitions, people's lives are bought by the purchaser, so let us have decent terms and conditions for the employees?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that discussions are going on with Kvaerner about the engine to which he refers. I cannot comment on the exact position in the negotiations, but I am sure that his words will have been noted. As for the ferry for Mauritius, I had some discussions recently with the Mauritian Government, which touched on that matter, among others, and it is clear that there is a real interest in the possibility of that ferry. Undoubtedly there will be keen competition for it. If, as we all hope, privatisation is successfully achieved, the terms and conditions of the work force after privatisation must be a matter for negotiation between the parties.

Mr. Clay: In recent years, the Minister's predecessors used to tell the House that British shipyards had to close because they had no orders. What does the Minister believe the British people would think of a Minister who closed a shipyard that had the imminent prospect of two orders worth over £200 million, one of which had been withdrawn from a shipyard in Korea to be built at North-East Shipbuilders Ltd. in Sunderland?

Mr. Newton: Part of the answer to the question that the hon. Gentleman asked me is that it would depend on the prospects of those ships being built at a profit rather than a loss, against a background where the history has been

one of massive losses incurred by British Shipbuilders over the years. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will at least acknowledge that.

Mr. Gould: Does the Minister accept that there is now unmistakeable evidence of an upturn in world demand for shipping and that the NESL yard in Sunderland is the European yard that is best equipped and best placed to take advantage of it? In those circumstances, does he not accept that to close that yard now would be an act of industrial vandalism?

Mr. Newton: Part of the answer to the hon. Gentleman is precisely that which I have just given to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay). One must judge the position against the background of the likelihood that the ships will be built so that a profit and real jobs are provided. One must also look at the longer-term prospects, not just at the reports that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) mentioned.

Perhaps it will be helpful if I say clearly to the House that British Shipbuilders received a number of bids for North-East Shipbuilders Ltd. by the deadline of 30 September, which are still being evaluated. Further additional information has also been submitted by some of the bidders, including a recent amendment to one of the bids. The Government are, of course, concerned—I assure the hon. Member for Dagenham again of that—to ensure that every avenue has been explored before a decision is taken. I have therefore asked John Lister, the chairman of British Shipbuilders, to invite each of the bidders to submit any final amendments that they wish to have considered by noon on Friday 28 October. Thereafter, I shall make a full statement to the House as soon as the evaluation is complete.

British Aerospace and Austin Rover

12. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the chairmen of British Aerospace and Austin Rover; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Newton: Neither my predecessor nor I have met either chairman in recent months.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the Minister arrange a meeting with the chairmen of British Aerospace and Rover to discuss future plant closures? Will he remind them that when the Government sold British Aerospace to Austin Rover at a giveaway price of £150 million it was to produce a British motor industry using British components and providing employment, not to enable British Aerospace to engage in asset-stripping on a grand scale?

Mr. Newton: I know that the hon. Gentleman is a member of the Select Committee that has been examining the matter. I think that, if only as a member of that Committee—which I understand is considering some further interviews—he might well consider it improper were I to respond to some of his questions.

Mr. Grylls: The Labour party is critical of British Aerospace for selling some property which is in excess of its requirements, the proceeds from which it will presumably then use to invest in and improve its business and that of Rover. If Rover were still in the public sector, however, Labour would be calling for more money to be put in by the taxpayer. Is that not typical of Labour's double standards, given that the effect of both would be the same?

Mr. Newton: It must also be said that for everyone discussing the matter the key consideration must be to do everything possible to ensure the long-term viability of all the operations for those who work in them. It is to that that we must direct our main attention.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: When the right hon. Gentleman meets the chairman of British Aerospace, will he raise with him that company's behaviour towards its subsidiary Royal Ordnance plc, and in particular the closures at Patricroft and Bishopton? Does he not agree that it is ludicrous for the manufacturing industry in this country to be hit in this way again, so that we become dependent on outside suppliers for munitions?

Mr. Newton: I cannot agree with the hon. Lady that plans which I understand are designed to improve the long-term viability and competitiveness of Royal Ordnance are against the interests of those who work in the industry. Obviously there are points of argument about whether such plans work towards that objective, but, as I have said, it is the objective that we should all have in mind.

Sir Hal Miller: I hope that discussions between the Minister and the chairman will be less frequent following privatisation, and that they will be confined largely to matters in which the Government can act, such as the removal of trade and institutional barriers. But may I ask what progress has been made in discussions in Europe about the French threat to ban imports of cars made at Longbridge for Honda?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give my hon. Friend an exact and up-to-date report, but if I may I shall write to him about it.

Mr. Stott: When the Minister next meets the chairman of British Aerospace, will he ask what is his view of the British Airways decision to buy the American Boeing aircraft instead of the European Airbus, in which British Aerospace has a 20 per cent. share and for which the British taxpayer provided a substantial amount in launch-aid? Will he also ask what the decision will do for the long-term job prospects of those employed in the Airbus programme in British Aerospace? Does he not think that British Airways' decision is damaging, unpatriotic and a kick in the teeth for British industry?

Mr. Newton: If I have the opportunity I shall be more than happy to ask the chairman of British Aerospace for his views, but I shall also want to ask the chairman of British Airways for his views and his assessment of the effects on the company of its decisions.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Patrick Thompson, No. 16.

Several Hon. Members: What about No. 13?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have had notification that No. 13 is not to be asked. I call Mr. Patrick Thompson.

Mr. Madden *rose*——

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Haynes *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have had notification that Question No. 13 is not to be asked. *[Interruption.]* Mr. Thompson.

Research and Technology Initiative

16. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the response to his Department's research and technology initiative.

Mr. Forth: There has been a very encouraging response *—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is perfectly in order for an hon. Member to remove his question. It is not a matter for me and it is in order.

Mr. Haynes: The hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) has been got at.

Mr. Forth: There has been a very encouraging response to the research and technology initiative since its launch on 12 January. I have arranged for a short note to be published in the *Official Report* today*—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. A point of order does not arise on this.*—[Interruption.]* Order. However, I think that it would be helpful if an hon. Member who is not moving his question is not in the Chamber. Mr. Forth.

Mr. Forth: There has been a very encouraging response to the research and technology initiative since its launch on 12 January. I have arranged for a short note to be published*—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This takes up time at Question Time. I have already ruled that a point of order cannot arise on such a matter. Mr. Forth.

Mr. Forth: There has been a very encouraging response to the research and technology initiative since its launch on 12 January. I have arranged for a short note to be published in the *Official Report* today, outlining progress on the programmes in more detail.

Mr. Thompson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply and for the encouraging news. Does he agree that if we are to compete successfully in Europe and elsewhere much more needs to be done, not least in the education and recruitment of skilled scientists, engineers and technicians.

Mr. Forth: I agree with my hon. Friend. He will be aware of the education and enterprise initiative, recently launched jointly by three Government Departments, the principal aim of which is to do precisely what my hon. Friend has asked—to bring industry and education more closely together, to encourage understanding and mix their skills so that we may progress further in the development of the required skills in industry.

Mr. Ingram: Will the Minister comment on the difficulty that he is experiencing in the privatisation of the national engineering laboratory at East Kilbride? Does he agree that, given those difficulties, it would be better for NEL to remain in the public sector, where it has successfully served industry for the past 40 years?

Mr. Forth: The future of NEL is still being considered and discussions are still continuing. I believe that it is right that we should continue to explore the best possibilities for giving NEL, and any other facility, the most promising and positive future. That is what my Department and the Secretary of State have in mind as we continue to look at the matter.

Mr. Hind: As part of the research and technology initiative, will my hon. Friend consider*—[Interruption.]* As part of the research and development initiative will my hon. Friend consider the technology enterprise*—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us settle down now, as we have important questions to consider.

Mr. Hind: Will my hon. Friend consider the technology enterprise trust, which is now operating in Manchester, and which is funded by private enterprise? As a result of that trust, teams of experts go into universities and advise academics on patents, registration, product licences and on obtaining further research funds to expand with a view to going into production. That is an idea that could be spread throughout the country, and private enterprise has an important part to play in that.

Mr. Forth: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for bringing the attention of the House to something that is obviously a good example of the way in which the private sector can work positively together with further and higher education, to the benefit of all. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be delighted to know that that is in tune with the developments that my Department is trying to encourage.

Dr. Bray: In considering the proposals received under the research and technology initiative, does the DTI try to pick winners, or does it try to sabotage them? Surely the fiasco of the attempted sale of the national engineering laboratory shows the ignorance of the Secretary of State, the true state of engineering research in this country and its need for serious support.

Mr. Forth: I find it difficult to understand why the hon. Gentleman should so criticise a move designed to recognise that those closest in their work to the requirements of industry should be given greater freedom and flexibility to work ever more closely with industry, to the mutual benefit of all. I would have thought that the hon. Gentleman would also recognise that it is to the long-term benefit of employees involved in research-related activities that they should be given the freedom and responsibility to work more closely with their customers who pay for their work. I hope, in recognising that, that he will understand that the future of NEL will be more secure against that background than it has been in the past.

Following is the information:

THE RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE PROGRESS REPORT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

The research and technology initiative of the Department of Trade and Industry comprises three main areas—support for collaborative research, support for new technology ideas in small firms and technology transfer initiatives. This note outlines progress up to end September 1988 since the launch of current DTI policies in the White Paper "DTI—the department for Enterprise" (Cm. 278) in January 1988.

Collaborative Research

Support for collaborative research is provided under four main headings:

LINK.

An across-Whitehall initiative of pre-competitive, industrially relevant research undertaken by companies jointly with the science base. DTI is one of the main contributors to LINK and, of the 10 programmes launched since January 1988, nine have DTI participation, amounting to over £35 million. Twenty individual projects are at an advanced stage of processing and over 130 more are under discussion. Major LINK programme areas include advanced electronics and biotechnology.

EUREKA.

Industrially led projects with European Community and other European partners. EUREKA has been in existence since 1985. There are currently 214 approved EUREKA projects, of which 74, with total costs of £1·1 billion, involve United Kingdom partners; 22 are United Kingdom led. United Kingdom organisations have expressed interest in participating in a further 21 projects and another 13 proposals involving United Kingdom organisations are in circulation seeking partners. Since January 1988, nearly £9 million of DTI funding has been committed to 16 projects. A further 30 are in various stages of consideration. Examples of major EUREKA projects are high definition television and lasers for manufacturing.

Advanced technology programmes.

These promote longer-term industrially led collaborative projects between United Kingdom companies in advanced technologies. Eleven of these programmes have been launched, some having been announced before January 1988. A hight level of interest has been generated, in particular for the new programmes in information technology. Over 800 outline projects were submitted in response to the call for proposals for the IT programmes. Examples of other important areas featured in advanced technology programmes are superconductivity and advanced robotics.

General Industrial Collaborative Projects.

These bring together companies, particularly small companies, and research organisations including Government research establishments and research and technology organisations on a variety of projects or programmes of research which would not meet the criteria of the other schemes. To date, nine programmes at RTOs have been launched as well as four programmes at other bodies. Over 130 new projects are either running or under consideration.

Overall response to the initiative has been good, with well over 1,100 proposals, either firm or in outline, having been received for the programmes of collaborative research.

Small Firms

Support is provided for the development of new technology ideas in small firms under the SMART—small firms merit award for research and technology—scheme. This is a competition for firms with under 200 employees. Over 900 applications were submitted for the awards of £37,500. The applications are in the final stages of judging and winners will be announced in November. Due to the high quality of the entries, it is expected that the number of awards will be increased from the 100 originally planned.

Technology Transfer

DTI technology transfer activities include promotion of understanding and take-up of modern technologies and best practice techniques, various programmes of technology transfer from overseas and the establishment of the regional technology centres jointly with DES and the training agency. RTCs have now been established in most parts of the country. Subject to demonstration of industrial support, it is expected that further RTCs will be set up in early 1989. It is hoped that they will all be linked by a national network over the next year. A review of a number of DTI technology transfer activities has recently taken place and detailed announcements will be made later in the year. The new programmes will include a £12 million three-year programme to promote greater awareness in industry and commerce of the importance of open systems standards and the benefits that this can bring through the greater inter-working of IT systems.

Manufacturing Investment

17. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the most recent quarterly figure for investment in manufacturing; and what percentage change this represents since the second quarter in 1979.

19. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest figures he has for investment by manufacturing industry; and what were the comparable figures one year ago.

Mr. Forth: In the second quarter of 1988, investment in manufacturing industry, including leased assets, is estimated to have been £2·9 billion at 1985 prices and seasonally adjusted. That represents an increase of 13 per cent. over the figure of £2·6 billion for the corresponding quarter of 1987 and increases of 3 per cent. and 56 per cent. respectively over the second quarter figures for 1979 and 1983. The figure of £2·9 billion is the highest ever recorded for manufacturing investment in a single quarter.

Mr. Pike: Is not the true picture very different from the one painted by the Minister, as in constant figures the investment has only just reached nationally what it was in 1979? Is it not a fact that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs said last week that since 1979 investment in constant terms is 38 per cent. down in the north-west region? Is not most of the investment going to the south-east and the London area? What will the Government do for the regions, and what will high interest rates do for the future of investment?

Mr. Forth: I would rather look to the future than to the past, which is what the hon. Gentleman is in the habit of doing. I draw his attention to the fact that the recent Confederation of British Industry quarterly industrial trends survey shows that of 1,200 manufacturing companies, 40 per cent. plan to increase spending on plant and machinery over the next 12 months. That does not suggest to me that there is a problem. It is clear to all that, given the record levels of profitability of United Kingdom industry, the levels of investment are not only at record levels, but are likely to remain so. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will concede that we have liberated regional policy from the groove of automaticity where it has been stuck—to which Opposition Members are so devoted—by giving it a new impetus through our consultancy initiatives, which are spread throughout the regions.

Mr. Hayes: I warmly welcome my hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box. Will he remind the whingers and prophets of doom on the Opposition Benches that if they want a good example of international confidence in manufacturing industry in this country they should look to Ford in Wales?

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind words and for bringing to the attention of the House the fact that, such is the continuing confidence of major businesses such as the Ford Motor company in the future of the United Kingdom, and such is their confidence in our economic stability and the productivity improvements that we have seen recently, that they—unlike Opposition Members—are continuing to express confidence about the future of our economy and continuing to invest at record levels.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that whereas manufacturing investment may certainly have brought down unemployment in counties such as Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire, where the unemployment rate is about 3 per cent., in areas such as north-west Wales unemployment still approaches 20 per cent.? When are we going to see some of the manufacturing investment which is apparently working such miracles?

Mr. Forth: I am disappointed, as ever, that Opposition Members persist in wanting to point out the difficulties rather than the opportunities. Unemployment throughout the country has been falling now for a record period. It is falling in all regions of the country. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join me in trying to attract investment to his area as well as to the rest of the country, so that everyone can benefit in the boom in the economy and the boom in investment.

Mr. David Shaw: My hon. Friend makes his points well. Does he agree that since 1979 investment has been productive, which is shown by the fact that we are producing more in manufactures today than in 1979, and that that increased production is being achieved by a labour force of 5 million instead of 7 million, helping Britain to become more competitive and successful in the world economy?

Mr. Forth: Yes, indeed. It is a welcome change to hear from the Conservative Benches—something that is positive and encouraging. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Such interruptions are hardly fair to other hon. Members with questions on the Order Paper.

Mr. Forth: When what I just said is punctuated in *Hansard* it will make a lot more sense.

I welcome what my hon. Friend has said. He pointed out correctly that the record improvements in productivity, linked to those in investment, mean a much better future for Britain than we have often seen in the past.

Mr. Blair: As we are talking about investment in manufacturing, will the Minister consider the plight of those who invested unintentionally in various dubious manufacturing activities through Barlow Clowes? Does he agree that it is shameful that Conservative Members are prepared to issue press releases about that, but are not prepared to have their Minister questioned in the House of Commons?

Mr. Forth: As you pointed out, Mr. Speaker, it is always entirely up to hon. Members whether to put their questions. If the hon. Gentleman were to examine today's Order Paper in more calm than excitement, he would see that for varying reasons many hon. Members have not been in a position to put their questions. Therefore, to single out any one from the Order Paper is invidious. [HON. MEMBERS: "They were absent."]

On Barlow Clowes, I refer the hon. Gentlemen to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in answer to a question yesterday. I believe that that is the position.

Filature du Hainault

18. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the latest position regarding the French Government's allegedly illegal subsidy to Filature du Hainault to manufacture polypropylene filament yarn.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): The EC Commission announced on 27 July that it had approved the French Government's proposed aid to Filature du Hainault and that that aid did not conflict with the objectives of the Community's synthetic fibres discipline. I wrote to my hon. Friend about the Commission's decision on 15 August.

Mr. Riddick: Does my hon. Friend share my dismay and disappointment at the decision? Is this not another case where the French Government have pulled a fast one? Does he not realise that this will result in unfair competition for two firms, F. Drake and Company of Golcar and Drakes Fibres, in my constituency? Will he do everything in his power to ensure that such an illegal subsidy is not allowed in future?

Mr. Clark: As my hon. Friend will recall from the detailed correspondence that we had on this, there were, apparently, technical distinctions between the type of polypropylene yarn being produced by the company at Valenciennes and existing production, where there is over-capacity and where the Commission does not allow aid. However, I have told my hon. Friend that I share his anxiety and doubts about this. It would be easier for me to comment were the Commission's reasons to be made available. Although the decision was announced on 27 July, and although the reasons are encompassed in a document only five pages long——

Mr. Skinner: What is the Minister going to do?

Mr. Clark: If the hon. Gentleman would let me explain, I would welcome his comments. Although the document is only five pages long, it is not yet available for comment because of delays in the Commission's translation section.

British Launcher Rocket

20. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to meet representatives of the aerospace industry to discuss the development of a new British launcher rocket.

Mr. Newton: No, Sir, and no such meeting has been requested.

Mr. Atkinson: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the advance technology engine work that the Royal Ordnance rocket division of British Aerospace has recently completed for the European Space Agency? Is he also aware that it is in a very strong position to obtain that contract, but for a lack of funding, and can he say whether that funding will be forthcoming?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give an answer to the last part of my hon. Friend's question, but I shall look at what he has said in the light of his obvious keen interest in the matter.

Scotch Whisky

21. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to meet with representatives of the Scotch whisky industry; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has accepted an

invitation to lunch next week from the Scotch Whisky Association. Discussion is expected to concentrate on overseas trade matters.

Mrs. Ewing: While being sure that the Secretary of State will have a very hospitable lunch with the Scotch Whisky Association, may I ask that he deals in particular with the issue of Japanese taxation of Scotch whisky imports? Is the Minister satisfied that progress is being made in the light of the recent GATT negotiations, and can we expect further progress?

Mr. Clark: Yes, we are satisfied that the Japanese proposals for reforming their liquor tax system, when and if implemented, will greatly improve the ability of Scotch whisky to compete in the market on fair and equal terms. The date for implementation is agreed as 1 April 1989.

Hazardous Substances (Illegal Dumping)

3.30 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"an accident caused by the illegal dumping of a hazardous substance."

Yesterday evening I was notified of a horrific accident involving five children of constituents of mine living in the Marus bridge area of Wigan. Jamie and Carmelle Anderson, aged 14 and 7, Darren Cook and Andrew James, aged 14, and Simon Young, aged 13, were engulfed in a fireball after a metal drum containing a lethal cocktail of toluene, xylene and menthanol exploded. Jamie, Carmelle and Darren are currently gravely ill in the burns unit of Booth Hall hospital near Manchester with up to 80 per cent. burns to their bodies. Andrew and Simon received burns to their hands and arms and, thankfully, they are comfortable. I am sure that the whole House will join with me in sending a message to those children and their parents, with its best wishes for the fullest possible recovery from their horrific injuries. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

I have held preliminary discussions with Mr. John Wade, deputy director of the Health and Safety Executive. His initial response to the accident was immediate and his advisers attended the site of the incident, which occurred on scrubland near the children's homes. The initial investigation report indicates that the mixture of highly inflammable industrial waste had been dumped illegally. It is likely that the materials were used in the garage trade. The remains of a drum were found close to a "No tipping" sign erected on the land by Wigan metropolitan borough council.

The House must be concerned as to how many more such drums exist and where they have been dumped. It beggars belief that such an inflammable time bomb is ticking away, and that those five children may be the first in a series of innocent victims, either in Wigan or in the north-west in general. I ask the person or persons who dumped that toxic bomb to come forward and help the police and the Health and Safety Executive with their inquiries, and to advise them if any further waste has been dumped illegally and where it is before other innocent people are maimed or killed.

This horrific accident has again placed sharply in focus the need for tougher Government action to prevent illegal dumping of highly dangerous and toxic substances in this country.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and the House for listening with such courtesy and patience. I have personally found the circumstances of this tragedy distressing. My words are in no way adequate in voicing my feelings and those of the families concerned about the condition of the children affected and the horrific circumstances surrounding them, and the feelings of their parents about what has happened to their children as a result of disgraceful and inexcusable action by the person or persons concerned, who have flouted the law and have allowed such a disgraceful thing to happen.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"an accident caused by the illegal dumping of a hazardous substance."

I have listened with deep concern to what the hon. Member has said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House. I hope that he will find other means of bringing the matter before the House.

Barlow Clowes (Parliamentary Question)

3.35 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware of the tremendous interest in the Barlow Clowes affair. Through you, may we ask for an explanation of the puzzling case of the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) and his question No. 13 on the Order Paper relating to Barlow Clowes? The hon. Gentleman was present but the question was absent. Are we to have an explanation, or are we to assume that Ministers simply do not wish to be questioned on the matter today?

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I withdrew the question because I happen to believe that, in the light of all that I am trying to achieve, what is now required is a degree of quiet and calm for a short period so that we can determine whether people outside this House can do something to assist the many thousands of investors in Barlow Clowes. Nobody is more interested in achieving that than I am. If politicans would be a little quieter at the moment, it might just be possible that we shall be successful.

Mr. Speaker: If hon. Members wish to withdraw a question, it would be a courtesy to the House if they let the Table Office know the evening before so that the question is not printed on the Order Paper. That would, I think, be for the convenience of other hon. Members who may wish to come to the Chamber in the hope of taking part in the discussion on that question.

Sir Peter Emery *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a stricture on the hon. Gentleman. I am seeking to be helpful.

Sir Peter Emery: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. An hon. Member has the right to withdraw a question at any time until Question Time. No impoliteness was intended to the Minister, whom I informed the moment that I knew that I wished to withdraw the question. It must surely be for an hon. Member to judge what is best overall. That is what I did, and any other hon. Member would also do that.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Not on that matter, which I think we have exhausted.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is it a different matter?

Mr. Skinner: Well, it is going off at a tangent——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that we want to do that today. We have a heavy day before us, and there are six prayers.

Extension of Civil Justice

3.37 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to permit the conclusion of agreements between solicitors or barristers and their clients in civil cases under which the latter may be represented on a contingency fee basis, and to remove all restrictions inhibiting such practice.

Many of us are very proud of our system of justice, and we are right to be proud of most aspects of the system. However, there is one aspect of our civil justice system that rightly calls for the concern of this House. Quite simply, the problem is that too few people have access to it.

If one is a multi-millionaire there can be little difficulty in commissioning all the legal services required. If one is poor enough to qualify for legal aid, that assures representation—although not necessarily exactly the sort of representation that would be chosen if one could pay for it. However, for the broad mass of the population who fall between those two categories a decision to seek justice by going to law is, in effect, a decision to toy with the risk of financial catastrophe for both that person and his family. The cost of litigation has become so high that a few days in court can wipe out—or even more than wipe out—all that a hard-working man or woman may have accumulated throughout a lifetime.

That position is most unsatisfactory and we should do something about it. It is unsatisfactory for two reasons —first, for those who lose because they cannot go to justice when they are entitled to do so and are therefore denied the justice that they would otherwise have. I think of the victims of accidents—perhaps of transportation companies, both public and private, which have been operating in breach of safety procedures——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Libel.

Mr. Davies: One thinks of libel, the victims of professional negligence, the victims of medical negligence, and the victims of flawed pharmaceutical products. All such people, if they fall within the broad mass category of the population, would find it exceedingly difficult and risky to go to law.

Some hon. Members may already be afraid, and some hon. Members may hope, that I am about to propose some measure arbitrarily to reduce the cost of litigation and to reduce legal fees by legislative fiat. I reassure hon. and learned Members who may be concerned about my intentions that they are certainly not of a nefarious and villainous kind. My proposed solution is far better. It is simply that, when they wish and when their clients so choose, lawyers should be allowed to come to an arrangement to represent their clients, whether as solicitors or barristers, on the basis of contingency fees. That is to say that a solicitor or barrister would agree to take a pre-arranged share of any damages that his client might be awarded in the event of his suit being successful. In the event of failure, he would take nothing—no win, no fee.

I emphasise that what I am proposing is a purely permissive measure. It is not prescriptive in any way. It would be open to lawyers and their clients to continue to come to an arrangement on the basis of their conventional time-based fees and other fees that operate at present. But let us make no mistake about it: my Bill would outlaw

—perhaps I should say disbar—the restrictive practices currently operated by the Law Society and by the Bar Council that prevent their members from coming to that arrangement even when they might wish to do so.

I shall deal briefly with the objections that are sometimes raised in respect of contingency fees. The first is that it would undermine lawyers' objectivity. That is a strange objection. Our whole system of adversarial justice is based on the recognition that lawyers are not objective —they are on the side of their clients, and quite properly so—and that it is their obligation to pursue their clients' interests with all the energies and skills at their disposal as far as they can within the law. That is an important qualification.

The obligations of lawyers to the law and the formal responsibility of barristers to a court would not be changed in any way by the proposals in my Bill. I would regard it as an extreme and unacceptable slur on the legal profession to assume that, because lawyers are materially indifferent to the results of their actions on behalf of their clients, they are less loyal to their clients than they would be under a contingency fee system.

The second objection is that contingency fees would bring forth an escalation of damages awarded in civil cases. That objection is based on a false analogy with the system in the United States and the confusion between two quite separate and distinct features of the United States legal system. They have contingency fees in the United States, but they have something else which we do not have and which I would not seek to introduce, and that is juries fixing damages. Juries fixing damages, not contingency fees, have led to the great inflation of damages in the United States.

Under my proposals, arrangements for lawyers' remuneration and the formula used by a lawyer to arrange his remuneration with his client would remain as it should be—entirely irrelevant to the principles on which a jury fixes damages.

A third objection to contingency fees is that they would bring forth a great deal of unnecessary and purely vexacious litigation. That objection rests on the most pessimistic assumptions about either the level of competence or the rationality of the legal profession. Surely, unless one makes the most perverse assumptions about lawyers—I have the highest regard for their professional competence and rationality—the effect of my Bill would be exactly the reverse. No lawyer in his right mind would take on a contingency fee basis a case which was purely frivolous or any case other than one which he had a good chance of winning, and so was, in his professional judgment, a good case.

My Bill would abolish the conflict of interests between lawyers and their clients that exists under our present system. It is without a doubt a purely theoretical conflict, but under the present system a lawyer being indifferent to the result of a case might be considered to have an incentive to push his client to pursue a frivolous or hopeless action because he would nevertheless receive a fee. That is a purely theoretical danger, and I do not suppose for a moment that any lawyer has ever fallen victim to that temptation. The integrity of the legal profession has been and undoubtedly will continue to be more than proof against such temptation. Nevertheless, it is better to abolish a temptation than to resist it. That is the principle which we as legislators should adopt in this case.

My Bill would promote the interests of justice and the confidence of the British people that they will have access to civil justice if ever they need it. It would be in the interests of lawyers and their clients, and I have great pleasure in commending it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Quentin Davies.

Extension of Civil Justice

Mr. Quentin Davies accordingly presented a Bill to permit the conclusion of agreements between solicitors or barristers and their clients in civil cases under which the latter may be represented on a contingency fee basis, and to remove all restrictions inhibiting such practice: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 219.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Weighing of Goods Vehicles and other Cargo) (Application to non-UK Ships) Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Questions to Ministers

3.48 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I tried to catch your eye earlier on this matter. You will agree that Question Time is precious to Back Benchers because it is our one opportunity to question Ministers on specific subjects. You will notice that the last question we reached today, No. 21, was on the important topic of the Scotch whisky industry. That question cannot be put to a Scottish Minister and must be answered by the United Kingdom Department that deals with these matters. You will also be aware that during Question Time Members were not given an opportunity to ask questions because of the many interruptions. That reduced the time available. Otherwise——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. But for several questions which were withdrawn today we probably would not have got as far as question 21.

Mr. Walker: That does not change the point I am trying to make, which is that if hon. Members interrupt questions, however justified their reasons may be, Back Benchers suffer. Usually it is Back Benchers who make the noise, and this seems to me an opportunity to draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to that fact. I drew attention to the question about Scotch whisky, but my point applies to any question; it just happened to be one that is important for Scotland, and that is why I drew your attention to it.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recollect, as he was here at Question Time, that I drew attention to the very matter he has raised: the more interruptions we have during Question Time, the slower we proceed.

Orders of the Day

Housing (Scotland) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 2

GENERAL FUNCTIONS OF SCOTTISH HOMES

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 4, line 19, at end insert—

"( ) Section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 (local authorities: general statutory duties) shall apply to Scottish Homes as it applies to a local authority."

3.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 places local authorities under a statutory obligation to carry out their duties with regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups. The Government and, I hope, the House, agree wholeheartedly with the terms of that section and consider that the new housing agency, Scottish Homes, should be subject to the same provisions. I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): We welcome the fact that the Race Relations Act 1976 will apply to Scottish Homes. I wonder whether the principle could be extended to the composition of the agency? It seems unfortunate that representative Scots seem to be excluded and discriminated against in that composition. The Government have had to go to New York to find a chairman for it, and to England to find a chief executive, and another member of Scottish Homes, our old friend the Earl of Ancram, was last seen carrying a carpet bag around Epping Forest. It would be useful if the members of Scottish Homes could have some rights—if there could be discrimination in favour of people who are resident in Scotland, who intend to continue to reside there and who are representative of its people.

This said, we obviously support the extension of the provisions of the Race Relations Act to Scottish Homes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: With the leave of the House, I may say to the hon. Gentleman that the board of Scottish Homes represents a fair cross-section of housing interests in Scotland. Both the chief executive and the chairman were born in Glasgow council houses—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman should not be so disparaging about Glasgow, one of Scotland's great cities.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4

REGULATION OF HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS IN SCOTLAND AND TRANSFER TO SCOTTISH HOMES OF CERTAIN PROPERTY, RIGHTS, LIABILITIES AND OBLIGATIONS OF HOUSING CORPORATIONS

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 5, line 27, after "with" insert "—(a)"

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 3.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The amendments have been tabled to correct an omission that is principally of a technical nature. As it stands, the Bill transfers to Scottish Homes all rights, liabilities and obligations relating to registered housing associations to which the Housing Corporation is entitled or subject, in cases in which an association is based in Scotland. But the corporation also has certain obligations in relation to land held by unregistered housing associations and those obligations should also be transferred to Scottish Homes in cases in which the land is in Scotland. These amendments will have that effect.

Mr. Home Robertson: It is always nice to know what the effect of an amendment is. Presumably, if the Government go to the trouble of tabling an amendment and recommending its acceptance, it must have some effect. How many such unregistered housing associations are there in Scotland, and how much land under the ownership of the Housing Corporation may be affected?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman details now, but I shall certainly write to him and do so. This is a tidying-up amendment to make sure that proper procedures are observed.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 3 agreed to.

Clause 16

SECURITY OF TENURE

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 10, line 40, after first "subsection" insert

", subsection (1) of section *[Right of succession of spouse]* below,"

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

I take it, Mr. Speaker, that we can also discuss amendment (a) in lieu: Page 10, line 40, leave out 'or subsection (4) of section 43 below' and insert

', subsection (1) of section *[Right of succession of spouse]* below or section 3A of the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984'.

Mr. Speaker: With this we will also discuss the following: Lords amendment No. 18:

New clause

RIGHT OF SUCCESSION OF SPOUSE

".—(1) In any case where—

(a) the sole tenant under an assured tenancy dies; and

(b) immediately before the death the tenant's spouse was occupying the house as his or her only or principal home; and

(c) the tenant was not himself a successor as explained in subsection (2) or (3) below,

the tenant's spouse shall, as from the death and for so long as he or she retains possession of the house without being entitled to do so under a contractual tenancy, be entitled to a statutory assured tenancy of the house.

(2) For the purposes of this section, a tenant was a successor in relation to a tenancy—

(a) if the tenancy had become vested in him either by virtue of this section or under the will or intestacy of a previous tenant; or

(b) if he was a statutory assured tenant by virtue of section 3A of the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984; or

(c) if at some time before the tenant's death the tenancy was a joint tenancy held by him and one or more other persons and, prior to his death, he had become the sole tenant by survivorship; or

(d) in the case of a tenancy (hereinafter referred to as "the new tenancy") which was granted to him (alone or jointly with others) if—

(i) at some time before the grant of the new tenancy he was, by virtue of paragraph (a), (b) or (c) above, a successor to an earlier tenancy of the same or substantially the same house as is let under the new tenancy; and

(ii) at all times since he became such a successor he has been a tenant (alone or jointly with others) of the house which is let under the new tenancy or of a house which is substantially the same as that house.

(3) No order for possession under Ground 7 of Schedule 5 to this Act shall be made—

(a) in relation to a case to which this section relates by virtue of subsection (1) above; or

(b) where the tenant's spouse succeeds to the tenancy under the will or intestacy of the tenant.

(4) For the purposes of this section a person who was living with the tenant at the time of the tenant's death as his or her wife or husband shall be treated as the tenant's spouse."

The proposed amendments to Lords amendment 18:

(a), in line 5, leave out from 'house' to end of line 7.

(b), in line 12, leave out from beginning to end of line 31.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Amendment No. 4 made in another place, amended clause 16(1) of the Bill. That clause defines the circumstances in which a statutory assured tenancy arises, and amendment No. 4 added to the list the right of succession for the spouse of an assured tenant which Lords Amendment No. 18 introduces.

However, the provision needs to be amended further because of the recasting of clause 43 and schedule 6 of the Bill with which Lords Amendments No. 38, 39 and 76 are concerned. This amendment does this.

The Government amendment is a technical one to take account of changes to the provisions in succession made on succession to regulated tenancies in another place.

Mr. Home Robertson: When the Minister disagrees with a Lords amendment it brings a whole new flavour to the concept of relationships between the two Houses, because his brother is the Duke of Hamilton. Therefore, this is something of a family dispute.

The amendment deals with the right of a widow to succeed, and it has been portrayed by the Government as a concession. It shows how many concessions have been made to landlords against the interests of tenants in Scotland when the re-establishment of the right of a widow to succeed to the tenancy is presented by the Government as an important concession.

[Mr. Home Robertson]

The Government's concession is little more than a fig leaf and greatly qualified because it applies only to the initial tenant's widow. Under subsection (2), the widow of a successor tenant will have no rights whatever. If a tenant dies and his widow succeeds to the tenancy and then remarries, the second spouse will have no rights and on another death the landlord would be able to repossess the house. That means that by no means all widows or widowers will be protected by the provision.

I draw to the attention of the House the representations made by, among others, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations Ltd., expressing grave concern about the erosion of spouses' rights under the legislation. The amendment falls far short of what the federation called for and it is worried about the impact on future relationships between housing associations and tenants.

The Lords amendment is a slight improvement, but the new legislation still represents a serious erosion of tenants' rights and security, and many widows will face summary eviction in Scotland under the new assured tenancy system. I commend my amendments (a) and (b) to Lords amendment No. 18 because at least they would lift that threat. I should like to hear the Government's opinion of those amendments.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I hope that the Minister will be able to satisfy us on the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). I should like to ask the Minister about the position of a widow or widower of a tenant who had died. If I understand the Government's intentions correctly, the new spouse of that widow or widower would not be allowed to continue the tenancy of the house when his or her spouse died. I cannot understand the logic of that, because it would mean that the spouse had not only lost his or her partner but had lost the home as well. Is that what the Government intend to do to people? Do they not realise that in many cases the people involved will be elderly, because of the late marriage of a widow and a widower which often occurs?

I can understand a lack of appreciation of these difficulties by people who live in several houses, none of which is let and all of which they own. Will the Government come into the real world and try to concern themselves with ordinary people for whom such a problem would be extremely serious?

4 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Will the Minister explain what is the present position in law? Is it the case that the succession of spouses is not affected by whether the person who has died succeeded to the tenancy from his previous spouse? There is a serious weakening of the statutory position under the Bill. At the moment there is no discrimination if one is the spouse of the tenant who died and one succeeds to that tenancy. However, that simple position is being eroded by the Government's amendment.

I should like the Minister to clarify another point. If, for example, a tenant dies, the spouse remarries and there are children from that remarriage, is it the case, under what the Minister has suggested, that both the spouse who succeeds and the children of that second marriage will have no security of tenure and could be required by the landlord to surrender the tenancy because of this amendment? I am worried that that may happen. In the guise of introducing technical amendments—the Minister actually said that it was a technical amendment—the Government are seriously undermining the position of tenants.

I know that Lord Sanderson of Bowden, who has responsibility in the other place for Scottish housing, said that the purpose of the Bill was to build on the rights given to tenants in the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Amendment Act 1984 and not to take away tenants' rights. However, Labour Members do not believe that that will happen, and neither does the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, which said that the Government are giving only basic minimum rights to tenants under the new assured tenancies and short assured tenancies. What the Minister said seemed to confirm the SFHA's worries. I do not see how we can add to a tenant's rights, or secure tenant's rights by taking away rights that they already have in existing statutes, but that is what the Minister appears to be doing.

In Scotland, widows and widowers who are left to pick up tenancies already have serious problems with which to deal. In my surgery last Friday night, I had two different cases. One lady came in and said that her husband had died, her grown-up family had left and she did not know how she could afford to heat the house, but if she went back on the waiting list she would be given a house in a part of a town to which she did not wish to move because of the neglect there resulting from lack of Government funds to local councils. She felt trapped in her house and unable to meet the heating bills and unsure whether she could heat her home over the winter. Another case was of a widow who had been left in a house with a huge garden which she did not know how she could cope with, but she did not want to move on to the waiting list because she could not be assured that she would get the kind of housing that she would want.

The Minister is suggesting that in a number of cases, certainly in the private sector, people will not be able to stay in their houses and, as well as coping with the death of their spouses, they will have to cope with the problem of finding new accommodation for themselves, and perhaps for their families, because the Minister has taken away from them the right to succeed to the tenancy that their dead spouse had enjoyed.

The Minister will have to explain why he can leave somebody in the position of having to cope not only with a family bereavement but with the problem of finding new accommodation for themselves and their families. The Minister is suggesting that we should agree to that, but I do not believe that any hon. Member would accept that diminution of the rights of tenants. That is particularly so in the private sector, of which Conservative Members claim to be in favour and which they want to encourage. Here, they are attacking private sector tenants and taking away their rights, which are taken for granted in the public sector. I should like to see the day when the Minister and the Tory Members start to give private sector tenants the same rights as those enjoyed by the public sector tenants.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) said, and I find myself in sympathy with much of what he said about the problems of individuals who find themselves in houses that are unsuitable for their

requirements. That often happens if one is locked into the cycle of council accommodation. Frequently, children grow up and leave home—the normal events of life—parents are left, one dies, and the remaining parent is left with a property that contains more bedrooms and other rooms than are required.

Quite often—the hon. Member for Dundee, East drew attention to this—people are left with large gardens with which they cannot cope. It would be marvellous if one could say that local authorities respond quickly to such situations, but, sad to say, the experience of most hon. Members is that local authorities often leave individuals in these circumstances for long periods, sometimes years, before transferring them to more suitable accommodation.

I can speak from some experience of private letting. I grew up, in the early stages of my life, in a privately let house in Dundee. In those days, private landlords could get adequate returns on their lettings. My experience, and that of my family, was that the private landlord system worked sympathetically to the kind of problem to which the hon. Member for Dundee, East has drawn attention. However, much has happened since then. I see that the hon. Gentleman is shaking his head. I do not know whether he ever lived in such circumstances before the 1939 war, because if he did, he would know that I am talking about the period before the legislative changes that wrought havoc with private letting, certainly in Dundee.

Interestingly, the legislation was intended to do good, but it had the opposite effect. It removed from the market place altogether private sector letting, which had successfully provided homes for the majority of tenanted premises, certainly in Dundee. I cannot talk about elsewhere, but in that city, which I know well, it worked. I hope—I would not go any higher than that—that the legislative changes in the Bill will do something to remove some of the imbalances that have occurred, and release more property for letting.

I should like to think that, in doing so, we are taking on board the problems that were highlighted by the hon. Member for Dundee, East. I hope that the Lords amendment that we are rejecting and the amendment that we are putting in its place will provide a much more sympathetic regime for the kind of problems that the hon. Member for Dundee, East has highlighted. If that is not so, I shall be distressed because we must find a way to improve the lot of people who have to live in rented premises. We must ensure that the private sector, as well as the public sector, provides the right kind of accommodation in the right places and at the prices that people can afford.

If all that happens, the Bill will be a success. If it does not and we do not leave a better position than we found, I shall be saddened. However, I am optimistic, because, having sat through the Standing Committee on the Bill and worked carefully through the Bill, I believe that much of what is in it is progressive. It is intended to improve the lot of people who have to live in the circumstances that we have been discussing. I am not interested in political rhetoric. It is easy to indulge in that, but I am much more concerned about the lot of those who will require sympathy, understanding and the opportunity, if it can be arranged, for a transfer to more suitable accommodation.

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): Like the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), I started life in a rented house—a council one built in the 1920s—but the conclusions that I reached about the necessity for public housing are very different from his. In Committee, every time a tenant's right was removed, I referred to it. My hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) rightly made the distinction between the Government's attitude to tenants in the private sector and their attitude to those in the public sector. It seems that, while the latter are to be given rights, the main one being the right to buy their houses, when, under this Bill, they are forced into the private sector, such rights are removed. I do not understand that motivation. I do not see how it can be seen as an improvement of the rights of the individual in Scotland to remove rights when tenants are forced to transfer.

The hon. Member for Tayside, North said that he did not want to indulge in rhetoric; he wanted to consider the facts. We must ask the Minister to give us some facts. In view of the Government's opposition to what appears to be a sensitive and apt Lords amendment, which more or less deals with the present position and gives some right of protection to spouses in rented accommodation, I am most concerned about the practical implications if the proposal is defeated. I want the Minister to tell us what the implications are for individuals and local authorities.

The Government are encouraging the removal of housing stock from the public sector. We heard earlier this week—I am sure the matter will be raised later today—about the transfer of large numbers of Scottish Special Housing Association houses in the Borders to a new trust. That appears to be the future trend. We must consider the implications of the transfer of large numbers of houses to the private sector. The local authorities will have no houses left. It appears that they will not be given nomination rights in those transfers, but, as I understand it, they will still retain the obligation to house the homeless.

If the Government have their way, we shall have a device that will create homelessness. It appears that the landlord will be entitled to remove a tenant, not because of the actions of that tenant—for example, in failing to pay the rent or because he is a bad or anti-social tenant—but for the simple reason that the person who was the formal tenant, in the sense that he or she held the lease, has died. That will be the sole reason for removing that person. He will not be entitled to stay in the house. The landlord may remove him for whatever purpose—for example, to sell the house or to let it to another tenant at a higher rent or on different leasing terms. Obviously, therefore, there will be an incentive for the landlord.

The local authority will not have the necessary housing stock to rehouse that person. Even if the local authority has housing stock, what will be its obligaton to the tenant? Will he be given priority in terms of housing need? Under the present homeless persons legislation, a test of vulnerability is applied. Will that tenant be a vulnerable tenant, or will he be classified as intentionally homeless? What will be the tenant's situation under this newly created right to evict? The Government are giving landlords the right to evict tenants from their homes for the simple reason that the existing leaseholder has died.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): Perhaps the Minister will help me and explain whether, in the case of a family where a spouse or parents have died, a remaining member of the family will be allowed to succeed to the tenancy. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) said, it is not always necessary to

[Mrs. Ray Michie]

rehouse someone because the rooms or the garden have become too large for them to maintain. Many families have lived and grown up in a public sector house and are sad and reluctant to leave it because it is their home.

I am concerned that, for example, a 50-year-old son or daughter, who has been living with his or parents in that house, would be removed. It seems harsh that somebody who has lived in a house and loved his home all his life should suddenly find himself being put out. I should have thought that it was a great worry for many parents if they thought that, when they died, their child, of whatever adult age, was not able to succeed to the tenancy.

4.15 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): The vast expanses on the Government Benches as we discuss the Bill are a visible, if silent, testimony to the ridiculousness of the Bill. I was ill-fated enough to be a member of the Committee that considered the Bill and similar circumstances prevailed then, with Conservative Members writing out their Christmas cards, sending letters to their constituents and disappearing down the Corridor. However, when the Division bell rang, they thundered back in their artificial majority, buttressed by London barristers who knew nothing about Scottish housing and cared even less about it. Four Conservative Members are present, yet, if a Division is called on this vital amendment, hundreds of Conservative Members who know nothing about this legislation will arrive to ram through in the Lobby the Government's proposals to attack Scottish housing.

Mr. Bill Walker: Let me take up the hon. Gentleman's comments about the Committee and what I took to be his views on the conduct of Conservative Members in Committee. I trust that he will not suggest that I and my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who is here today, were not active in Committee. If that is what he is suggesting, I suggest that he reads *Hansard*. He will find that, as I have endeavoured to do in every Committee of which I have been a member, I tried to participate constructively and to be helpful to Ministers and to the people who sent me to Parliament. I view that as a serious commitment, so I take the hon. Gentleman's comments as being out of place.

Mr. Galloway: My comments are not at all out of place as I readily concede the omnipresence of the hon. Gentleman in Committee. He was so active and rabid in his contributions in Committee that we were contemplating bringing a straitjacket to restrain him from making attacks on tenants, local authorities and even on the berry pickers of Blairgowrie who felt the rough end of his tongue.

For that reason, I wanted to follow the remarks made by the hon. Gentleman a few moments ago. I have heard him before on his trip down memory lane about the halcyon days of the private landlord. I too am from Dundee and used to deliver milk to the hon. Gentleman's house in Dundee.

Mr. Walker: Not when I lived there.

Mr. Galloway: That is why I did not doctor the milk, as I might otherwise have done. However, it was not the milk of human kindness that I was delivering or that the hon. Gentleman has been delivering on the issue of Scottish housing, both in Committee and here today.

The hon. Gentleman is taking a trip down a memory lane that does not exist. His memory is playing tricks on him. There never was a time when private landlordism provided the kind of services that he, in Committee and again today, has said it has. There never was a time when private landlords were in it for any other reason than to squeeze every last penny out of the poor people in their clutches who could not get out of their clutches. The private landlords in Dundee and throughout Scotland were bloodsuckers.

The mask slips when we hear the hon. Member for Tayside, North. He revealed the real purpose of the Bill, which is to turn the clock back to the so-called halycon days when the private landlord was king. The Bill has nothing to do with liberating Scottish tenants or increasing the Scottish housing supply. Instead, it is all about giving some fast bucks to private landlords by resurrecting the housing system which existed, as the hon. Member for Tayside, North said, before the 1939 war. That was a revealing phrase. The Government are returning the pattern of housing tenure in Scotland to that which existed before the second world war.

I was born in an attic in Atholl street, in the Irish quarter of Dundee, which is known as Tipperary. The address was No. 12A Atholl street. My mother and father and I spent the first part of my life in an attic in a slum tenement. My experience, therefore, is far more common than the mythical memory-lane experience of the hon. Member for Tayside, North. I have heard him in Committee set out the trip up The Hawkie and doon The Blackie, as we say in Dundee. It is true that there were tiled closes up The Hawkie and especially down The Blackie. The majority of tenants, however—hundreds of thousands in the private sector in Dundee and other cities—were not living in tiled closes in either The Hawkie or The Blackie. Instead, they were living in the rabbit warrens of the Overgate and the teeming slums of Hilltown, Hullgate and Lochee. It is to that pattern of housing, but in a sanitised form—literally, I hope, as well as metaphorically—that Conservative Members wish to take us.

Mr. Bill Walker: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will confirm that he was born after the legislation to which I referred was enacted. That is the legislation that was put on the statute book immediately after the 1945 war. That changes substantially the circumstances that I was talking about and the ones from which he suffered. I accept that he suffered.

Mr. Galloway: I was born in 1954, an auspicious year in many ways. It is true that the legislation that was enacted by the Labour Government from 1945 to 1951 began to change the pattern of housing tenure in Scotland. It could not wipe out at a stroke the sort of slums that I am describing, but the Labour Government made efforts to get rid of them. The difference between that Government and this one is that the present Government seek to return us to the so-called halcyon days that existed before the 1939 war, to use the revealing phrase of the hon. Member for Tayside, North.

The Government should be aware—I have written to them, and I am certain that other hon. Members have done so—that there is a great deal of anxiety in Scotland among

those who have heard rumours, perhaps misleading ones, about reduced rights of succession. I know that the Minister is a decent cove and will be concerned to set people's minds at rest. There is a specific problem for the spouse who succeeds on the death of her husband or of his wife. Such people are anxious and will be listening to the debate. They will be waiting for the Minister to give them the appropriate information. They will be anxious to know what their rights of succession will be, and the rights of their families, if they remarry.

The Conservative party claims to be the party of marriage, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced a marriage Budget earlier in the year. Are we to place barriers in the way of widows and widowers that will stop them marrying because of their fears that by so doing they will adversely affect their rights of succession? Are we to encourage widows and widowers to live outside marriage but with partners so as to safeguard their rights of succession?

Surely the Minister is not that sort of person. When he responds, I hope that he will not say that he can meet the problem half way. I hope that he will send to those in Scotland who are anxious about this issue the message that the rights of succession of spouses who remarry will not be adversely affected and that the Government accept the amendments that seek to protect those rights.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I am not clear what the main burden of the speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) was all about. He should realise that there have been housing difficulties in Scotland for a very long time, and certainly since the war.

It is no use blaming one Government or another. Whatever Government have been in power, those of us who have held constituency surgeries over many years have found that about 50 per cent. of those seeking advice have been raising housing issues, ranging from dampness to the lack of a house, and including the problems that result from having bad neighbours.

It has been the prime worry of all hon. Members, local councils and Ministers that the housing stock in Scotland has been inadequate. It has not been of sufficient quality and there must be ways of improving it.

When we seek ways of improving the housing stock, we end up with a Bill of this sort. It is disappointing that the Opposition have attacked a genuine attempt to improve the condition of the housing stock, thus adversely affecting the opportunities of those who wish to be tenants in Scotland under one guise or another. When we have an opportunity to improve matters through local authorities, various forms of private housing and Scottish Homes, for example, we should try to proceed constructively and not look on the black side of every proposal that is made. Most of the Government's proposals are the result of detailed consultation.

Everyone who has participated in the debate seems to have claimed some connection with Dundee. I suppose that I must throw in my claim, for I was educated at Dundee. I attended a distinguished Dundee school of economics under the redoubtable Dr. Bowie. From time to time, the local council has had under its control hundreds of houses of poor quality which have been unoccupied, and that is the sort of thing that we want to try to avoid.

The Minister is right to bring forward a Bill that is full of constructive ideas. It is wrong for the Opposition to spend the debate—this is what they did in Committee—trying to shoot down every good idea, however advantageous each one may be to the people of Scotland, who must have the opportunity to live in better homes. The Bill's objective is to provide those homes for them, and that is why I support it.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: With the leave of the House, I shall respond to the contribution of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran), who has temporarily left the Chamber. The Government are proposing disagreement with Lords amendment No. 4, which is essentially technical. We fully support Lords amendment No. 18, which gives the spouse of an assured tenant a statutory right to succeed for the tenancy.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) asked me to clarify the current position. The amendment applies only to assured tenants, and only the spouse of the first tenant succeeds. That is relevant also to the questions of the hon. Members for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) and for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie).

Mr. McAllion: What is the position before the Bill is enacted and implemented? Is it not that spouses of any tenant will succeed to the tenancy irrespective of whether they happen to be the first successor or second successor?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is correct that the Bill will narrow succession rights. That I am prepared to admit.

The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) stated that the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations is expressing concern. Housing associations have every right to grant greater succession rights than exist in statutes if they wish, and I should expect them to do so. They are preparing a model tenancy agreement, which will be extremely important.

4.30 pm

During consideration of the Bill, we were ready to consider improvements at all stages, but the keynote of our policy was the revitalisation of the private rented sector, which now stands at approximately 6 per cent. Many organisations in Scotland were concerned about succession and how to get the balance right. The Government originally took the view that succession rights, like other tenancy terms, should be left for negotiation between tenant and landlord. I remain convinced that many landlords letting on assured tenancies will be happy to include such terms in their leases.

However, we have accepted that when a tenant dies, his or her spouse is in a particularly vulnerable position and with that in mind we introduced Lords amendment No. 18, which allows a limited right of succession to a spouse of an original tenant who, immediately before the tenant's death, stayed with the tenant in a home that was their only or main home.

I should like to answer the point made by the hon. Member for Dundee, East. We propose a limitation on the right of succession not because we do not recognise that the spouse of a tenant will also be in a vulnerable position on the tenant's death, but because excessive succession rights of the type proposed by the Opposition would hinder the expansion of the private rented sector. We have very much in mind the fact that almost 130,000 houses in Scotland are vacant, the majority being in the private sector. We want a considerable proportion of them to be brought back into use.

Mr. Home Robertson: We know that the Minister is seeking to bend over backwards to encourage private landlords to rent so that they can profiteer and do more or less what they like. The hon. Gentleman acknowledged the vulnerability of a widow or widower at the time of bereavement. Will he confirm that the Government amendment would mean that the widow of a successor tenant could simply be summarily evicted?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That is the position and the answer is yes, but it is important that a tenant entering a tenancy agreement should negotiate the best possible arrangements, taking the circumstances into account.

What is wrong with the Opposition amendments to Lords amendment No. 18 is that they would give a tenant's spouse a right of succession even though she or he was not living in the house concerned, or used it as a second home. I do not see how that can be regarded as reasonable. The amendments of the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) would open the door to the possibility of an unlimited series of statutory successions to the same assured tenancy. For that reason, the Government cannot accept the amendments.

I listened carefully to the views expressed by Opposition Members and I recognise that they feel strongly about the issue, but we disagree with their amendments. As my hon. Friends the Members for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) said, it is important to bring empty houses back into use and to revitalise the private rented sector. We believe that the greatest benefit to all those who are seeking homes of their own will derive from encouraging private landlords to let vacant property. That encouragement will not come about if we open the door to unlimited successions in the way that the Opposition propose.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): In the year and a bit since I have been in the House, I have not heard such a pathetic justification for a measure that will attack people who are faced with bereavement and give them the unenviable choice of trying to seek alternative accommodation, in the knowledge that if, having remarried, they pass on, their new husband or wife could not succeed to the house.

It is an outrage that somebody who suffers bereavement and falls in love in later life—although it may not necessarily be in later life—will be affected in that way. We all have constituents—I see my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) nodding—who have suffered bereavement. In Dundee and Aberdeen there have been tremendous catastrophes, which have left many young women widowed.

If the widows of men who lost their lives in the Piper Alpha disaster lived in such tenancies, remarried at the age of 22, 23 or 24 and themselves suffered a catastrophe, their new husbands and any young children they had could be thrown out onto the streets by caring landlords such as those described by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and the Minister.

Mr. Galloway: My hon. Friend seems to me to be putting his thumb on the nub of the issue. I appeal to the Minister to do better than the pitiful explanation that he gave. As Nye Bevan said—and it is a truism in politics —"Where there is death, there is hope."

The Government seem to be saying that excessive succession rights—as the Minister called them—will be a disincentive to the burgeoning of the private rented sector. That implies not only that people may remarry for the sake of securing rights of succession to a house but that they might do in a spouse to get their grubby hands on the tenancy.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that he is speaking in an intervention.

Mr. Griffiths: I thank my hon. Friend for that most helpful intervention.

We see in front of us a Minister who has been praised —wrongly, it seems—for being a compassionate man, but who, after 70 or 80 hours of debate in Committee and after more debate in the other place, comes to the House and tells us that widows and widowers who remarry while living in such statutorily assured tenancies and then die cannot pass on the tenancy to their husband or wife. The Minister has made an appalling admission.

Mrs. Fyfe: Although it embarrasses me somewhat to mention it, I think that I should relate some of my own experience, which my hon. Friend may find helpful. I am a widow and when I suffered the loss of my husband, at least the security of my home was beyond question. If, in addition to that sorrow, I had had to be thrown out of my home, I think that I would have lost my mind.

It is horrendous that Conservative Members could do this to secure the rights of private sector landlords. It is an outrage and I hope that the whole of Britain will notice it. It is unbelievable. However, the Minister has yet to explain in what way the private landlord benefits from having one tenant rather than another. He is saying clearly that private sector landlords matter more than people who are bereaved and are suffering.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind Members that an intervention must be a pertinent question or comment. They must not seek to speak a second time through an intervention.

Mr. Griffiths: Let us consider the scenario that the hon. Member for Tayside, North and the Minister have described—not that of the past but that of today. The Minister told us that there are large numbers of empty houses in the private sector, which landlords are frightened to let in case widows move in and take them over and the landlords can never move them or their families on. That is the nub of the Minister's argument.

Mr. Bill Walker *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Griffiths: I shall give way—The truth of what I have said is acknowledged by the fact that the hon. Gentleman makes no intervention.

Landlords now are no different from those whom successive Governments, up to this one, have done so much to try to drive out of business.

It is rather ironic that I should be speaking today, as this is the closing date for landlords to take advantage —under the Government's business expansion scheme—of 60 per cent. tax relief and all the capital gains on that to foster private landlordism. The tragedy is that the clause works hand in hand with the private landlord—for the sake of private profit—to ensure that a minimum of obstacles are placed in the way of his letting a property for

the maximum and ensuring that people are moved out, or at least do not have absolute security in a variety of circumstances in which they have it now.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman obviously was not listening when I talked about the two-year-old milkman delivering milk to me when I lived in Linlathen. I said that legislation had changed circumstances and that private housing which used to be plentiful had disappeared. There are many empty houses which we want to bring on to the market, and the legislation is designed to do precisely that. It is not intended to be a replacement or an alternative to existing legislation; it is intended to add to it.

Mr. Griffiths: The hon. Gentleman should come with me to my constituency, which might be called a typical Conservative constituency in that it has probably one of the highest densities of private landlordism combined with home ownership. He should see the people, too old and frail to come to my ward interviews or surgeries, whom I visit in Morningside and Marchmont. They are living in the houses—with window frames painted the standard green, like the leather benches in the Chamber—owned by the big private landlords in Edinburgh. They find it difficult to get repairs done by those so-called compassionate landlords whom Conservative Members have praised in the past, are praising now and wish to expand in the future.

Worries about rent levels have been heaped on tenants by the Government's withdrawal of housing benefit, as the Secretary of State found when he visited Govan yesterday and spoke to a pensioner who told him that he now has to pay £50 of his rent instead of £30. We need not look back to the past; we see terrible problems today. Compassionate hon. Members who represent constituencies such as mine see them daily when they visit their constituents.

The Minister has woefully failed to address himself to these difficulties. I am speaking now rather than earlier because I thought that my points were being made far better by my hon. Friends, and felt sure that the Minister would take on board what they said. But he brazenly said that he and his party care not a whit for the widow or widower in such terrible circumstances. The charge may be made—we have not heard it yet, perhaps because not many Conservative Members are present to intervene—that we are constructing an exaggerated scenario involving cases that are unlikely to occur, and that the chances of a widow's obtaining a tenancy and then remarrying are slim. If the chances are so slim—one in 100,000, or one in a million—there is surely no problem about accepting the amendment. It cannot be a disincentive.

Pressure has been put on the Minister by his friends the private property speculators not to change the position because they know that this is not uncommon in the areas that we represent, where private landlordism is fairly prevalent. The fact that it is not uncommon means that the safeguard that we are urging on the Minister is more important than ever. We know that the Minister has sought to cloak his wish to protect and expand private landlordism and private profit in talk of security, when security has been removed. We know that the Government have made no provision not only for spouses who may find themselves homeless but for the children of the newly widowed, who may find themselves out on the street because of a rule that can be pointed to by a landlord. The case can go to the sheriff, who will have no discretion or choice in the matter.

Is there a massive pool of other housing in either the rented sector or for purchase? No. Most people rent privately only because they cannot get on to council waiting lists, which have tragically doubled in Scotland under the present Government, or because they cannot afford the extortionate, record mortgage rates that the Government have imposed in 1980 and this year.

4.45 pm

The very people who could be flung out because of this wicked measure are being deprived of the opportunity of applying for council houses because the Government starved them of resources between 1979 and 1983. Any council will tell us that the backlog from those years is so great that, even if spending is greater than it was then, councils are still being starved of resources. They are not able to build houses to house the homeless, and people are unable to enter the housing market, especially in cities such as Edinburgh but no doubt in many other areas as well, because prices have shot up.

The Minister's failure to comment was an appalling omission. What does he expect people to do—not just the new widow or widower, but the children who have been thrown out on the streets? Does he not think that the rights of thousands of people should be greater than those of a few hundred private landlords?

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I speak on the basis of solidarity with my Scottish colleagues, as a member of Standing Committee G which dealt for four months with the English and Welsh legislation. The destruction of succession rights has run through both Bills, and we have been trying to understand the reasoning behind this vicious, nasty legislation. In fact, it is all about market forces in the private sector.

The property will already be in the private sector, and on the tenant's death it will remain in the private sector. Eviction will not add a single house to the market, as the house will already be in the market place, available for rent, and indeed will be tenanted on the basis that it is in the private sector. The Minister's argument does not hold water. There is no incentive.

Mr. McAllion: My hon. Friend is right to point out that not a single house will be added to the private sector, but another person will be added to the growing list of homeless people in Scotland.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend is quite correct, and I hope to prove the truth of what he has said.

Let me return to the pressures of market forces. The Minister is providing for a gun to be held at the head of the widow or widower. The unscrupulous landlord will say, "I have the power to have you out tomorrow, but I might be prepared to allow you to stay if you agree to a doubling of the rent, or reductions in the amount spent on repairs, or a shorter life span for your tenancy." He may even say, "Would you agree to sublet to another tenant?" That is already happening. In my constituency tenancies are being divided to increase the landlord's share.

The Government are screwing the poorest in the community. Market forces are not about the equality of tenants in the market place. They provide an opportunity

[Mr. McCartney]

for the landlord to take as much as he can in rent and do as little as he can to provide facilities for the family renting his property.

The Bill also encourages the private sector to remove a property from the private rented sector. Private landlords will be encouraged to get rid of the tenant and sell the property as an asset. It does not necessarily mean that that property will pass to another private landlord or that it will be sold to another tenant. It could be sold for business purposes and the house could be sold as a shop or as a future site for an office block. That is already happening in the housing market in England and Wales.

If tenants are lucky they will be offered reduced tenancy rights and massive increases in rent. Alternatively, they will face homelessness. If the private landlord gets rid of those tenants it is possible for him to take the house out of the rented sector and sell it as a capital asset. Therefore, homelessness will increase and there will be a reduction in the number of houses available in the private rented sector. Given the reduction in capital investment available to local authorities, they will be unable to deal with the homeless problem as it increases. That is the reality of the Government's proposals.

The Minister is not ignorant of the facts and he knows precisely what he is doing. He believes in private market forces, not in the quality of the private rented sector or the ability of a tenant to obtain a tenancy agreement that charges an affordable rent. The Bill, which is petty and vindictive, will be transferred to England and Wales. We shall not forget the Minister for this treacherous piece of legislation.

Question put and agreed to.

Amendment (a) in lieu of the Lords amendment agreed to.

Clause 17

FIXING OF TERMS OF STATUTORY ASSURED TENANCY

Lords amendment: No. 5, in page 11, line 16, after "below" insert "in the prescribed form".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 10.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Tenants and landlords have the right under the Bill to apply to the rent assessment committee for a determination of rent or of other conditions of the tenancy. However, without Lords amendments Nos. 5 and 10, only an application from a tenant under a short assured tenancy needs to be in a specific form prescribed by regulations. We believe that it would make for simplicity for tenants and landlords in making their applications, and for the rent assessment committee in processing them, if they are all in a form set out in regulations. That is what the two amendments achieve.

Mr. Home Robertson: I welcome the fact that my hon. Friends, together with the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), took the opportunity afforded by the previous amendment to have a fairly wide-ranging debate on the principles of the Bill. Lords amendment No. 5 is concerned with rents—another fundamental aspect of the Bill.

In response to my intervention in his earlier speech, the Minister candidly confirmed that Lords amendment No. 4 means simply that the widow of a successor tenant will be exposed to the threat of summary eviction. That is one of the things that the Government are proposing to do to encourage the private sector, private speculation and private landlordism.

The entire Bill concerns increasing rents and reducing tenants' security in the private sector. I suspect that that is in the vain hope that there will be a rebirth of private landlordism in Scotland. The Labour party does not want that.

Lords amendments Nos. 5 and 10 deal with the procedures for a tenant to refer the terms and rent of a new statutory assured tenancy to the rent assessment committee. According to the amendment, the application to the committee must be in a prescribed form. The fact that it will be in a prescribed form according to a prescribed procedure and timetable will be another obstacle to tenants who want to secure their rights under the Bill—given the limited rights that will be left to them.

It would be helpful if the Minister could say something about the interesting concept of an "affordable rent". The Government say that they want market rents so that private landlords can make a profit. On the other hand, the Government say that they will ensure that those rents are affordable and that there will be sufficient back-up to ensure that. Housing associations, Shelter and others have expressed grave concern about that.

Have the Government had any further thoughts about the concept of affordable rent? How on earth do they propose to ensure that tenants can afford the rents that are likely to be charged, given that a sellers' market already exists in Scotland? There is a gross shortage of housing in Scotland. Any hon. Member or councillor in Scotland who comes face to face with his or her constituents must be aware that an intolerable number of people are living in overcrowded accommodation. An intolerable number are stuck on housing waiting lists or in bad housing.

Because of the present housing crisis there is a sellers' market in Scotland. Given a free market, landlords will be able to charge high rents. What protection will be given to tenants? I shall return to this matter when discussing Lords amendment No. 17, which would ensure that tenants have the information that they need to assert what is left of their limited rights.

Given that the Minister was candid enough to come clean and admit that he is quite happy at the prospect of widows being evicted in Scotland, will he now come clean about the future high rents?

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Following what my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) said, I should like to quote a specific example from the Secretary of State's constituency. I hope that the Minister will comment on it.

A council house in the Wester Hailes estate had been bought from a tenant and sold on to a private landlord. One of the local councillors in that area had to deal with the subsequent tenant who was paying the private landlord £90 a week rent and rates for a flat which would normally go at £30 a week. That tenant was paying £28 more than the housing benefit limit just to have a roof over her head.

That house in Murrayburn Park in Wester Hailes is only one of a number of examples that are now coming to the attention of many councillors and Members of Parliament. Certainly the landlord would consider that £90 was an affordable rent, but the tenant did not. The local councillor, John Innes said:

"This case is an example of the unscrupulous and unfair actions of private landlords exploiting those in desperate need of housing".

The Minister may say that the affordability of rents will be regulated in some way, but that is not good enough. The tenant in that case had to move out of the house and had to be housed by the council because she was sending herself into virtual penury as a result of the rent that she was paying to her landlord—what the Government would describe as a "caring landlord".

Many people will find themselves in a similar position to that lady. A tenant may be charged a rent that is way above the threshold that the Government consider reasonable; under the Bill there is no set limit. Any advice given to tenants to register for a fair rent assessment is discarded because the tenant is understandably frightened of harassment from the landlord.

The article in the *Wester Hailes Sentinel* will be the first of many such articles and I take no comfort from that. It is news only because it happened in the Secretary of State's constituency. The laws over which the Secretary of State presides are inadequate. It is because the Secretary of State and his Ministers have, time and time again, rejected the requests that I, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) and others have made for tougher regulations on private landlords, that people are now in such difficulty.

In common with my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) I await the Minister's reply with interest.

Mr. Bill Walker: I wish to respond to the comments made by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) about a specific case. The hon. Gentleman will know, as all hon. Members know, that, sadly, people are exploited in many different ways. I have come across local authorities which have been very poor and bad landlords. I have had to intervene on behalf of people in difficult circumstances brought about by a non-caring, unsympathetic and very dictatorial landlord or local authority. That does not mean that all local authorities are bad. Nor does it mean that all landlords are bad.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, South cited a specific case. I trust that he will agree that, on specific cases of that type, the Member of Parliament is often the best person to deal with the problem. I trust that the hon. Gentleman suggested to the lady involved that, whatever her circumstances, she should consult her Member of Parliament.

5 pm

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: The woman did not consult me. I merely picked up a paper that is circulated widely in Edinburgh. The Member of Parliament thought that in general the provisions of the new housing legislation should help to prevent abuse. I do not disagree with the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker): if there are abuses in the public or private sectors they should be tackled. However, will the hon. Gentleman agree that this legislation does not adequately tackle such abuses? The case to which I have referred and that mentioned by the hon. Member for Tayside, North—which may be a recent case—have occurred after nine years of this Government being in office. What kind of legislative framework have the Government introduced to stop the abuse in the cases that have been referred to?

Mr. Walker: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's intervention, because it gives me an opportunity to state that the case that I am reciting—I can think of many others—went to the local authority ombudsman and was dealt with adequately. If someone goes through a Member of Parliament, he can get things done. In my experience, it is wise not to make judgments based on something written in a newspaper. I have learnt from experience that one should accept a specific case as such and then go into the details to find out the real problem. I believe that many things are written simply to draw attention to a paper or to help to sell it. They are written with little intention of solving the problems of the individuals involved.

Mr. Galloway: The newspaper to which reference has been made could not have increased its sales with the story because it is a free sheet with a wide circulation in Edinburgh.

Having found evidence of bad public sector landlords, the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) could refer the case to the ombudsman. To whom will we refer such cases of gross exploitation in the private sector? There is no ombudsman in the private sector. In all his experience of abuse by local authority landlords, has the hon. Gentleman ever heard of a case in which a local authority charged £90 a week for a flat in Wester Hailes or on an estate like it instead of the £30 a week charged when it was in the public sector?

Mr. Walker: I am very glad that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman because his intervention clearly relates to the time when he did not attend the Standing Committee while he was in Glasgow because of a little local difficulty. That meant that he missed some of the very important debates and he obviously has not had the opportunity to read thoroughly the reports of the debates.

With regard to the question of what one is charged for anything, I stress that nothing in life is free; someone pays for it. The distributors of a free sheet may have their reasons for wanting to increase circulation—for example, because more people will advertise. Whoever pays will have reasons for what they do. That is a general observation because I do not know the specific details. As I said to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South, if we look carefully at the details we may find that things are not quite as they are presented. That is why we should refer the matter to the hon. Member of Parliament responsible who can deal with the specifics in the way in which we in this House cannot.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton) *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) giving way?

Mr. Walker: No.

Madam Deputy Speaker: In that case, I call Mrs. Maria Fyfe.

Mrs. Fyfe: I will give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) at a suitable moment if he asks me.

Will the Minister tell us what the Government are planning to do to ensure, in the Government's words, that rents are "below market levels" and at "affordable levels" for those in lower-paid employment? Over recent months the Minister has given repeated assurances that that would be the case. However, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations has stated that there is nothing in the Bill to ensure that that happens. What will the Minister do to ensure that the rents will be affordable?

When the Minister replies to that, will he also reply to an earlier question from my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) about the clause affecting a bereaved spouse who remarries and then dies, leaving a widow or widower? A landlord might tell that person that he or she cannot stay unless they pay a higher rent. The Minister managed to get off the hook by refusing to answer that question. Perhaps he will answer it now as we are talking about rents. What will he do to protect people in that position?

If a Member of Parliament has taken up a problem on behalf of a constituent with a local authority, he does not have to go to the ombudsman to sort it out. In the vast majority of cases, the local authority will respond as well as it can, although it cannot always give people what they want because there are not enough houses. However, the authority will respond sympathetically and examine the question. If I write to a private sector landlord, he need not even bother to answer my letter because there is nothing in this legislation which requires him to pay any attention to any Member of Parliament or elected representative.

Mr. Heffer: I do not like to intervene in Scottish affairs, but this is not completely a Scottish affair. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) said that he had to deal with bad local authority landlords. We have all had cases where local authorities have not dealt with repairs as quickly as they should have. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) said, we know that if we or the local council intervenes, action will be taken sooner or later.

I have been a Member of this House longer than the hon. Member for Tayside, North. For my sins, I have been here 24 years. On the basis of my dealings with my constituents, most of whom live in private landlords' houses, I would cheerfully hang, draw and quarter most private landlords. I would do that on the basis of what they do not do when Members of Parliament approach them and ask them to take action over repairs.

When the Labour party was in government, we had legislation under which we could go to the local authority and sometimes force a landlord to do repairs and charge it to him. That is not possible any longer. The position is not quite the same as it used to be. Landlords can now ignore Members of Parliament or anyone else and they do. There is no ombudsman or anyone else to take the case to.

From my experience of private landlords, I can state that the quicker we get rid of them, the better it will be for the ordinary people who cannot afford to buy a house of their own. I have a thing about private landlords, as I have had to deal with them for a long time. I hate most of them. There are a few exceptions who have, on odd occasions, actually concerned themselves with the people who live in their homes. However, that is not true of most private landlords, who seek to extract the maximum amount of money from their tenants and to give the least in repairs in exchange.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer). If somebody were in a position to purchase his house, I would advise him to do so because that would provide him with much greater security. However, not everyone is in a position to do so.

No eviction can be summary. A landlord must have a ground for applying to the court for an order for possession. That is important.

It is for the landlord and tenant to decide what is affordable. The Department is working with the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations on factors to be taken into account and on collecting local information on rent levels. It might assist the House to know that we are conscious of the vital need to provide as much information as possible to tenants and landlords about their rights and responsibilities once the Bill comes into effect. Therefore, we shall be making widely available a booklet explaining the rights of assured tenants and those who remain regulated tenants; all existing private sector tenants will keep all their existing rights.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Will the Minister assure the House that the leaflet advising tenants will be more accurate than the leaflet on the poll tax, which was a deliberate deception, pretending that higher levels of rebates would be given and giving inaccurate figures of the levels at which the community charge will be set?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We are a little in advance of our business.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall not anticipate the future debate, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that the booklets will be thorough. They will explain the rights of assured tenants. A separate booklet will explain the rights of all existing private sector tenants. That includes all existing protected and statutory tenants under The Rent (Scotland) Act 1984.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): I am sure that the Minister will have noticed that, in his eagerness to make some rather cheap remarks about my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway), the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) refused to answer the question that was put to him. Will the Minister answer the question? We know that a tenant in the public sector has recourse to an ombudsman in the case of maladministration, gross overcharging or whatever, but can he tell us in simple terms what a private sector tenant will do in the event of such maladministration or gross overcharging?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: All existing tenants will have exactly the same rights as they have at present. That will be spelt out in great detail in the booklet. Who will be the best person to take a matter up with depends on the circumstances of the case. A matter concerning housing benefit would be best dealt with by the Department of Social Security. The booklets should be ready before the new provisions come into force and will deal with matters in an easily understandable question and answer form.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): How does the Minister expect a landlord and his potential tenant to arrive at an

agreed rent? Can he imagine a tenant knocking on the landlord's door saying, "Look here, Mr. Landlord. I cannot afford your £90 rent. I can afford only £30 a week. Will you agree to that?" How will such agreements be reached between landlords and tenants? Is not the reality that a person who does not have £90 a week will remain homeless?

5.15 pm

Mr. McAllion: In the course of the last debate a question arose about the right of succession of spouses. The only new response was that landlords would have to negotiate with the spouses to ensure that eventualities such as those that we described would not come to pass. As I understand it, Lords amendment No. 5 deals with the notice that would have to be given to fix the terms for the renewal of an assured tenancy. Indeed, if the tenant was unhappy with the terms of the assured tenancy he could refer that notice to a rent assessment committee to determine whether the terms were reasonable under a contractual assured tenancy.

Could a tenant who was unable to negotiate with a sympathetic landlord a contract which included the spouse's right to succeed to a tenancy, take the matter to the rent assessment committee, saying that it was reasonable for that to be included in the terms of the assured tenancy, or would this legislation preclude such tenants approaching the rent assessment committee?

This is an historic day, because this is the 10th anniversary of the election to the House of my hon. Friend for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). His was a famous by-election victory. The Conservatives were expected to win but, as always in Scotland, the Labour party won. I would be grateful if the Minister would address himself to the question whether such a tenant could go to a rent assessment committee to ask it to determine whether it would be reasonable to set aside the terms of the agreement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This is the third time that I have spoken on the amendment, so with the leave of the House I shall say that, if the landlord puts forward proposals that a tenant considers unacceptable, I would strongly advise him to find a different landlord. The premise upon which the legislation is based is that the private rented sector will be revived, making more choice available.

Dr. Reid: Can the Minister give me one instance from his experience of a hire purchase company telephoning somebody with a hire purchase agreement to ask them whether they agreed with the rate of interest to be charged because the company was anxious to reach that figure by agreement, not by diktat?

Mr. Galloway: There have been many historic misstatements in the course of the Government's life, from the unemployed being enjoined to get on their bikes to look for work to the one that has just been uttered by the Minister with responsibility for Scottish housing. With a dire shortage of housing and a gross over-supply of people looking for the right kind of housing, people who are vulnerable economically are being told that they should eat cake if there is no bread—if they cannot reach agreement with their landlords, they should look for another. If ever any statement suggested that the Minister lives on a completely different planet from most Scottish people looking for housing, it was that.

Here we are down memory lane again finding landlords with sheepskin coats, big gold rings, chains—and alsatian dogs, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) says—spivs, who are all too amenable to pleasant negotiations with the poor people who happen to be in their clutches and have to live in their crumbling tenements, flats and houses. They are all too ready to sit down and negotiate an affordable rent, the speed of repairs or how bright the light on the dark and dingy stairs should be. They are all too willing to meet the tenants or their representatives at any time to drive a fair bargain with them. If, at the end of the day, despite the eminent reasonableness of the spivs in sheepskin coats, no agreement can be reached, the tenant need only pack up his bags, get on his bike and look for another landlord with whom to reach a compatible agreement. That is a fantasy —a nightmare offered by the Government. The pitiful excuses for the legislation that the Minister is offering us are enough to make me want to demand his resignation.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 19

NOTICE OF PROCEEDINGS FOR POSSESSION

Lords amendment: No. 6, in page 13, line 28, at end insert—

"(7) A notice under this section shall cease to have effect 6 months after the date on or after which the proceedings for possession to which it relates could have been raised."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Home Robertson: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, amendment (a) leave out '6' and insert '2'.

I take it that we may also discuss amendment (b), in line 4, at end insert

'and no further notice may be served within a period of six months after the lapse of a notice under this subsection'.

The Lords amendment means that an eviction notice will lapse six months after the proceedings could have been raised. I suppose that that may be a small blessing. Without it the threat of eviction could hang over tenants more or less permanently. However, it does not take us much further forward, because the landlord can simply issue a new notice. Amendment (a) would further reduce the uncertainty facing a tenant by reducing the lifespan of an eviction notice to two months. More important, amendment (b) would prevent a landlord from issuing another notice within six months of the lapse of the previous one. That would prevent the landlord from playing a cat and mouse game with his tenants and harassing them by repeatedly issuing notices to quit.

Harassment is already a feature among private landlords in Scotland, and it is likely to intensify as a result of this legislation. At my constituency surgery last Saturday, there was one young mother who was being threatened with violence by her landlord, who wanted to put her out of the house because she could not afford to pay the rent. The only advice that we could offer was that she should contact the police and seek protection. Such harassment is already happening and will become much easier under this legislation.

The Minister says, "Tenants can just go and find another landlord." In Scotland, the normal procedure

[Mr. Home Robertson]

would be for a person to seek a tenancy from the local authority, but that is the one thing that the Minister does not want prospective tenants in Scotland to be able to do, because the Government keep running down and eroding the provision of local authority and public sector housing in Scotland, as they are determined to get as much of that housing stock as possible into the private sector. I invite the Minister to consider the possibility of harassment by the repeated issuing of eviction notices, so that a tenant would be constantly living under the threat of eviction. I commend to the Minister in particular amendment (b).

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government cannot accept the proposed amendments to Lords amendment No. 6, as we believe that there is considerable doubt about whether a sheriff would treat as valid a notice served on a tenant many months before proceedings took place.

However, to put the matter beyond doubt, the Government agreed to placing a time limit on the lifespan of a notice. That is what we have done, and we have naturally used the same time limit as that which applies to notices served on public sector tenants. As a result, the notice is valid for six months after the earliest date on which possession proceedings could take place. That seems entirely sensible, and I see no reason to restrict the lifespan to two months as proposed by the amendments, thereby treating private sector tenants differently from those in the public sector.

I do not consider that a restriction on the issue of further notices would be appropriate. It is true that without amendment (b), a landlord could issue a series of notices and so keep a tenant under constant threat of proceedings. But if a landlord is so minded, at least the Lords amendment puts him to the trouble of issuing a notice every six months. If a landlord wishes to pursue the matter, he must go to court and through all the processes, and obviously the facts will be taken fully into acount by the court.

It must be borne in mind that there are many circumstances in which it would be perfectly reasonable for a landlord to serve another notice shortly after the expiry of an earlier one—for example, if the tenant falls into rent arrears for a second time, or, in general, where a ground for possession applies, then ceases to apply, then comes to apply again.

I must also point out that, however well intentioned, the amendments might occasionally encourage landlords to evict tenants. That would occur if a landlord used the issuing of a notice as a form of final warning; for example, to make the tenant bring his rent payments up to date or else face eviction—a relatively common practice in the public sector. When the lifespan of such a notice is six months after the earliest date when proceedings can take place, and when the landlord has the ability to issue further notices, he can be fairly relaxed about giving his tenant time to comply. But if the notice's lifespan is only two months and there is a restriction on issuing further notices, the tenant will have less time to comply and the landlord will be more likely to raise proceedings for eviction. I invite the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) not to press the amendments.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: I shall attempt to summarise the Minister's remarks: he thinks that there should be a six-month rule for both the public and the private sector, as against our amendment, which would provide one rule of six months for the public sector and one rule of two months for the private sector.

The growth in rent arrears has been mainly caused by the Government's policies in respect of housing benefits, which have restricted the payments available to tenants who entered agreements with both private and public sector landlords. Those restrictions on housing benefit have caused great hardship over the past seven months —as the Minister, his colleagues and all the rest of us know, and as the people who have been most affected by housing benefit restrictions know to their own cost.

The reason why we advocate a two-month rule for private landlords as against six months for public landlords is that the latter are geared up for changes in Government legislation. Their local Members of Parliament are advising them that the Government are cutting housing benefit and that that might have a horrendous impact—as it has in Edinburgh. Private landlords do not have any such mechanism. I know that that is true, because private landlords have contacted me asking, "Why is the council suddenly cutting the money available to the private tenant in my dwelling? I cannot hold off eviction proceedings for much longer." I have to explain to those private landlords that it is not the fault of the local authority but is the fault of the Government, and that has been admitted by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House.

While a council can, one way or another, wait more than six months for rent arrears to be paid by a cheque from the DSS, the private landlord often cannot do so. We want to ensure that any notice that is served must be acted on within a short period. We know that, with eight changes and cuts in housing benefit since 1983, there may be a ninth and a tenth on the way, and even more until we reach the 24 fiddles we have had on the unemployment statitistics. That is what worries us. We worry about the impact that this legislation will have on those people who are threatened with notices of eviction that hang over them for much longer than two months. If the period is limited to two months, attention will be focused more than ever on the Government of the day to ensure that changes in legislation such as that affecting housing benefit will not have the terrible impact that they have had in the past.

Mr. Doran: I am slightly out of step with my right hon. and hon. Friends because I welcome Lords amendment No. 6, which I see as being reasonable. If we shorten the period, we may encourage landlords to go to court much more quickly, rather than attempt to reach a negotiated settlement.

However, I am concerned at the Minister's rejection of amendment (b), which attempts to restrict the number of notices served. The Minister's brief comes from the vacuum, as I see it, that exists either in New St. Andrew's house or in Dover house. Certainly it does not appear to relate to the real world.

One of the most effective methods of harassing a tenant is the service of an eviction notice. From my experience as a solicitor who acted for many tenants who were in difficulties with their landlords, I know of numerous occasions when landlords wishing to avoid court proceedings, knowing that they cost money and create

difficulty, considered the service of an eviction notice as a first stage in the process of harassment. In most cases, until the tenant receives legal advice, he does not know that there is any difference, and assumes that a notice of eviction means that he must get out. Amendment (b) provides a valuable sanction in attempting to restrict the serving of notices and further to protect tenants.

One of the few benefits of the Bill—and we welcome it—is the improvement in the definition of and the increased penalties for harassment, contained in clause 35, which proposes a new subsection 2A(a) to section 22 of the 1984 Act. Does the Minister think that a repeated service of notice would constitute harassment? I think that it would, but I should be interested to know whether he thinks that the proposed new subsection would cover that.

5.30 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The normal reply of lawyers is that it always depends on the circumstances of the case. We have framed the grounds for possession to bring them in line with those for public sector tenants. A ground for possession can apply, cease to apply and then apply again.

I do not think that Opposition Members have put forward a convincing case for a different approach, and I therefore cannot accept the amendments.

Mr. Home Robertson: I am persuaded by the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) about the defects of amendment (a). I accept that the six months provision may be marginally better than two months. However, I remain worried about the subject of amendment (b).

The Minister acknowledged that it would be possible for a malicious landlord repeatedly to issue eviction notices. As my hon. Friends have already said, that is an acknowledged method of harassment of tenants, and the Minister has confirmed that landlords will be allowed to continue to do that. He said that landlords would have to go to the trouble of issuing a notice every six months. That is hardly an undue burden in this day of word processors. The Minister is deluding himself if he does not think that some landlords will set up shop in Scotland and be only too willing to take such action to keep their tenants under pressure. I am disappointed and angry that the Minister is not prepared to acknowledge the value of amendment (b).

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Clause 20

EXTENDED DISCRETION OF COURT IN POSSESSION CLAIMS

Lords amendment: No. 7, in page 14, line 3, leave out "rights of occupation under" and insert "occupancy rights under section 1 or 18 of".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 8.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The amendments improve the drafting of the Bill by specifying the relevant sections of the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981 and by using the correct Scottish terminology.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 8 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 9, in page 14, line 15, after "on" insert "the ground specified in section 30(1) of this Act or on".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment is designed to remove an anomaly in the Bill. It ensures that a sheriff may not sist, suspend or postpone proceedings or an order for possession when a short assured tenancy is involved. It simply brings the treatment of short assured tenancies in that respect into line with that of the other mandatory grounds for possession in schedule 5.

Mr. Doran: I am not quite sure what is intended by the amendment. Without it, would the sheriff have the right to suspend the operation of a notice to quit? If so, I want to say something about removing that power from the sheriff.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have in mind the example of an engineer working abroad, perhaps in the middle east, who lets his house for a year on a short assured tenancy. He could be severely prejudiced if the proceedings were sisted. It might be his only house. Landlords let on a short assured tenancy basis because they wish to be certain of gaining possession at the end of the tenancy when, for example, they might be returning from abroad. They need to be able to reoccupy what might be their only home. Tenants who accept short assured tenancies will be well aware of the period of tenancy and will have no expectation of retaining possession thereafter. A landlord who seeks an order for possession should not have to wait indefinitely for the order to be granted or to take effect.

Mr. Doran *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has already spoken once and must be aware that that is not in order.

Mr. McAllion: The Minister referred to a landlord who had let his house on a short assured tenancy and wanted repossession without having a fight in the courts. What is to prevent commercial landlords in Scotland from letting their properties on short assured tenancies and using this legislation as a way of evicting tenants so that they can put up rents? What protection is there against abuse of the proposed amendment by commercial landlords?

Mr. Hood: Does my hon. Friend agree that landlords will be tempted to opt for short assured tenancies not because they are going abroad for a year or two but to keep within the legislation? They could still ask a tenant for a 25 per cent. increase in rent—as already happens in London—and when that is refused could give four week's notice and then throw out the tenant. The tenancy will continue only for as long as the tenant pays the increases in rent. Is not that our fear about the legislation?

Mr. McAllion: My hon. Friend makes a fair point about a matter of great concern. The Minister cannot simply skate over it. I realise that Conservative Members think the world is full of kindly commercial landlords who

[Mr. McAllion]

are in business only to help tenants find housing at reasonable rents. Of course, Conservative Members may well be landlords; they are certainly not tenants. Most of them own substantial properties and have substantial incomes. They do not understand ordinary people living in Scotland.

The Minister knows that Shelter has produced figures showing that the waiting lists for council and housing association houses in Dundee have risen by 102 per cent. during the past seven years. People in Dundee do not have access to decent housing; there are too many people chasing too few houses. When the private sector does revive, it will be on a basis of short assured tenancies. People will accept them simply as a means of obtaining housing because there is nothing else available. The Minister must think of the problems that will confront those people when they are faced with eviction because they cannot pay a massive rent increase. It is possible that commercial landlords will abuse the social security system and use housing benefit to push up rents beyond what would be regarded as reasonable by ordinary people.

I draw the Minister's attention to a former children's home in my constituency. When it was under the control of the regional council, conditions were laid down relating to its use and it provided beds for between 30 and 35 children. The home has now passed into the hands of private sector landlords who have turned it into a hostel. Instead of providing 30 to 35 beds for children, it now provides 96 beds for adults. They expect 96 adults to live in a building that used to accommodate 35 children. That is how they exploit the poor—those who have no access to housing—and they are exploiting them to the best of their abilities. The Minister must face that problem and ensure that the House does not pass amendments that create loopholes that commercial landlords can use to exploit tenants on social security benefits.

Mrs. Fyfe: I do not think that many would dispute the right of a person to re-occupy his home when returning from abroad. Can the Minister give any figures for short assured tenancies that fall into that category? Can he give figures for commercial landlords who will look upon this aspect of the legislation with delight and seize the opportunity to evict with ease? I am sure that that figure will be very much larger than the figure for people returning from abroad.

I accuse the Minister of misleading the House by choosing that example, which appeared so reasonable and sensible, but not explaining the commercial landlord aspect. He did not cite the example of commercial landlords which is far more relevant to the poor people who will be their victims.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister said that, with this amendment, he is removing an anomaly from the Bill, but he is removing the sheriff's discretion. He is removing short assured tenancies from the sheriff's extended discretion in eviction proceedings. We regard that as another retrograde step to weaken the limited security of tenants with short assured tenancies. Under this provision, even if he may believe that the tenant has a strong case because of special circumstances, the sheriff will have no discretion whatever. This is an eviction Bill, and the amendment simply strengthens that aspect of it, and we deplore it.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall answer one or two questions of the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion). I query his assumption that tenancies will automatically be short assured tenancies when commercial landlords are involved. I query that assumption because the rent for a short assured tenancy is likely to be lower than that for an assured tenancy, because there is not the same security of tenure for the tenant. Therefore, the norm should be a lower rent. In any case, it is important that the booklet explaining tenants' rights should be made readily available, and hard work has been put into that. The tenant on a short assured tenancy may go to the rent assessment committee at any time if he wishes to raise a certain point.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 10 agreed to.

Clause 24

INCREASES OF RENT UNDER ASSURED TENANCIES

Lords amendment: No. 11, in page 15, line 33, leave out subsection (4) and insert—

"(4) Where a notice is served under subsection (1) above but the rent under the tenancy has previously been increased (whether by agreement or by virtue of a notice under subsection (1) above or a determination under section 25 below) the new rent shall take effect not earlier than the first anniversary of the date on which that increase took effect."

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment makes more explicit the provisions of clause 24(4). Our intention has always been that rent increases under this provision should not take place more often than once a year. In the form in which the provision left this House, the once a year limitation applied only to notices proposing increases. In practice, that will probably have the effect that we intended, but amendment No. 11 seeks to put the matter beyond any possibility of doubt.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister is displaying his usual charming innocence, but it does not take us much further forward. The amendment simply substitutes the provision that the new rent will not come into effect earlier than a year after the previous increase for the bar which stated that no further notice of increase could be served within a year of the previous one. An increase in rent may be delayed, but harassment by notice of rent increase can go on with impunity. That is what the Government want, and I fear that that is what will happen.

Mrs. Fyfe: I live in hope that the Minister will actually answer one of my questions. Just how often can there be a notice of rent increase, although the rent increases may be reduced to one a year? If a landlord may issue notices of rent increase over and again, that is an act of harassment in itself, and the Minister is doing absolutely nothing about it. Surely he knows that people fear notices of rent increase—even people in the public sector regard them as a threat to evict, although they are nothing of the kind. They are merely formal notices of intention to increase rent. If that action is repeated over and again, it will be taken as harassment, and rightly so.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: With the leave of the House, I inform the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) that the amendment makes explicit what it has always been our intention to make certain, that increases under the provision should not take place more often than once a year. All it does is to make certain what is a safeguard for tenants, and I am sure that the hon. Lady will accept that.

Mrs. Fyfe: On a point of order——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady has already spoken once on the amendment.

Mrs. Fyfe: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I beg the hon. Lady's pardon. I did not hear what she said.

Mrs. Fyfe: I specifically asked the Minister how often there could be a notice of intention, and he has failed to answer the question.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Lady knows that that is not a point of order for the Chair.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 25

DETERMINATION OF RENT BY RENT ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

Lords amendment: No. 12, in page 16, line 19, at end insert—

"(3A) Where any rates in respect of the house concerned are borne by the landlord or a superior landlord, the rent assessment committee shall make their determination under this section as if the rates were not so borne."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Home Robertson: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, amendment (a), in line 5, at end insert—

'and where a landlord has borne such rates as part of a tenancy agreement before 1st April 1989, and where a tenant has informed the Rent Assessment Committee about such terms, the Committee shall ensure that the rent is adjusted to take full account of the abolition of domestic rates'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 15 and 22.

5.45 pm

Mr. Home Robertson: The amendment is intended to deal with what I fear is the likelihood that some landlords will seek to take advantage of the poll tax to swindle their tenants. I know that several of my hon. Friends, particularly those representing Edinburgh constituencies, have already drawn attention to that potential problem. In several urban areas it is not uncommon for private landlords of perhaps tenement-type property to charge rents that also cover rates paid directly to the local authority.

If the rating system is to end, for the time being anyway, on 1 April 1989, tenants in that type of relief will become liable for the poll tax. But, as things stand, there is absolutely no guarantee that their landlords will reduce their rent payments to take account of the abolition of domestic rates. It is quite possible for a landlord to seek to have his cake and eat it, and for the tenant to end up paying the tax twice. Having previously paid an element of rent as a contribution towards rates, there is nothing to stop the landlord carrying on pocketing the difference, and the tenant will be liable to pay the poll tax. That is a serious threat, and it has been drawn to the attention of the House by hon. Members from constituencies that are likely to be affected.

I fear that it will be easy enough for tenants to be exploited under the new housing legislation that the Minister is talking about. Frankly, it would add injury to insult if tenants were to find themselves having to pay their local taxation twice—once to the local authority and a second time to the landlord, as a little bonus for the landlord in such circumstances.

The amendment requires the rent assessment committee to intervene in such cases and to ensure that the rent paid by the tenant to the landlord is reduced to take account of the fact that the landlord no longer has to pay rates to the local authority. It is absolutely imperative that there should be a safeguard of that nature, and I commend the amendment to the House.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have listened with care to what the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) has said, but I do not believe that his amendment is necessary. Lords amendment No. 12 is designed precisely to ensure that, whenever a rent assessment committee makes a determination of rent for an assured tenancy, that determination must be net of any payment in respect of rates. That means that the rent assessment committee decides rent and ignores any charge that the landlord may make in respect of rates. That is to be the case when the determination takes place before or after domestic rates are abolished on 1 April next year. In practice, the hon. Gentleman's amendment would add nothing to what Lords amendment No. 12 already provides.

I should respond to the concern of some Hon. Members about the position of tenants who pay part of their rent in respect of rates when the community charge replaces domestic rates next year.

Assured tenancies will only have been allowed in Scotland for a short time when domestic rates are abolished. So the vast majority of private sector tenants will still be regulated tenants, subject to the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984. Those tenants will, of course, retain their right to have a rent registered by their rent officer. Registered rents are net of rates, so no regulated tenant needs to be unsure about his position. Of course, I strongly recommend private tenants to become registered.

I would expect assured tenants, in negotiating the terms of their tenancy with their landlord, to ensure that any payment in respect of rates is clearly distinguished from their rent payment and ceases on 1 April 1989. A written lease, for which the Bill provides, should set out the terms of the tenancy clearly and the provisions for a writen agreement are an additional safeguard. In addition, there are provisions to allow tenants with short assured tenancies to refer their rents for a determination by the rent assessment committee in certain circumstances and RACs will determine rents net of rates. In other words, they will determine solely the rent, so tenants will know what their rents will be.

In general, there is no need for any tenant to pay his landlord anything for rates after April next year. The only difficulty is encouraging tenants to make use of the rights available to them. That problem is not confined to rates

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

and can be tackled only by a long-term common effort involving central and local government, and advice agencies.

If a landlord persists in seeking to charge a tenant a rent which includes a payment for rates, the tenant will have every right to refuse to pay the element in respect of rates. The landlord could not evict a tenant in those circumstances, unless he had valid grounds to do so under schedule 5 to the Bill or schedule 2 to the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984.

Mr. Galloway: Again, the Minister demonstrates a woeful misunderstanding of the realities of life in the private rented sector. A great number of my constituents are living under the yoke of private landlords. Many are young people who pay high rents for dingy rooms in dingy buildings in inner-city Glasgow. The great majority, or certainly a large number, are already paying their landlords an amount which is supposed to be calculated for rates. If I heard the Minister correctly, he said that he would expect the tenant to ensure by 1 April 1989 that he was netting the amount which is supposed to be for rates. What sort of an apology for government is that? The Government are throwing the onus on to the tenants.

Many tenants are not as legally trained or as adroit as the Minister, many are afraid of their landlords, many are from ethnic communities and are unsure of their ground, and many are young people with little experience of the housing market. Yet the Minister expects them to ensure by 1 April 1989 that they have netted the amount needed in rates. Surely it is the Government's responsibility to ensure that private landlords cannot exploit this situation.

We are not asking much, even of a Government who are clearly the landlords' friend. People in the Public Gallery who have been listening to the debate will know that by now. It is not asking much of such a Government to ask them to ensure that landlords are not making off with money that is supposed to be for rates when tenants will also have to pay the poll tax from 1 April.

The Government are again demonstrating a faith in private landlords which would be touching if it were not so repulsive. The Scottish people will look forward to the day when the last private landlord is strangled with the last copy of the *Scottish Daily Express*, to paraphrase Tom Nairn. The sooner that day comes the better.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) made an impassioned plea, but he probably did not listen to what my hon. Friend the Minister said. My hon. Friend stated clearly that tenants such as the hon. Gentleman described did not have assured tenancies. They will not be caught up in this until they renegotiate their tenancies after the Bill becomes law, if they decide so to do.

Mr. Galloway *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. The amendment deals with tenants who will be affected by the legislation after they become assured tenants. The tenants described by the hon. Gentleman do not fall into that category.

Mr. Hood: Only a few minutes ago we heard from the mouth of the Minister that he strongly recommended tenants to register straight away. The only conclusion to draw from that statement is that he knows, and we know, that tenants will be in the hands of shoepskin spivs. Did you hear that?

Mr. Walker: I imagine that the Chair heard everything that was said. No doubt the question was not intended for you, Madam Deputy Speaker, but for me. Whatever amusing incidents the hon. Gentleman finds in the debate, I find it much too serious for levity. If I sincerely believed what the hon. Member for Hillhead was saying—that all the tenants he described would be caught by the legislation—perhaps I could move towards his position, but that will not happen in the real world. The tenants will come under the old legislation for whatever tenancy they arranged.

I choose my words carefully, because both the hon. Gentleman and I know that many people in the real world are not operating under the constraints of the legislation tabled by successive Governments. As often as not, they have reached some private arrangement to meet their circumstances and we understand that. Therefore, they will not be caught up in this until they become assured tenants. For those reasons, the amendment does not apply to them.

Mrs. Fyfe: The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) has not attempted to assure us that these wonderful landlords from whom the milk of human kindness flows would never attempt to do anything so dastardly as to pretend that a rent which formerly included a rates element was now a realistic rent or charge too much for the new rent.

We can all recall earlier days when a former Member of this House, now Lord Carmichael of Kelvingrove, had to introduce a Bill to prevent private landlords from fraudulently charging too much for gas. At that time, private landlords could get away with jacking up meters to charge too much for gas which was supplied at a given rate by a nationalised industry. We all know what the conduct of private landlords can be like.

The Minister suggests that the answer for tenants caught in this trap is to appeal. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) eloquently pointed out the difficulties that face many members of the public when attempting to make such an appeal. They may not understand their rights or the language. Instead of leaving it to individual tenants to appeal, why does the Minister not call this what it is? It is fraud and there should be a police charge for it because it is as dishonest as stealing goods from a shop or money from people.

Mr. McAllion: Like the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) I try to live in the real world and for the most part I succeeded in doing so until I came here. Once one enters the doors of this Chamber one enters an unreal world.

In the real world it is common practice for rents to include some charge for rates. Indeed, not two miles from here is the private sector flat that I rent in Kennington, for which I am charged rent and rates combined—to the princely sum of £538 a month. If anyone here knows of any cheaper accommodation I should be pleased to hear about it. That flat is rented at a market rate freely negotiated between landlord and tenant. Its price reflects the shortage of such accommodation in London, and it is the sort of rent which Members of Parliament can afford,

but ordinary working class people in London cannot. They are being squeezed out to the margins, away from central London, by Tory councils and private sector landlords.

6 pm

The Minister said that my hon. Friend's amendment was not different from the Lords amendment, but of course it is. The Lords amendment says:

"The rent assessment committee shall make their determination . . . as if the rates were not so borne."

My hon. Friend's amendment says that the tenant can draw the attention of the rent assessment committee to the fact that the rates are included in the rent. That is a big difference. How will the rent assessment committee know the facts unless the tenant has the right to go to the committee and draw its attention to the fact that rent and rates have been combined and that the latter should be discounted in determining the rent?

The Lords amendment gives the tenant no such right. There is a shortage of accommodation. All the power and influence lies with the landlord, not the tenant, and the tenant must have the absolute right to defend such small rights as he has under the present legislation. He should have the right to go to the rent assessment committee and draw this to its attention, and the Minister should know that.

The Minister also said that most tenants would not be affected, because the provision takes effect only from 1 April, and most tenants hold regulated tenancies. I understand that an assured tenancy is supposed to be freely negotiated between landlord and tenant at the market rent. How can the market rent be assessed? People look at the rents being charged in the local area. So, in this case, rents in the regulated sector will be looked at, and they may well include a charge for rates. When assessing the rent for an assured tenancy, rents for regulated tenancies may well be taken into consideration, and they include a charge for rates. There is a serious possibility that people with assured tenancies may find themselves being charged for rates that are included in the rent, and rates charged in the area in which they happen to be trying to obtain a tenancy. The Minister should recognise that that is a real possibility.

If the Minister stands by the Lords amendment, the tenant will have no right to go to the rent assessment committee and draw its attention to these facts. It will be left to the committee to discover them in some mysterious way. Landlords and tenants are in an unequal relationship; many tenants will feel intimidated. The legislation should at least include a statutory right for tenants, enabling them to go to welfare rights officers and others and ask them to intercede for them with the rent assessment committee. The Lords amendment includes no such right, and will include none if it is passed unamended.

Mr. Doran: My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) raised an important point. I accept a great deal of what the Minister said, which may surprise him, but I have to tell him that some of it does not affect what happens in the real world.

We are focusing on the effect of the poll tax and what it will mean to people who live in rented accommodation. Most tenants, council and private sector, when asked what their rent is will give a global figure of £20, rather than identifying £15 for rent and £5 for rates.

Two categories of people will be seriously disadvantaged after 1 April 1989. The first are those who already pay rates to the landlord. The Minister is right to say that when rents and rates are paid as a global sum the tenant may have a right to recover after 1 April if there is a registered rent and the rates are separately identified. That, however, does not take account of the problem that this must be brought to the notice of tenants in some way. Most of them know that they pay a global figure and do not realise that they are paying extra for rates. I shall be interested to hear how the Government will attempt to make tenants aware of that.

The second group of people who will be at a disadvantage are those who live in areas of high pressure on housing, in which there is a shortage of rented accommodation of all kinds. Like most of my hon. Friends, I am fairly sure that there will be an increase in homelessness and in shortages of housing for rent. The private sector is not the panacea for that problem that the Government think it is. I see major problems ahead. Landlords will increasingly try to get around the legislation, although to a lesser extent than they do with the present legislation.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) said, there is already a great deal of pressure on rented accommodation here in London. I have never yet been to see a flat for rent in London without being asked to take a company lease so as to get around the English Rent Acts. The same thing will happen in high-pressure areas such as Glasgow, Edinburgh and even possibly Aberdeen, because of housing shortages.

I have tried to assess the implications for people in my area. For instance, a couple with an average rent will pay about £40 a week—just over £2,000 a year. That will include rates, because that is the sort of rent I would expect them to pay. Unless there is some way of notifying these people that, after 1 April 1989, they will be entitled to a reduction in their rent because of the introduction of the poll tax and the removal of the burden of domestic rates from landlords, that couple in Aberdeen will face the prospect of their housing costs increasing by about £520 a year. We expect a poll tax of about £260 a year in Aberdeen, and these people will face a real increase of 25 per cent. in their housing costs.

I accept what the Minister says. In an ideal world in which everyone knew his rights and could exercise them, this legislation might be adequate, but we need much more than that. My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian addressed that problem; the Government failed to do so.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister sought to play down the likely incidence of exploitation of tenants by the double charging of the equivalent of local authority taxation, saying that only a small number of people would be affected and that if they had registered rents, everything would be allright. We all know that a high proportion of rents in certain parts of Scotland are not registered. We know that many people pay rent and rates together to their private landlords, and it is not impossible that some landlords will try to carry on charging that equivalent charge after the poll tax comes into effect next year. So some tenants could have to go on paying the equivalent of rates to the landlord and the poll tax to their local authorities.

Perhaps our amendment is technically flawed; I think that was the point the Minister tried to make. I am convinced, however, that we are on to an important point here. The Government should grasp it and seek ways of

[Mr. Home Robertson]

protecting tenants in these circumstances. They could do that by accepting the amendment which, even if flawed, could still be tidied up in another place.

This is a genuinely important point of principle. A significant number of tenants could face exploitation as a result of this double charging and as some private landlords try to swindle their tenants. I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to join me in voting for the amendment to the Lords amendment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran), said that people would not know whether they were paying rates as part of their rents. They will not have to know, because any application to the rent assessment committee will mean that the committee will find out what the rent should be, and that is what the tenant will pay.

Mr. Doran: My point was that people who already have a registered rent and who pay rent and rates together will not be aware of any change in their rights on 1 April 1989 unless some special effort is made to draw it to their attention. This affects the vast majority of Scottish private tenants.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As I explained earlier, registered tenants now have their rents determined net of rates so no regulated tenants need be unsure of his position. The facts should be before him. The hon. Gentleman pressed hard for written leases. We are bringing those in and that will help, because they will be written into the terms of the tenancy.

We fully appreciate that after 1 April rent payments by tenants should not include a sum formerly paid in respect of rates. We do not want tenants to pay such sums plus community charge payments. Lords amendment No. 12 is designed to ensure that the rent assessment committee takes account of this in relation to applications for a rent determination. That reflects the Government's concern in the matter. For that reason, the amendment of the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) is unnecessary.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): The Minister seems to be missing the Opposition's point. Why should the onus be on the tenant? We are told that landlords will operate fair practices. Why should they not recognise immediately that they are honour bound to reduce rents by the amount that they were charging for rates? If a landlord keeps his rents at the same level and charges an amount for rates that he should not be charging, and if a rent assessment panel decides that that is the case, the landlord should be deemed to have committed a criminal offence. That would put a stop to any shenanigans and malpractices.

If tenants know the law, surely landlords should also know it and should carry out their duties so that tenants do not have to apply to an assessment panel. I have many years experience of tribunals and rent assessment panels and it was one field in which I was almost entirely unsuccessful. I raised about 400 cases and lost 398. I won on two occasions and the tenants were awarded a reduction in rent of 2p. Our people do not see rent assessment panels as fair and unprejudiced, and I urge the Minister to recognise the reasoning behind our amendment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: By leave of the House, I did not suggest that the onus should be on the tenant. I said that registered tenants have a right to have their rent registered by the rent officer and should exercise that right. I am sure that in the vast majority of cases they do that and will continue to do it. I stressed that if a landlord seeks to charge a rent which includes a payment for rates, the tenant will have every right to refuse to pay that element. The Opposition amendment is unnecessary.

Question put, That amendment (a) to Lords amendment be made:

The House divided: Ayes 162, Noes 226.

Division No. 483] **[8.13 pm**

AYES

Anderson, Donald	Fyfe, Maria
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Galbraith, Sam
Armstrong, Hilary	Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Ashdown, Paddy	George, Bruce
Ashton, Joe	Godman, Dr Norman A.
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Golding, Mrs Llin
Battle, John	Gordon, Mildred
Beckett, Margaret	Gould, Bryan
Beggs, Roy	Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Beith, A. J.	Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Grocott, Bruce
Bermingham, Gerald	Haynes, Frank
Blair, Tony	Heffer, Eric S.
Blunkett, David	Henderson, Doug
Boateng, Paul	Hinchliffe, David
Boyes, Roland	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Bradley, Keith	Home Robertson, John
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Hood, Jimmy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Howells, Geraint
Buckley, George J.	Hoyle, Doug
Caborn, Richard	Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Ingram, Adam
Clay, Bob	John, Brynmor
Clelland, David	Johnston, Sir Russell
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Cohen, Harry	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Coleman, Donald	Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	Kilfedder, James
Corbett, Robin	Lamond, James
Cousins, Jim	Leadbitter, Ted
Cummings, John	Lewis, Terry
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Litherland, Robert
Cunningham, Dr John	Livsey, Richard
Darling, Alistair	Lloyd, Tony *(Stratford)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Loyden, Eddie
Dewar, Donald	McAllion, John
Dixon, Don	McAvoy, Thomas
Dobson, Frank	McCartney, Ian
Doran, Frank	Macdonald, Calum A.
Douglas, Dick	McFall, John
Duffy, A. E. P.	McKelvey, William
Eadie, Alexander	McLeish, Henry
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*	Maclennan, Robert
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*	McNamara, Kevin
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*	McTaggart, Bob
Fearn, Ronald	McWilliam, John
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*	Madden, Max
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*	Mahon, Mrs Alice
Flannery, Martin	Marek, Dr John
Flynn, Paul	Maxton, John
Foster, Derek	Meacher, Michael
Foulkes, George	Michael, Alun

Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ys)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hat'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
McCrindle, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. David Maclean.

Question accordingly negatived.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 13, in page 16, line 19, at end insert—

"(3B) In any case where—

(a) a rent assessment committee have before them at the same time the reference of a notice under section 17(2) above relating to a tenancy (in this subsection referred to as "the section 17 reference") and the reference of a notice under section 24(1) above relating to the same tenancy (in this subsection referred to as "the section 24 reference"); and

(b) the date specified in the notice under section 17(2) above is not later than the first day of the new period specified in the notice under section 24(1) above; and

(c) the committee propose to hear the two references together,

the committee shall make a determination in relation to the section 17 reference before making their determination in relation to the section 24 reference and, accordingly, in such a case the reference in subsection (1)(b) above to the terms of the tenancy to which the notice relates shall be construed as a reference to those terms as varied by virtue of the determination made in relation to the section 17 reference."

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 14.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Amendment No. 13 is necessary to make clear in the Bill how a rent assessment committee is to proceed if it has to make two determinations at more or less the same time concerning the same tenancy. This could arise if a tenant were referring a proposed rent increase to the committee under clause 25, while at the same time either tenant or landlord were referring proposed changes in other terms of the tenancy under clause 17. Obviously, it makes sense for the committee to hear the two references together. In such cases, the committee should resolve the issue of what variation in tenancy terms is appropriate before considering the level of market rent to be determined. Therefore this amendment requires a rent assessment committee in these circumstances to determine the terms of the tenancy first no matter in what order the reference are actually received. The subsequent rent determination should then take account of the revised terms.

Amendment No. 14 simply corrects an error.

Mr. Home Robertson: Lords amendment No. 13 highlights the range of options being made available to landlords through this legislation. It provides for the order in which a rent assessment committee should determine a landlord's applications. If he were to decide on the blunderbuss approach to a tenant, it would have to deal first with the conversion of the tenancy into a short assured tenancy, which would involve loss of security and then, if the first option failed, with the increase in the rent of the original assured tenancy. This is not a happy prospect for Scottish tenants who fall into the trap set for them by the Government. I welcome the opportunity to highlight what is going on.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments 14 and 15 agreed to.

New Clause

PROHIBITION OF PREMIUMS ETC. ON ASSURED TENANCIES

Lords amendment: No. 16, before clause 27 insert the following new Clause—

" . Sections 82, 83 and 86 to 90 of the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984 (which make it an offence to require premiums and advance payment of rent in respect of protected tenancies and make related provision) shall apply in relation to assured tenancies as they apply in relation to protected tenancies (including protected tenancies which are regulated tenancies), but with the following modifications—

(a) section 83(5) shall not apply; and

(b) section 88(1) shall apply as if for the references to 12th August 1971 there were substituted references to the date of commencement of this section."

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) spoke with some passion about this on Second Reading and the amendment meets the point that he made.

Along with succession rights, which we have already discussed, I think that the issue relating to assured tenancies that caused most concern was premiums. The Bill, as introduced, contained no provisions relating to premiums. We felt that the operation of the market would work in due course to prevent the charging of unreasonable premiums. We still hold that view, but we recognise that in Scotland there has in effect been a full prohibition on premiums for tenancies for many years—since 1920.

We have also taken on board the many representations against premiums we received from hon. Members, from the other place and from organisations that have daily contact with those involved in the private rented sector. Therefore, we tabled this new clause, which simply applies the relevant provisions of part VIII of the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984 to assured tenancies as well as regulated tenancies. These provisions prohibiting premiums are already well established in Scotland, so there should be no difficulty in ensuring that they are fully understood by those involved.

I am sure the new clause will be welcomed by the House.

6.30 pm

Mr. Home Robertson: Although the Minister has confirmed that the prohibition on premiums has been well established in Scotland, that did not prevent the Government from trying to exclude the principle from the Bill. The fact that this is being presented as a concession must therefore highlight the oppressive nature of the legislation.

This is a sellers' market. There is a shortage of housing to rent in Scotland and, therefore, anyone with a decent house to rent can be certain that, if the house is in a desirable area, there will be many people wanting to rent it. Without such a safeguard, there is nothing to stop a landlord asking for rent in advance or a deposit which would be returnable at the conclusion of the tenancy. Without that provision, there would be the possibility of demanding key money from tenants who were desperate to find housing, given the present shortage.

The Minister has acknowledged that we have pressed the Government on this matter, both on the Floor of the House on Second Reading and in Committee. Although there is rejoicing in heaven when a sinner repents, the Minister will have to do better before there will be any rejoicing among tenants in Scotland. There was a serious risk that unscrupulous landlords would exploit the opportunity to extort key money from desperate prospective tenants. That practice should be illegal and I welcome the fact that the Minister has at least made this significant concession in respect of assured tenancies. However, I wish to press him a little further because, as I understand it, the prohibition does not apply to short assured tenancies. Perhaps he will confirm that it will still be possible for a landlord wanting to let a property on a short assured tenancy to demand key money.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is my understanding that the ban on premiums applies generally.

Mr. Home Robertson: That was not clear from my reading of the amendment and I am grateful to the Minister for confirming that point.

This is a significant step in the right direction. It should not have been necessary to drag the Government kicking and screaming into such a concession, but we welcome it.

Mr. McAllion: I was grateful to hear the assurance given by the Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) that this would also apply to short assured tenancies, but I see nothing in the Lords amendment that states specifically that it will apply to such tenancies. As I have often told the Minister, I have good grounds for not believing anything that Tory Ministers say with regard to Scotland, so the fact that he has said this tonight is not sufficient assurance. I would like him to tell me where in the Bill it is stated that there will be a prohibition on key money, not only for assured tenancies, but for short assured tenancies. It must be stated in the statute, if the Minister is going to make it stick in the Scottish courts. The fact that he might refer to it during a debate does not represent sufficient grounds upon which a tenant could go to a court and obtain a successful decision. The Minister has yet to address that central problem.

In the housing market in Scotland, where there is a shortage of housing and a sellers' market, there is every incentive for unscrupulous landlords to avoid the assured tenancies and to go for the short assured tenancies. We want to see in the Bill a prohibition on premiums or key money for short assured tenancies.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Perhaps I can assist the hon. Gentleman. He may not be aware that a short assured tenancy is a form of assured tenancy. That is the answer to his question and he can be reassured on that point.

Mr. McAllion: It may well be that a short assured tenancy is a form of assured tenancy, but the phrase "short assured tenancy" does not appear in the amendment. Various words are defined at the back of the Bill. The Minister is saying that it is defined in the Bill that assured tenancies include short assured tenancies, but there is nothing to that effect among the definitions at the back of the Bill.

Mrs. Fyfe: Before I comment on that matter, may I draw the attention of the House to the fact that 226 hon. Members voted against a previous amendment. That means that more than 220 people who walked through that Lobby voted to throw bereaved people out into the streets, without having heard a word of the debate.

The title in respect of amendment No. 16 on page 3 of the Lords Amendment Paper reads:

"Prohibitions of premiums etc. on assured tenancies".

If that means all tenancies, would it not be clearer to say so? Like my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), I am not at all certan whether what the Minister has just said at the Dispatch Box is the case and whether he intends the provision to apply to all tenancies.

Mr. Doran: I want to pursue that point because the Minister appears to be saying that, wherever there is a reference to assured tenancies in the Bill, that includes short assured tenancies and that that should apply to all tenants' rights. May we assume, therefore, that the short assured tenant has the same rights as the assured tenant, with the exceptions made in the Bill? I should be happy if the Minister could give me that assurance.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The answer is yes.

Question put and agreed to.

New Clause

DUTY OF LANDLORD UNDER ASSURED TENANCY TO PROVIDE WRITTEN TENANCY DOCUMENT AND WEEKLY RENT BOOK

Lords amendment: No 17, after clause 28 insert the following new clause:

".—(1) It shall be the duty of the landlord under an assured tenancy (of whatever duration)—

(a) to draw up a document stating (whether expressly or by reference) the terms of the tenancy;

(b) to ensure that it is so drawn up and executed that it is probative or holograph of the parties; and

(c) to give a copy of it to the tenant.

(2) On summary application by a tenant under an assured tenancy, the sheriff shall by order—

(a) where it appears to him that the landlord has failed to draw up a document which fairly reflects the existing terms of the tenancy, draw up such a document or, as the case may be, adjust accordingly the terms of such document as there is; and

(b) in any case, declare that the document (as originally drawn up or, where he has drawn it up or adjusted it, as so drawn up or adjusted) fairly reflects the terms of the assured tenancy;

and, where the sheriff has made such a declaration in relation to a document which he has drawn up or adjusted, it shall be deemed to have been duly executed by the parties as so drawn up or adjusted.

(3) A tenant shall not be required to make payment in respect of anything done under subsection (1) above.

(4) Where, under an assured tenancy, rent is payable weekly, it shall be the duty of the landlord to provide a rent book.

(5) A rent book shall contain such notices which shall be in such form and shall relate to such matters as may be prescribed and otherwise shall comply with such requirements as may be prescribed.

(6) If, at any time, the landlord fails to comply with any requirement imposed by or under subsection (4) or (5) above he and any person who on his behalf demands or receives rent in respect of the tenancy shall be liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale.

(7) Where an offence under subsection (6) above committed by a body corporate is proved to have been committed with the consent or connivance of, or to be attributable to any neglect on the part of, a director, manager, secretary or other similar officer of the body corporate, or a person purporting to act in any such capacity, he, as well as the body corporate, is guilty of an offence and liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Home Robertson: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, amendment (a), in subsection (1)(c) at end insert

'together with a copy of a document summarising tenants rights and duties under current legislation, including procedures for appeal against eviction or variations in terms or rent, which shall be made available by the Secretary of State'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this, we may also consider amendment (b), leave out 'subsection (1)' and insert 'subsections (1) or (2)'.

Mr. Home Robertson: Again, the fact that the provision for a written lease and rent book has had to be extracted from the Government as a concession must highlight the fundamentally oppressive nature of the Bill. Obviously, we welcome those concessions which we demanded in

[Mr. Home Robertson]

Committee and it is an important step in the right direction, but the provision should have been in the Bill in the first place.

The Bill lays out a minefield of dangers for tenants, which will not be easy to understand. I cite, for example, the procedures for referring rent increases to the rent assessment committee, the procedures for appeal to the sheriff against eviction and other complications that arise from the Bill. We shall have a mass of different types of tenancy in addition to the protected tenancies which will continue to apply in the public sector. There will be assured tenancies, statutory assured tenancies, short assured tenancies and other variations and permutations on those themes.

I genuinely fear that some tenants will be saddled with impossible rents or leases. They could even face eviction because they cannot understand or cope with the procedures set out in the Bill. That could be a particular problem for former secure tenants who have been accustomed to the security that applies in the public sector. The Government have made it clear that they intend as many secure tenants as possible from the public sector will be transferred into assured tenancies in the private sector in the coming months and years before we have an opportunity to repeal the legislation.

That will create many difficulties for those tenants. They will need advice, back-up and all the assistance that it is possible to give them. It is questionable whether the citizens advice bureau, organisations such as Shelter, local authorities and solicitors will be able to cope with the work load of advising tenants faced with repeated applications by landlords for increases in rent and repeated efforts by landlords to evict tenants or harass them under the provisions of the Bill. However, as the Government are responsible for this phenomenally complicated and oppressive system which they are trying to impose in Scotland, they should accept the duty to provide a comprehensive guide to the basic rights and duties of tenants, which, under this amendment, could be annexed to the lease. That would be genuinely helpful to tenants.

The Minister said that the Government are intending to produce a booklet. The fact that it is a booklet rather than a leaflet emphasises the point that we are wading into complicated legislation from the point of view of tenants in Scotland. It would be much more sensible and satisfactory if there were to be a clear summary of the rights and duties of tenants which could be annexed to every lease produced under the legislation so that a tenant would have in his possession a clear guide to his rights and duties to which he could refer. He would then know when he required further advice and whether he was within his rights when a landlord was abusing his rights. There is a need for this sort of information, and I commend the amendment to the House.

Mrs. Fyfe: I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), who has called for the production of a summary of tenants' duties and rights. I was a member of Glasgow district council, which spent a long time in genuine negotiation with representatives of various tenant associations and Glasgow council tenants to try to produce such a statement. The end result was a document which ran to several pages. That was only right, because there was so much detail on which tenants and council representatives had to be clear.

When it comes to tenants' rights, there has to be a list of exactly what types of repair the council will undertake and a similar list of the repairs that tenants are required to undertake. The list included fairly simple items. For example, when the rope on the pulley broke in the kitchen, the tenant was expected to replace it. If there were wiring problems or a ceiling fell down, the repair work was the council's responsibility. By and large, serious or major works were the responsibility of the council. Trivial or everyday matters were the responsibility of the tenant.

Council tenants have various duties, one of which is to pay the rent on time, while another is to wash the close regularly. Duties have to be described in detail because some people might genuinely not know exactly what is expected of them. That might well be the position of a young person who has never been a tenant before. Many councils are now encouraging and helping young people, who may be in their teens, in an understanding of their tenancies. Rights and duties must be spelt out in great detail so that everyone knows exactly where he stands.

The tenants of Glasgow district council welcomed the spelling out of their rights and duties. Those who represented the tenants' associations thought that the document produced by the council was the best that they had seen. That feeling was based on their experience of tenancy agreements throughout Scotland. If the Government were so minded, the Glasgow district council approach could be taken as an example of how to proceed. Unfortunately, they have not said anything so far about any intention to follow the practice of that council.

I urge the acceptance of the amendment because I cannot see how it could possibly have a harmful effect on any tenant or landlord. Each would know exactly where he stood if rights and duties were set out in the detail which I have described. Without that detail, landlords can get away with far too much. Surely the Minister does not wish landlords to escape their responsibilities.

When I was a tenant of a private landlord I had great difficulty in persuading the landlord that he should make my front door secure. It took two months to ensure that I had a door which would protect me from burglars. That is an example of the sort of problems that are faced by ordinary everyday parents, who may well be young persons. I was confronted with the problem while living in my first home, and it is typical of the difficulties that many tenants have to face. Rights and duties must be spelt out clearly so that everyone knows precisely where he is. I hope that the Minister will take the point on board.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Members for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) and for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe), and earlier, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran), have advanced a strong argument for ensuring that tenants are aware of their rights and responsibilities. I agree wholeheartedly with that view. The new assured tenancy system depends on both landlords and tenants being aware of their respective rights and responsibilities. It is because of our concern to ensure that tenants have the necessary information that we have provided the right, as set out in Lords amendment No. 17, for every tenant to have a written statement of the

terms of his tenancy. It is in the interests of both tenant and landlord that both of them are clear about the terms on which the let is taking place.

Many landlords already provide a written lease, but others, for whatever reason, do not. We have been persuaded that it is desirable to provide the safeguard that is represented by the amendment. Under the proposed new clause a landlord has a duty to give his tenant a written document that sets out the terms of the tenancy. The document must be drawn up at no cost to the tenant. The provision has been framed with the intention of giving private sector assured tenants a similar right to that which public sector tenants already have.

6.45 pm

We are taking other steps to ensure that tenants are aware of their rights. Whenever a landlord under an assured tenancy seeks repossession of his house, or proposes a change in the rent or other terms of the tenancy, he must serve the appropriate notice on his tenant. The notices will all be prescribed by regulations. They will include information for the tenant about his rights—for example, his right in some circumstances to refer the proposal to the rent assessment committee.

We believe that it is much more helpful for a tenant to obtain such information when he needs it rather than at the beginning of his tenancy when he might regard it as unimportant. We shall also be issuing a booklet that will give general information about assured tenancies for both landlords and tenants. It will be circulated widely and it will be an accessible source of information for all those involved. I hope to have the booklet published before the end of the year. I hope also that hon. Members will agree that we are taking seriously the need to ensure that tenants are aware of their rights. We shall continue to give the matter high priority.

Lords amendment No. 17 would have implications far beyond tenants' rights. It would give tenants the right to raise court proceedings at no cost. That proposal, whatever is merits in general terms, should not be dealt with at the very end of our consideration of a Bill. With Lords amendment No. 17 we have tried to give private sector tenants broadly the same rights on written leases as those that are enjoyed in the public sector. To go down the road that is proposed would be, in our view, to go too far. I hope that the amendments will not be pressed to a Division.

Mr. McAllion: My hon. Friends and I would not quarrel with a number of the Minister's remarks. It is necessary for tenants to have the information that they require so that they can protect their rights under this extremely complex Bill. That makes it even more strange that the Government Benches are almost empty. I have no doubt that Conservative Members will support the Government whenever a Division takes place, but it is clear that they have no understanding of the Bill's contents.

I agree with the Minister that there should be a duty upon the landlord to produce a written document which sets out the terms of the tenancy. For three hours we have been debating complex issues, such as a tenant's right to go to a rent assessment committee and require it to come to a judgment on whether the rent offered to him by the landlord includes some charge for rates following the decision to abolish domestic rates and impose a poll tax. The tenant has to know where he stands. It is unlikely that a written lease would make information of that sort available to the tenant.

Under the Bill, tenants will be subject to eight mandatory grounds for eviction and nine non-mandatory grounds. These provisions are set out in tight print on four pages of the Bill. That information will not be included in the written lease that is made available by the landlord. The tenant will not necessarily be aware of his rights.

The same applies to the clause that sets out the prohibition of premiums or key money. That will not be set out in the written lease that the landlord makes available to the tenant. How is the tenant to know of his rights? In effect, the Minister says, "That is too bad. He will have to wait until the end of the year." The provisions in the Bill will take effect on 1 April 1989, and the booklet to which the Minister has referred will be available, so he says, by the end of the year. I hope that he means this year and not the end of next year. I hope that it will be available to tenants when the Bill takes effect.

What information will be set out in the booklet? The Minister spoke about "general information". What information will that be? Will every right that a tenant has be set out in the booklet? Will it be a comprehensive guide of the sort that is suggested in the amendment? Will the booklet be made available to every tenant in the private sector?

I have been fighting against the imposition of the poll tax in Scotland, but at least the Government sent an explanatory booklet to everyone who was involved. It never could be said to set out the truth, but at least it was issued. Will every tenant be sent a booklet setting out his rights and responsibilities? Will he be warned in advance of the different elements of the Bill that will affect him? It is necessary that he should be so warned.

If a booklet explains to tenants their rights in relation to assured tenancies, will it compare the rights with those of secure tenants in the public sector? One of the main motivations for the Bill is to encourage people to move out of the public sector and into the private sector—on the basis of assured tenancies. How are people to judge whether that is good for them if they are not given a comprehensive list of information? Will the booklet contain only information about the rights of assured tenants or will it compare them with existing rights in the public sector or in regulated tenancies in the non-assured tenancy sector?

The Minister must address those problems because the Government have a responsibility. If they bring forward a major piece of housing legislation and impose it against the democratic mandate in Scotland, it is up to them to give tenants in Scotland a comprehensive guide about how their rights will be affected under this new and complex legislation. Tory Back Benchers may not give two hoots about the Bill and they may vote for it in ignorance and with contempt for what the Scottish people want. However, they should at least have the decency to inform the Scottish people about how the rights of tenants will change in the revamped private sector, but the Minister will not concede that. The Lords amendment may give a written lease, but it will not give comprehensive information about assured tenancies or about how they compare with secure tenancies in the public sector. The Minister has a responsibility to address that problem. I am not convinced that a booklet that contains general information will do that.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) believes that Tory Back Benchers do not care about the Lords amendment. The evidence is obvious—there are no Tory Back Benchers here, or at least no Scottish ones. I see only an English stray, the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn). He is no doubt welcome.

I do not understand, from hearing what the Minister has said, why he does not support amendment (a). Everything that he has said should be leading him to support it. He has said that he is keen that tenants should be informed about their rights, so he should accept amendment (a), which provides him with an ideal opportunity. It is important that there should be a document to summarise tenants' rights and duties under current legislation, including procedures for appeal against eviction or variations in terms of rent. It is right and proper that that should be made available by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

The Lords amendment, which the Minister supports, creates a duty on the landlord to provide a written tenancy document and a weekly rent book. Those are sensible and necessary provisions for tenants and are to be welcomed. Amendment (a) seeks to take that protection one step forward. I cannot agree with the Minister when he says that it goes too far. It is a simple, straightforward, sensible measure, which I hope that he will adopt. On several occasions, he has said that he is interested in informing tenants about their rights. Here is a practical opportunity for him to do so.

If information is to be supplied by a landlord, amendment (a) is surely a sensible and reasonable provision, which adds to the ability of a tenant to know his rights. Amendment (a) would assist tenants and give protection to individuals by ensuring that they are alerted to their legal rights. I support amendment (a) and ask the Minister to think again. It is not a step that goes too far and it should be sensibly accepted as part of the protection for tenants.

Dr. Reid: I should like to thank the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) for acknowledging the effective opposition by Labour Members in Committee. It is a testimony to his political integrity that he has done so, whereas many other hon. Members might not have been genuine and generous enough to acknowledge the fight put up by my hon. Friends.

I ask the Minister a simple question in two words—why not? He has taken the opportunity tonight to tell us about what the Government will do. He has not given one good reason why a reasonable amendment, which seeks to inform tenants of their rights under the Bill, should not be accepted.

This is a complex Bill. The work that has been put in and the length of the Committee and of the Bill itself are testimony to that complexity. Anyone knows, when he is renting, or, indeed, buying a house, how complex an operation that is. The Minister must know, as presumably he buys bigger houses than we do and has more complex details to work out. Thus, an already complex situation will be made far more so by the Bill.

The Minister must tell us why it is such a bad idea or an unreasonable demand that, in the midst of those technicalities that are being inflicted upon would-be tenants, we should ask that they be given a general guide, particularly when all the evidence of the Government's Acts shows how, when complex issues are not explained in a comprehensive and straightforward way, the people who lose are the consumers.

One has only to look at the lack of take-up of benefits. Despite all the good intentions of hon. Members on both sides of the House, because of the complexity of the benefits system—most benefits do not involve lawyers, tribunals or the legal system—most of those benefits are not taken up. That does not show an unwillingness on the part of the would-be beneficiaries to take up the benefits, but it shows complete ignorance, not through any fault of their own. They cannot gain access to information or to details about their rights and entitlements.

In certain spheres, the Government are intent on making sure that people know their rights. When it comes to trade unions, we are constantly told in the House that trade union members must have knowledge, must participate and be involved and, above all, must have their rights clearly outlined to them. Similarly, for consumers, there is now legislation to ensure that their rights are known to them. When it suits the Government, they are willing to undertake vast exercises of public information or, as has been said, public disinformation.

There was an example of that on the poll tax and also when this legislation was proposed, in regard to tenants of the Scottish Special Housing Association. No excuses or reasons were given by the Government for why they could not contact every member of the SSHA. The stamp machines were going 19 to the dozen and the letters were flying out of the Scottish Office at St. Andrew's house. Every single tenant of the SSHA was contacted. Incidentally, there was no ballot form in the envelope. However, when it suited the Government and when they wanted to put out their propaganda supporting their case for the Scottish Homes legislation, they managed to write individually to every one of those tenants.

When it comes to the Government's pet subjects, such as undermining the trade unions and propagating their views on Scottish Homes and the poll tax, why is it that there are no lengths that are considered too inordinate for the provision of information? But when we ask for a straightforward, simple guide to tenants' rights to be supplied to every one of the tenants, the Government do not give us a single reason why that should not be done.

I look forward to the Minister's answer. He should not tell us what he has done. Let us assume that we look upon what he has done as a sign of his benificence and benevolence. But we ask him why he cannot do what is asked in what must be judged by any objective observer to be an eminently reasonable amendment, which means that the people who will be most affected by the Bill will be given an idea of their rights under the legislation.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: When we started the Bill's long progress towards the Floor of the House on 19 January by embarking on the Committee stage, the Government had not even conceded the right of tenants to have anything in writing from their landlords. That was to be left to the market, to be negotiated freely between landlord and tenant. We have moved on a bit since then. If the booklet that the Minister has promised will be published had been published then, it would have been one of the shortest ever published by the Government. It would have contained the phrase, "All terms and conditions of rent are to be negotiated between the landlord and the tenant. Yours sincerely." We have moved on to what may well be an

alarming position for tenants. They will have the right to a written lease, which we wholeheartedly support, but not the right to an explanation of that lease.

7 pm

I am not a lawyer—I know that the Minister is—but I have no doubt that it would suit certain landlords to visit certain solicitors and draw up leases that were hard to understand and would enable them to say to their tenants, "This is all legal jargon, but basically it means X, Y and Z. Sign here." We have all been subjected to pressure to sign at the foot of a page that looks too complicated to read. The Lords amendment asks—and we ask—for a summary explanation of tenants' rights and duties.

While it is fundamentally important that tenants' rights are explained to them, it is also vital that their duties are explained so that they cannot at any stage be hoodwinked by their landlords. That is part of our basic objection to the way in which the Government have handled the matter. They have sided with the landlord time and again. They have moved from their position of 19 January not because they disagree suddenly with the landlords, or because they think that tenants deserve better protection and more information now than they did then; their sole reason is that they fear public opinion.

Since January we have gone through what was, for the Government, a humiliating round of local elections. The Conservatives could not take back cities such as Edinburgh: they could barely gain one or two seats there, and they were wiped out in such places as Glasgow. If he did any canvassing in Edinburgh, West, the Minister will know that that was because many tenants in both the private and the public sector fear that the Government wish to hand over them and their tenancies and to prejudice their children's rights to tenancies, and they have reacted against that. Public opinion has forced the Government to make this moderate concession.

Cannot the Minister now agree that there are no real barriers to issuing a summary statement which would help tenants to know their rights and obligations and the obligations of their landlords so that when tenant and landlord sit down with the legal document that represents the lease there is a legally binding explanation that helps to describe what might be too complicated for laymen such as myself to understand?

Mr. Doran: I apologise for the fact that other business prevented me from being present for earlier speeches. I heard the opening of the debate, however.

Once again my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) has raised an important point. It returns us to the issue that has been brought up throughout the debate, that of the real world. On paper, I am sure that many of us are pleased to see the Government cave in to the forceful arguments that we presented in Committee, when we insisted at every opportunity that tenants' basic rights should be protected. A fundamental part of those rights was the right to a written lease, which was to be removed. I am delighted that the Government now accept that principle. While we might have been happier with wording other than the "civil servantese" with which we have been dished up, progress is clearly being made.

My hon. Friend's point is valid. The lease is not a declaration of the tenant's rights and interests; it is simply an expression of the contract between the two parties. It makes no reference to the law that backs it up. We have seen fit to regulate this matter; here we still have a bit of Government intervention. Let me direct the Minister's attention to precedents of which he will be well aware. For example, under the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984, with the service of a notice to quit there is a statutory form setting out the tenant's rights and obligations as well as the landlord's obligations. That was done for good reasons. Parliament considered it important that when such a serious step was being taken the tenant should be fully advised of his or her rights.

We feel that the circumstances that we are now discussing are on all fours with that. The Bill will mean a considerable shift away from the rights of the tenant—which were the basis of the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984 and all the Acts that preceded it, right back to the Rent Act 1965—to the rights of the landlord. There is an imbalance. But, although we have hammered the point home as hard as we could, we have been able to shake the Government only a little. Opposition Members bitterly regret that they would not make the major shift that we wanted, because we believe that housing in Scotland will be profoundly affected.

The amendment seeks to achieve important but simple things. I find it rather difficult to understand why the Government have decided to produce a booklet, although I am delighted to hear that from the Minister today. Any information passed on to consumers—which tenants are—is welcome, as long as it is accurate and presented in an understandable form. I mentioned "civil servantese". It is important to write in ordinary plain English. There was a time when Governments attempted to do that, but they seem to be moving away from it again. We shall be discussing the documents on the community charge later this evening.

If the Minister has accepted the principle that information should be passed on to the tenant, why does he not accept the principle that that information should be targeted? The best way to target it is to oblige the landlord to include a schedule, just as he is entitled to present a notice to quit in a statutory form. Why cannot the tenant have a statutory declaration of his rights? It would be fairly simple to produce it by order, as is done in other contexts.

We are agreed on the principle that the information should be passed on to the tenant. We merely want to ensure that it reaches its source, and the simplest way in which to do that is to make it part of the lease. If he accepts the principle, why cannot the Minister accept this simple amendment?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government are fully aware that the smooth working of the assured tenancy system requires that tenants and landlords are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities. The provisions for a written lease are extremely important and should not be underestimated. We believe that the landlord must provide the tenant with a written document setting out the tenancy terms in the prescribed form, and notices for use by tenants and landlords will contain information on the rights of both.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) said that that was not enough, and I agree with him: it is not enough in itself. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) asked whether the booklet would be comprehensive. It certainly will be. It will set out all the

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

major rights and all the implications. It will also be freely available to every private sector tenant, although it will be impossible to ensure that every tenant picks one up.

The situation is not the same with SSHA tenants. There are now 80,000 such tenants, but there are no assured tenants—of course, not everyone wants to become an assured tenant. The booklet, however, will be widely and freely available.

Dr. Reid: The situation may not be exactly the same as that which applies to SSHA tenants, but I gave that example to illustrate the point. The Minister says that it will be possible to make sure that every tenant picks up a booklet, and precisely the same situation applies to benefits.

Is it the Minister's intention to ensure that the Bill operates on behalf of the consumer, about whom the Government constantly speak and to whom they direct their attention and propaganda? Does the Minister accept that, as in the case of benefits, consumers may not pick up a booklet because of a lack of knowledge and because they may be unaware of their rights? Therefore, that consumer will not gain the benefits of the Bill.

If the Minister agrees with that, why does he not follow what our amendment suggests? Procedures for appeals against conviction or variations in terms should be included with a summary of tenants' rights and duties under current legislation. The Minister should ensure that there is no question of a tenant not picking up a booklet by making it available to him at the time he enters into the contract.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I see the logic of the hon. Gentleman's question, but we believe that the combination of a written lease and a booklet, which will be widely and freely available, should provide the solution. I accept, however, that the booklet must be genuinely widely available.

Mr. McAllion *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am sorry, but I shall not give way, because of time.

Ironically, the hon. Member for Dundee, East cited the example of the information sent out regarding the community charge. It almost appeared that the hon. Gentleman was citing it as a good example of such communications. We shall bear in mind what he said.

Mr. McAllion *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have dealt with that point and I shall not give way.

The hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) asked about the second Opposition amendment, which would give the right to raise court proceedings at no cost. We do not believe that the Opposition have considered the wide-ranging implications of that for the Scottish legal system. To accept it would be foolhardy.

Mr. Doran *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not certain whether the Minister is intending to give way or not.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Home Robertson.

Mr. Home Robertson: I do not think that the Minister knows where he is either.

I acknowledge the generous words of the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) who rightly acknowledged that we have done an effective job in opposing this Bill by putting forward constructive amendments. I sincerely hope that that spirit of good will will spill on to the streets of Govan before too long.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: I believe that this is a sensible amendment and I am happy to support it in the same way as the colleagues of the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) supported my amendments during earlier proceedings on this Bill. It is a sensible amendment, which protects Scottish tenants and therefore it is well worth supporting, irrespective of party.

Mr. Home Robertson: The hon. Gentleman must forgive me, but I was not aware that he had taken a great deal of interest in this Bill up until now, although, fair enough, I recall that he tabled one amendment on Report. I will leave it at that.

The Minister has acknowledged the need for tenants to have information. He rather rashly said that, under Lords amendment No. 17, the lease would have to be provided in a prescribed form. I note that the Lords amendment refers to a prescribed form for rent books, but I see no reference to a prescribed format for leases. Therefore, I fear that leases could be curt documents setting out the rent to be paid and the duties of the tenant without giving any clear advice about the tenant's rights.

The Minister has made much of the booklet that the Government intend to publish. I echo my hon. Friends' welcome of the fact that that information will be published. However, I share the anxiety of my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) about whether the booklet will be another propaganda leaflet on behalf of the Conservative Government.

Mr. McAllion: Does my hon. Friend agree that if it was intended to be a propaganda leaflet issued on behalf of the Government, it would be given to every private sector tenant and they would not have to go to collect it? After all, that is the case with the poll tax booklet, which is being published by the Government.

Mr. Home Robertson: My hon. Friend is right, and there are precedents to confirm his fears.

Under the present Government, the track record of the Scottish information office is not a happy one. It has allowed itself to be used as a mouthpiece by the Conservative party and it has not disseminated information to citizens or, as in this case, to tenants.

I am inclined to stick to my guns on our amendment. Let us consider the type of problem that may occur. A tenant in an assured tenancy may receive a notice of an increase in rent or a notice of eviction. Whom does he go to to find out his rights? How does he know how to go about appealing against an increase in rent or a variation in terms? How does he know what the correct format should be for appealing against an eviction order? How will he know the timetable for such an appeal? These are complicated affairs and unless there is clear advice, readily available, to tenants there is a genuine fear that they will be harassed or exploited by their landlords.

7.15 pm

Dr. Reid: I urge my hon. Friend to stick to his guns. The Government have run on the platform of tenants' rights in Scotland. They forced through the House—against the best interests of Scottish tenants—the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980. Therefore, it would be a supreme irony if Conservative Members voted on the basis that they are all for tenants' rights, but they do not want those tenants to know about them.

Mr. Home Robertson: That is exactly what the Minister is saying by resisting my amendment. It is a simple amendment which would require the Secretary of State to compile an up-to-date summary of tenants' rights, which could be annexed to every lease that is agreed between a landlord and tenant under the new assured tenancy system. That is not a particularly onerous burden for the Scottish Office. I have no doubt that if the Scottish Office wanted to disseminate propaganda it would do so cheerfully.

A summary of tenants' rights would be the mechanism whereby tenants could obtain urgently needed advice. The tenant may be lucky enough to have to hand a copy of the booklet. That might tell him how he should go about appealing against a rent increase or an eviction order. Surely it would be infinitely more satisfactory if that urgently needed information were annexed to the lease. That is what we are demanding and I invite my hon. Friends to join me in supporting the amendment.

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:

The House divided: Ayes 152, Noes 210.

Division No. 454] **[7.18 pm**

AYES

Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Cleiland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Ingram, Adam
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Allen Adams.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorst, John

Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lang, Ian
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

Question accordingly negatived.
Lords amendment agreed to.

New Clause

RIGHT OF SUCCESSION OF SPOUSE

Lords amendment: No. 18, after clause 28 insert the following new clause—

".—(1) In any case where—

(a) the sole tenant under an assured tenancy dies; and
(b) immediately before the death the tenant's spouse was occupying the house as his or her only or principal home; and
(c) the tenant was not himself a successor as explained in subsection (2) or (3) below,

the tenant's spouse shall, as from the death and for so long as he or she retains possession of the house without being entitled to do so under a contractual tenancy, be entitled to a statutory assured tenancy of the house.

(2) For the purposes of this section, a tenant was a successor in relation to a tenancy—

(a) if the tenancy had become vested in him either by virtue of this section or under the will or intestacy of a previous tenant; or
(b) if he was a statutory assured tenant by virtue of section 3A of the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984; or
(c) if at some time before the tenant's death the tenancy was a joint tenancy held by him and one or more other persons and, prior to his death, he had become the sole tenant by survivorship; or
(d) in the case of a tenancy (hereinafter referred to as "the new tenancy") which was granted to him (alone or jointly with others) if—
  (i) at some time before the grant of the new tenancy he was, by virtue of paragraph (a), (b) or (c) above, a successor to an earlier tenancy of the same or substantially the same house as is let under the new tenancy; and
  (ii) at all times since he became such a successor he has been a tenant (alone or jointly with others) of the house which is let under the new tenancy or of a house which is substantially the same as that house.

(3) No order for possession under Ground 7 of Schedule 5 to this Act shall be made—

(a) in relation to a case to which this section relates by virtue of subsection (1) above; or
(b) where the tenant's spouse succeeds to the tenancy under the will or intestacy of the tenant.

(4) For the purposes of this section a person who was living with the tenant at the time of the tenant's death as his or her wife or husband shall be treated as the tenant's spouse."

Read a Second time.

Amendment (a) proposed to the Lords amendment: in line 5, leave out from 'house' to end of line 7.—*[Mr. Home Robertson.]*

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 151, Noes 202.

Division No. 455] **[7.30 pm**

AYES

Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Cleiland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*

Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Ingram, Adam
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neillist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Allen Adams.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lang, Ian
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

Question accordingly negatived.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Clause 31

REFERENCE OF EXCESSIVE RENTS TO RENT ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

Lords amendment: No. 20, in page 18, line 35, leave out "of similar tenancies"

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 21.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: These amendments relate to a point that was first raised by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) when we discussed the Bill in Standing Committee. He was concerned that there were likely to be very few short assured tenancies in any one locality in rural areas in Scotland. In such circumstances, the rent assessment committee might be unable to make a determination of rent under clause 31 because of a lack of similar tenancies of similar houses.

We have taken on board that concern. These amendments make it clear that a rent committee determining the rent of a short assured tenancy should consider the rents of all assured tenancies, whether short or not, as evidence for the appropriate market level of rent. However, when reaching its determination, clearly the committee will bear in mind that rents for short assured tenancies will often be lower than those for ordinary assured tenancies. I hope that that change meets with the approval of the House.

Mr. Home Robertson: The only query that arises from the Minister's speech is that not very long ago he was saying that a short assured tenancy and an assured tenancy were one and the same thing, so far as concerned the provisions of the Bill. Now he is saying that there will have to be an amendment to establish that they are the same for the purposes of considerations by rent assessment committees. Perhaps the Minister will return to that point.

This extension of the scope of the rent assessment committee to compare a rent that is the subject of an appeal against other rents charged in the locality, which now includes those for all assured tenancies and not just short assured tenancies, is obviously a minor improvement and one that we accept. However, perhaps the Minister will take this opportunity to address himself to the fact that the market rent likely to be established through this process will almost certainly be considerably higher in many cases than that which many people would regard as being affordable. How will that gap be bridged?

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) spoke of what is an affordable rent and what is a market rent. Obviously he does not realise that if a rent is set at a level that is not affordable, the property will not be let—and that would not be in the interests of landlords in the rural areas, of which he probably knows much more than I do, having himself been a landlord. The market will reflect the situation in whatever locality, and if landlords are determined to let their properties, they will fix rents at levels that people can afford.

Lord James Hamilton-Douglas: I repeat my earlier comment—that a short assured tenancy is a form of assured tenancy. The particular concerns voiced in Committee were to the effect that there would not be sufficient evidence available in respect of short assured tenancies. These amendments meet that point, and I agree with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker).

Mr. McAllion: The Minister said that the rent assessment committee will only be able to operate on the basis that it will be able to compare the rents of similar short assured tenancies in the locality. What will happen in the early stages, when the Act is first applied, and when assured and short assured tenancies are first set up? Will tenants have no recourse to a rent assessment committee because there will be insufficient numbers of assured and short assured tenancies with which to compare their rents? How will a market rent be arrived at in those circumstances?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I can only say to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) that I have asked exactly the same question that he has just asked.

Mr. McAllion: Will the Minister tell the House if he got an answer?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I certainly did get an answer, which was that there are plenty of evidence and precedents to give indications, and that there will be no shortage of expertise among those serving on rent assessment committees. We believe that it will not be a problem. The amendments go a long way to meeting the worries that were expressed.

Mr. McAllion: Will the Minister tell the House what evidence there is other than comparing other short assured and assured tenancy rents? What other evidence can be taken into consideration?

Mr. Home Robertson: Will it be the weather?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Basically, the rent assessment committees will be well aware of market rents that have been fixed in comparable circumstances in Scotland. I have no doubt that they will take them into account.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 21 and 22 agreed to.

Clause 33

DAMAGES FOR UNLAWFUL EVICTION

Lords amendment: No. 23, in page 19, line 22, leave out "3rd December 1987" and insert "6th July 1988"

7.45 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 24, 25 and 26, and amendment (a).

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: These amendments all relate to the new right to damages that clause 33 gives to an illegally evicted tenant. As I believe all right hon. and hon. Members agree, the increased protection and

compensation for harassed and illegally evicted tenants that the Bill introduces are an important element in our reform of the private rented sector.

Amendment No. 24 removes from clause 33(2) the need for an illegally evicted tenant to prove that his former landlord intended to force him to leave. Proof of intention has always been difficult to achieve. In clause 35, dealing with the new offence of harassment, the test is already that the landlord must only have known or have had reasonable cause to believe that his actions would make his tenant leave. Therefore, amendment No. 24 brings the provisions of clause 33 into line. Because the offence leading to a liability to damages is changed, it is necessary to change also the date from which liability can arise to that when the changes were first introduced to Parliament. That is what amendment No. 23 achieves.

Amendments Nos. 25 and 26 are different and in effect give an additional defence to a landlord who faces a claim for damages under clause 33.

Clause 33(7) provides that in proceedings to enforce a liability, a landlord may defend his actions by proving that he believed or had reasonable cause to believe that when they took place, the occupier no longer stayed in the house. Amendments Nos. 25 and 26 provide a similar defence if the liability arises because of the withholding or withdrawing of services. In such circumstances, the landlord will have a defence if he can show that he had reasonable grounds to withdraw or withhold the services. That might apply, for example, if the landlord was genuinely of the opinion that the tenant had left the house to work elsewhere for a period, or that he had made alternative arrangements to receive the services in question. I believe that these amendments improve the new right to damages in clause 33.

Mr. Home Robertson: I doubt if it will give that much comfort to someone who is being evicted with his family from his home to think that he will have the option over the next six months or one year of trying to fight his case in the courts, in order to win damages for that eviction. The fact is that the family concerned will be out in the street trying to find accommodation of some kind. The whole concept of damages for unlawful eviction is bizarre.

The entire Bill is designed to make it as easy as possible for private landlords to evict people lawfully, so it will be a very careless landlord who, under the new legislation, will carry out such action illegally. I suspect that the concept of illegal eviction could become redundant. However, the principle of imposing penalties for harassment is certainly worth developing, and we accept it as far as it goes. The rest of the legislation is so flawed that this fig leaf cannot do much to conceal the problems.

I refer briefly to the specific impact of amendment No. 25, which refers to harassment in the form of withdrawal of services. I presume that that means electricity, water, drainage, and other services of that nature.

The amendment will establish a ground for defence if the landlord had reasonable grounds for withdrawing those services from the tenant. It could be construed that it is reasonable, for example, to cut off the electricity supply if the landlord is in dispute with the electricity board or if the cable or other equipment has failed. The tenant may have nothing to do with the problem between the landlord and the electricity board. Amendment (a) would restrict that ground to cases where the tenant was at fault and where he had been given an opportunity to remedy that. I foresee genuine problems and I invite the Minister seriously to consider amendment (a).

Mr. Doran: Clause 33 will be improved by the addition of Lords amendment No. 24. I know from experience that there is a major problem in encouraging procurators fiscal to take action against landlords. I hope that the amendment will be a genuine improvement, but we shall have to wait to experience it in practice. However, although it improves the civil position of tenants by giving them the right to raise actions for damages, I hope that the Minister understands that the procurators fiscal need to be encouraged. No greater proof could be necessary before the civil courts than a successful prosecution of a landlord in the criminal courts for harassment. I hope that the Government will find some way to encourage procurators fiscal seriously to consider such cases, as I know from experience the difficulty of persuading the police and the procurators fiscal to take them up.

I am interested in the scope of clause 33 as expanded by the amendment. A case that has been worrying me for some time involves the tenant of a private landlord who agreed to move while the house was modernised and improved with the aid of public grants. She has been refused the right to return to her home, and in my experience that is not uncommon. Will the new legislation give my constituent the right to raise an action for civil damages against the landlord? The legal advice that she has been given so far is that her only entitlement would be to removal costs, because they would be the extent of loss that could be established.

That is unsatisfactory. Will an amended clause 33 improve my constituent's position?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman fairly said that we would have to experience the provision in practice. That is true of all legislation. His reference to procurators fiscal is a matter for the Lord Advocate——

Mr. Doran: I understand that the Minister has responsibility for law and order, so perhaps he could reply to my question.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is a matter for which the Lord Advocate has responsibility, but I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman's points are put before him. I am sure that once the provisions are enshrined in legislation they will be taken seriously——

Mr. Home Robertson: Who by?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Obviously, they will be taken seriously by those who uphold the law—for example, the police and law-abiding citizens such as the hon. Gentleman.

I should be grateful if the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) would give me the details of the case of his constituent to which he referred so that I can investigate and come back to him on it.

The Bill very significantly improves the protection available to a tenant against a landlord who seeks to operate outwith the law. The new provisions on improved protection against illegal eviction and the new right of a tenant to compensation have been widely welcomed.

The provisions give a landlord specific defences that he can seek to employ to justify his actions, but they involve persuasion of the sheriff. I believe that to be fair and just.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) has argued for the new defence to be qualified. I am afraid that his proposal would, in practice, add nothing to the effect of Lords amendment No. 26, and might in certain circumstances be detrimental.

Any landlord who sought to invoke the new defence would need to persuade the sheriff that he had reasonable grounds to withdraw or withhold the services. If appropriate, the sheriff would no doubt take into account any steps the landlord had taken to discuss the matter with his tenant, to offer alternatives, or to come to some other mutually acceptable arrangement.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman can be confident that the defence as set out in Lords amendment No. 26 is not too loosely drawn, and in the light of my explanation I hope that he will not pursue his amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 24 to 26 agreed to.

Clause 34

THE MEASURE OF DAMAGES

Lords amendment: No. 27, in page 21, line 3, leave out from first "any" to end of line 5 and insert

"substantial development of any of the land in which the landlord's interest subsists or to demolish the whole or part of any building on that land."

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendment No. 28.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: These amendments go a long way towards meeting the concern expressed in Committee by the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) and others. They enable the sheriff to take into account development value in certain circumstances when he is assessing the damage to which an illegally evicted tenant is entitled under clauses 33 and 34.

Clause 34 sets out how the damages should be assessed, briefly, the intention is that they should equal any gain the landlord would expect to obtain by owning the house with vacant possession rather than with a sitting tenant. The amendments mean that in assessing the potential gain, the sheriff can take into account any gain the landlord would make if he redeveloped the property for other residential purposes. That is directed, for example, at landlords who might otherwise be tempted to evict their tenants illegally so as to convert the property into flats for sale, which is the most common form of redevelopment.

I hope that hon. Members will appreciate that the amendments strike a fair balance that should moderate the behaviour of unscrupulous landlords and offer tenants increased compensation if they are illegally evicted.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 28 agreed to.

Clause 42

TRANSFER OF EXISTING TENANCIES

Lords amendment: No. 29, in page 27, line 22, leave out "it belongs to".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 30 to 37.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This group of amendments may look a little odd, but I can assure hon. Members that they are necessary.

The original need to amend the clause arose because we did not extend the provisions of clause 42 to Crown tenancies. Amendment No. 37 puts it right. However, that amendment makes amendments Nos. 29 to 36 necessary to maintain the grammatical integrity of the Bill. Without them, the new paragraph we are adding would not make sense.

Mr. Home Robertson: Not much of the Bill makes sense, but at least there will be some grammatical integrity, if nothing else. It would be helpful if the Minister could say a word about the impact of the extended scope of the clause to Crown tenants and Government Departments.

I am glad of the opportunity to speak to amendment No. 33, which refers to whether a house belongs to the Scottish Special Housing Association. I do not know whether hon. Members read *The Scotsman* on Monday, which referred to 1,700 SSHA houses in the Borders that apparently are to be transferred to a new trust, Waverley Housing, set up by, of all people the Earl of Ancram—that old friend of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths).

There has been much jumping of guns in anticipation of the passing of this squalid little Bill but, quite frankly, that one takes the biscuit. *The Scotsman* states that the object of Waverley Housing will be to

"protect Borders tenants from profiteering private landlords who might snap up properties in a free-for-all when the SSHA ceases to exist."

The Government are legislating for that free-for-all. Indeed, it can take place only if Scottish Homes, acting as the agent for the Secretary of State, allows it. Interestingly enough, in between his excursions to such places as Richmond and Epping Forest, Michael Ancram will be one of the Secretary of State's creatures on the board of Scottish Homes as well as undertaking the Waverley Housing set-up in the Borders.

The significance of all that is that those tenants will lose their status as secure tenants as soon as ownership of their properties is transferred to Ancram Homes, Waverley Homes, or whatever it wants to call itself. That is inevitable. I understand that there will be a temporary holding operation and that a management trust will run matters, but the ownership of the houses will remain with Scottish Homes.

Mr. Hood: Will my hon. Friend recall the Tory Members of Parliament who were defeated in the last general election in Scotland, and name one who has not been found a job by the Tory Government?

8 pm

Mr. Home Robertson: I am a little worried about Alex Pollock. He is the one who has been passed over. I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) must feel a deep sense of guilt about that. My hon. Friend is quite right. There have been many jobs for the lads.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): What about the lasses?

Mr. Home Robertson: My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) is quite right. Anna McCurley has landed a job on the Horserace Betting Levy Board. Yes, there are plenty of jobs. Michael Ancram has so many jobs that there are none left for poor old Alex Pollock.

Much more seriously, what will happen to tenants when their houses are transferred from the ownership of Scottish Homes in due course and are taken over by Ancram Homes or whatever it will be called? They will lose their security as secure tenants, they will lose their protection against excessive rents, and they will lose a range of vital rights. It is a matter of acute concern. Frankly, all the assurances about the future of SSHA tenants will not even last until the Bill gets Royal Assent.

Several of my hon. Friends may remember that the Secretary of State for Scotland actually criticised Opposition Members for scaremongering when we said that SSHA tenants would be sold down the river. But, already, he and his cronies are at it. Tenants and local authorities in the Borders have not been consulted. There has just been a sordid little carve-up, agreed in the Tory central bunker in Chester street, Edinburgh. The 1,700 tenants will be transferred from the SSHA in anticipation of transferring Scottish Homes to the new private trust orchestrated by Michael Ancram. That is a shameful manipulation by this minority Government, and I have no hesitation in pledging to restore proper protection to tenants at the earliest opportunity. I am grateful for the opportunity presented by the amendment to highlight the despicable action taking place in the Borders.

Mr. McAllion: I, too, am grateful for the opportunity to ask what has happened in the Borders with the Waverley housing association. I remember the hours that we spent in Committee debating the rights of Scottish Homes tenants and whether they were threatened by the legislation. We were given repeated assurances by the Minister that there would be no element of compulsion on Scottish Homes tenants, that they could remain Scottish Homes tenants as long as they wished to do so, and that they would keep all the public sector tenants' rights that they had previously.

The Minister came to Dundee, East, along with Mr. Derek Mason, who at that time was responsible for the SSHA, but he has also now landed a plum job with Scottish Homes. The two of them took the opportunity to blazon out to the press in Dundee that no Scottish Homes tenant's position was threatened and that, as long as that tenant wishes to remain a tenant of the new housing agency, nobody will interfere. Of course, the new agency has not even been set up, and already 1,700 houses have been taken out of the control of Scottish Homes. Scottish Homes' ownership of the 1,700 houses on the Borders is a technical matter.

From a report in *The Scotsman*, I understand that the new Waverley housing association will act on behalf of Scottish Homes. It will manage houses, control rents, be responsible for maintenance, and negotiate house sales with tenants. For every possible purpose that can be conceived, the Waverley housing association, not Scottish Homes, will be the new landlord. Has any one tenant been consulted? Not in the least. They had to read about it in *The Scotsman*. The House was not told about it. The Standing Committee that dealt with the Bill was given no warning. We were led to believe entirely the opposite.

The Minister assured us that every tenant would be consulted and that nothing would be done to take them out of the control of Scottish Homes unless they so wished. The rights of 1,700 tenants have been ignored by the Minister. Will he have the courage to go to the Dispatch Box, in a place where he is accountable, and explain to the House and to the people in the Borders why it is happening and why they and other people in Scotland have not been consulted? It is an arrogant abuse of power by the Government. I know that the Minister is a nice man who will probably sit on his bum and say nothing, but he should try to defend what the Government are doing in Scotland. There is no defence.

Mr. Bill Walker: I shall speak briefly, following the lurid comments from the hon. Members for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) and for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion). Anyone reading their comments would think that nobody should have anything to do with any housing association in Scotland. However, such bodies have a good record. They have shown themselves to be good, caring landlords and have acted on behalf of tenants.

Mr. McAllion *rose*——

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman has had his opportunity to speak. He has made his lurid comments.

These measures are bound to be beneficial. They take decision-making nearer the people who matter—the tenants.

The individual whom Opposition Members have mentioned is doing the job free. He is not getting any fee for it. I should have thought that all of us would commend people who are prepared to do things in their own time and at no charge to tenants or the public purse. Opposition Members think that everything should be run by nanny state.

Mr. McAllion: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Walker: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a minute.

Conservative Members believe that it is better for things to be run by individuals.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Walker: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Dundee, East, as I said I would when I finish my sentence, and I shall.

Opposition Members have overlooked the importance of this matter, which is a method of bringing decision-making nearer to tenants.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman said that Mr. Ancram is doing the job out of the goodness of his heart. As I understand it, Mr. Ancram has been offered a position on the board of Scottish Homes. In return for accepting that position, he will be given a substantial payment of £3,000 to £4,000 for his expenses. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that that is the case? Will he accept also that Mr. Ancram, as an ex-politician, may be seen to benefit from legislation that he helped to draft? In the

[Mr. McAllion]

circumstances, should not Mr. Ancram donate his fee of £4,000 to the defence committee for those people in Scotland who cannot pay the poll tax?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman has made an interesting observation. Scottish Homes is a large organisation dealing with tenants in properties throughout Scotland. It is quite right and proper that people who give their time should receive some reimbursement. The amount of reimbursement is quite trivial, considering what one might expect if one does a job conscientiously. That is true of many other public positions. I do not make that comment purely in respect of this narrow matter. We ask too many people to give too much time to public matters. We do not take into account the impingement on their time. Councillors and others are within that category.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East mentioned that Mr. Ancram will be paid. It is a big job for Scottish Homes. He accepted the chairmanship of the much smaller body near where he lives. He is a local person giving time to a local interest, and that must surely be to the benefit of the local community.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: The hon. Gentleman calls £3,000 to £4,000 trivial. Does he not realise that there are millions of pensioner couples in this country who, because the pension has been depressed by the Government, are restricted to that very sum? Millions of people are on income support because of the unemployment levels that the Government have generated, and they have to live on £60 to £70 per week. The hon. Gentleman calls that sort of sum trivial, but it is not trivial for the millions of people who must live on it.

Mr. Walker: I make no apology for the words that I used. We want people to give of their time in the public domain. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will think carefully about what I am saying. The sums that we pay busy professional people for being councillors or the like does not reflect the level of input that we expect of them, especially considering the substantial sums that they are paid outside the public sphere.

Mr. Darling: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that we are dealing, not with an ordinary person but with somebody who was a Minister, who lost his seat and was given a job by the Secretary of State? Does he not think that there is something deplorable and even sick about what is happening in Scotland when defeated Tory candidates are found jobs here, there and everywhere? In this particular case the person is presiding over thousands of people who have been transferred like sheep, with no choice in the matter. Yet the hon. Gentleman says that this man is giving of his time freely. That is not normal. It is a new departure and offensive to most decent people.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman is a relatively new Member to the House and I shall forgive him for not knowing that successive Labour Governments have found work for competent people who, for whatever reason, have lost their seats. I do not object to that.

Mr. Hood: List them.

Mr. Walker: I could list names, but I shall not do so this evening. The Labour Government were right to do that. We are touching on a principle, but confusing it by introducing personalities. That is a great mistake which the Labour party frequently makes. We should surely be able to agree that if there are people in any of the parties who have given good service to the nation, are competent and still have years of good service ahead of them, we would be foolish not to make use of them. It would be a mistake for the nation.

If we were talking about paying someone £50,000 or £100,000 a year, I could understand the objection, but we are talking, not of enormous sums but relatively small sums compared with the input that we expect. The nation gets a bargain from many people in public service. I am sorry to hear the Opposition argue in this way. I would have expected support for what I am saying. We should look much more carefully at how we reward people who give of their time for public service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are getting away from the amendment and I am sure that we shall return to it now.

Mrs. Fyfe: We are talking not about an able, competent person but about the Earl of Ancram. If the hon. Gentleman is so concerned about giving due reward for public service, does he support the Government's continued determination not to award councillors a decent rate for their efforts?

Mr. Walker: I would have thought that the hon. Lady would have been clear about what I said. The recompense that we give councillors is unsuitable for people of a high calibre whom we expect to give a lot of time. Successive Governments have been mistaken on that for many years. I would have thought that that came over loud and clear from my remarks. That is my view and I have held it for many years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I invite the House to come back to the amendment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I should like to respond briefly to the questions on the Waverley housing trust. I understand that it is proposed that the trust will take over the management of the SSHA stock in the Borders. It will be for the SSHA to decide on Waverley's housing proposals since management issues are for the association. The association has raised certain consequential matters with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and it has yet to take a final decision on new management arrangements, so the whole matter is under consideration.

The objective will be to improve the standards of service offered to tenants and the objectives of the trust are wholly concerned with benefiting the local community. Therefore, it is most encouraging that somebody of the calibre of Michael Ancram who has expertise in housing and is well known for his interest has been sufficiently public-spirited to offer himself——

Mr. Home Robertson: Keep a straight face.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am keeping a straight face—for the unpaid post of chairman of the charitable trust. The same qualifications will enable him to perform an extremely valuable role as a member of the new board of Scottish Homes. I endorse the Secretary of State's decision to offer him an appointment. Any conflict of interest would be unlikely, and in any case there are

well-established rules and procedures for board members to declare such an interest and avoid participating in discussions.

So far as political considerations are relevant, Mr. Charles Sneddon, who was appointed for his personal contribution, as were the others, based on his background of involvement with the council of management of the SSHA and his local authority, will be particularly helpful to Scottish Homes. He is a prominent member of a party other than the Conservative party, as the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) well knows.

8.15 pm

Dr. Godman: This is a serious matter. Surely it is in the interests of natural justice for tenants or their representatives to be involved in management, consultations and negotiations?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand that the trust also raised the possibility of acquiring the stock that it manages at the end of three years. At that stage the Government and Scottish Homes are committed to ensuring that the tenants are fully consulted, certainly before any purchase proceeds. We shall consider voluntary disposals in the context of another Bill.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the Minister explain what will happen to those tenants? Will there be a ballot or will each individual tenant be able to exercise the option to remain in the public sector or transfer to an insecure tenancy?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is taking me well outside the terms of the amendment. That will be discussed in the context of the other Bill under voluntary disposals. The same conditions and considerations would apply to the SSHA and Scottish Homes as have been set out for local authorities. We shall return to that subject.

The amendments are required because of the drafting and grammatical rule which requires that the contents of a tabulated list in the Bill do not go beyond the words which govern each and every item in the list. In other words, if the phrase had not been moved by means of the amendments it would have been held to apply to both parts of the new paragraph which would not then make sense since it would begin:

"it belongs to . . . is held in trust for Her Majesty."

For that reason, the matter had to be clarified and tidied up.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 30 to 37 agreed to.

Clause 43

STATUTORY TENANTS: SUCCESSION

Lords amendment: No. 38, in page 27, line 42, leave out subsection (1) and insert—

"(1) In section 3 of the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984 (which makes provision as to statutory tenants and tenancies) in subsection (1) after the word "sections" there shall be inserted "3A,"."

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move that, This House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we can also discuss Lords amendments No. 39, 76, Government amendment (d) and Lords amendment No. 83.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Amendments Nos. 38, 39 and 76 make two changes to clause 43 and schedule 6. One is purely a presentational one. The other introduces transitional provisions to protect the succession rights of certain prospective tenants. The presentational change is quite significant and is designed to make what are complex changes to complex legislation easier to follow.

As a result of the Lords amendments clause 43 will introduce a new section 3A to the 1984 Act to introduce different schedules which will come into play in different circumstances. Schedule 6 becomes the vehicle for importing two new schedules to supplement schedule 1 of the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984, which will remain in its present form subject to a minor drafting change, made by amendment No. 83.

Schedule 1 of the 1984 Act will continue to apply to succession in cases where the original tenant and the first successor to a regulated tenancy die before commencement of Part II of the Bill. Amendments Nos. 38 and 39 pave the way for the new format of schedule 6 to the Bill, set out in amendment No. 76, which introduces two new schedules —1A and 1B—to the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984.

Schedule 1A will apply to succession in cases in which the original tenant of a protected tenancy dies after commencement of part II of the Bill. Schedule 1B will apply to succession in cases in which someone who is a first successor to a regulated tenancy dies after commencement of part II of the Bill, but the original tenant dies before commencement.

As to transitional provisions, hon. Members will, I am sure, be pleased that the new schedules 1A and 1B incorporate the transitional provisions which provide a right of succession to a statutory assured tenancy for members of a tenant's family who have already lived with the tenant for six months at the commencement date of the Bill. They will not have to fulfil the new two-year residence requirement.

As a result of the recasting of schedule 6 achieved by amendment 76, an entry in schedule 10 of the Bill—the repeal schedule—is no longer required. The consequential amendment in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend removes that unnecessary entry.

Mr. Home Robertson: This is no big deal. It is merely a redraft of clause 43 and part I of schedule 6 on succession of tenant. Our main objection to the original draft of this part of the legislation still stands. It is that the relative will now have to live with the tenant for two years before he or she qualifies as a successor. Amendment No. 76 restricts that to six months only in cases that arise immediately before the Bill comes into effect. Apart from that, until the legislation is repealed or drastically amended, as it must be, two years will be the rule. That will cause a special problem for members of a family who may make great sacrifices so as to move in with an elderly or infirm relative and care for him. If the tenant does not survive for the full two years such a caring member of a family could find himself made homeless, for his pains, on the death of the tenant. The Lords amendment is no worse than the original drafting, so we shall not vote against it, but I fear that this aspect of the Bill will lead to rough justice, and I undertake to review it at the earliest opportunity.

Mrs. Fyfe: A constituent of mine gave up her home to go and care for an elderly relative. In this highly unusual case, when the elderly relative died my constituent then

[Mrs. Fyfe]

went to care for a sick and dying brother. She spent a considerable time away from her home and ended up losing it. What would happen to such a person under this legislation? She did not spend as much as two years with either person, yet had spent much time away from her home. She would lose her home and not gain the tenancy of her parent's or brother's homes.

My constituent had no work. She is too old to find work and lives on social security. In Glasgow's housing crisis she is at the tail end of a long waiting list. Has the Minister thought through the sort of cases that will occur in real life? Conservative Members must know from their surgeries that things like this happen. I can understand efforts being made to prevent people from jumping in cynically at the last minute by going to live with a sick and elderly relative in the hopes of succeeding to the tenancy, but two years is far too long. People may go for as little as six months in a genuine effort to care for an elderly relative and then have no right to succeed to the tenancy. That is wrong.

The Government have made great play of care in the community, of driving elderly people out of hospitals and into the community. That has meant that women with low-paid jobs or no jobs at all lose their homes. That cannot be the intention even of this Government. Surely they do not want to throw on to the streets women who have devoted years of their lives to caring for others.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Opposition Members have raised the same points as those mentioned by the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) in Committee.

When we introduced the Bill we pointed out that as things stand a landlord can find a property that he lets the subject of a series of successions which put the house out of his reach for generations. Extensive succession rights will not apply to assured tenancies and the Government believe that succession rights in regulated tenancies should also be restricted. In our original proposals for succession in regulated tenancies we envisaged that a relative of a tenant other than a spouse would have to live with the tenant for five years before the tenant's death before he or she would qualify as a successor. That would also be one of the conditions that would have to be fulfilled if a second succession was to occur.

In Committee, the hon. Member for Dundee, East and organisations involved in housing matters argued strongly that five years was too long and should be reduced, and on reflection the Government agreed. Consequently, two major changes to the succession rules were made.

First, on Report, the five-year requirement was reduced to two years. Secondly, as well as making the provisions easier to understand, Lords amendments Nos. 38, 39, 76 and 83 introduced transitional provisions to protect the position of prospective successors who, on the death of a tenant after commencement, would not meet the two-year qualifying period, but through residence before commencement would have met the six-month qualifying period that existed then.

The Government believe the changes have improved the Bill and strike a fair balance between the interests of landlords and tenants.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 39 agreed to.

Clause 46

INFORMATION AS TO DETERMINATION OF RENTS

Lords amendment: No. 40, in page 29, line 6, leave out from "information" to end of line 8 and insert

"as may be so specified with respect to rents under assured tenancies which have been the subject of, or taken into account on, references or applications to, or determinations by, rent assessment committees."

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment meets a concern expressed at an earlier stage by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). It increases the kinds of information about market rents that the rent assessment panel can be required to keep by the Secretary of State under clause 46. In the form in which the Bill left the House, clause 46 limited the information to be held to that relating to actual determinations made by rent assessment committees for assured tenancies. The amendment enables my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to require the rent assessment panel to keep information derived not only from applications that result in rent determinations, but from applications that do not.

There are three circumstances in which no determination will be given. The first is when the application is withdrawn, presumably because landlord and tenant have reached an amicable agreement. The second is in the case of a short assured tenancy, when there are insufficient similar assured tenancies in an area for the rent assessment committee to make comparisons. The third case is when it is clear that the rent set by the landlord for an assured tenancy is not excessive in relation to rents for similar properties in an area. It would obviously be helpful to the rent assessment committees and to landlords and tenants to have readily available the wider pool of information about rent levels that the amendment will allow. I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to. [Special entry.]

Clause 53

RIGHT CONFERRED BY PART III

Lords amendment: No. 41, in page 31, line 3, at end insert—

'( ) In subsection (1) above, "heritable proprietor" includes any person entitled under section 3 of the Conveyancing (Scotland) Act 1924 (disposition by uninfeft person) to grant a disposition.'

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment covers a technical conveyancing point and is intended to ensure that the expression "heritable proprietor" for the purposes of the tenants' choice provisions will cover all public sector landlords, who are, or may be, in conveyancing terms, "uninfeft proprietors". This term applies when they become proprietors by Act of Parliament but have not completed title in their own names in the register of sasines, or land registers. The amendment is needed to avoid any doubt that public sector landlords have a duty to sell their houses under part III to approved landlords, assuming that the tenants so wish. A similar definition applies in the right-to-buy legislation, and we think it appropriate to keep the two procedures in line as far as possible.

Mr. Home Robertson: As the Minister says, this is a minor extension of the definition of proprietor for the purposes of the landlords' choice provisions of the Bill. I deliberately used the term "landlords' choice", because part III of the Bill has everything to do with extending private landlords' choice and nothing to do with extending choice for tenants. We are worried about the likelihood of abuse of this scheme by unscrupulous speculators who may try to entice tenants to consent to the transfer of their houses out of the public sector.

We are also worried about the possible break-up of tenant management co-operatives. The main message on part III of the Bill which should go out from the House and from any responsible person in Scotland, is that a tenant should think very carefully before allowing a private landlord to take over his public sector house. Such a transition would lead to an immediate and drastic loss of important rights of security and loss of rent control. We shall need to return to that topic when the Housing Bill for the United Kingdom as a whole comes back to the House. That will raise the possibility of large-scale transfers without the consent of tenants. This is an alarming principle and the House should deplore the Government's action.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 55

APPLICATION TO EXERCISE RIGHTS CONFERRED BY THIS PART AND OFFER TO SELL

Lords amendment: No. 42, in page 33, line 32, leave out "as determined by the district valuer"

8.30 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 43 and 44.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: During consideration of the Bill in another place, there was much debate about whether there should be an avenue of appeal against the valuation determined by the district valuer on a property to be transferred under the tenants' choice provisions in part III. While it was not considered appropriate that there should be a right of appeal after a valuation has been made, it was accepted that it would be desirable to bring tenants' choice valuation procedures more closely into line with those in the right-to-buy legislation. The amendments made in the other place offer a choice between the district valuer and another qualified valuer nominated by the landlord, but acceptable to the applicant. Amendment No. 43 also clarifies that it is for the landlord to decide whether it should be the district valuer or another qualified valuer who should determine the market value. I commend the amendments to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 43 and 44 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 45, in page 34, line 3, at end insert—

"( ) Where the circumstances are such that, on the relevant date, a house, if offered for sale in accordance with subsection (6) above, would not realise any price then—

(a) for the purposes of that subsection, the price shall be taken to be—

(i) such amount as would require to be paid to Scottish Homes or a person who, on the relevant date, was approved under section 54 above in order that it or she would willingly so acquire the house, expressed as a negative; or

(ii) where Scottish Homes or that person would willingly so acquire it for no consideration, nil;

(b) the market value of the house may be determined under that subsection to be a negative value or nil;

(c) where the market value is so determined, the reference in subsection (5) above to a price equal to the market value shall be construed accordingly and references in this section to selling a house and the purchaser of it shall be construed respectively as references to disposing of it and the acquirer of it; and

(d) where, by virtue of paragraph (c) above, the price of the house is in the negative, the obligation to pay shall be upon the landlord."

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The main purpose of the amendment is to clarify that the property transferring under the tenants' choice provisions in part III can have not only a positive or zero value but, on occasions, a negative value.

Most houses in the public sector in Scotland have been maintained to a reasonable standard and are likely, therefore, under tenants' choice, to attract a positive value on transfer. However, there are some tenanted properties where this is not so, and these properties now need significant renovation to bring them up to the desired standard. In the very worst of such housing, it is possible that the cost to a potential new landlord of bringing the property into a reasonable state of repair could exceed the value of the property after the necessary renovation had been effected. In such cases few, if any, new landlords would be willing to participate in the acquisition of public sector housing under the powers in part III of the Bill, or would be willing to do so only in return for rent payments well above the going rate for such housing, and therefore well above the level that the tenant could afford to pay.

One can well imagine that it will be those tenants in local authority housing which is in the worst state of repair and who are least satisfied with the service provided by the local authority who will be most willing to contemplate a change of landlord. Therefore, the tenants' choice provisions should be especially attractive to such tenants. There should be no artificial barriers to such transfers proceeding. If we did not specifically permit negative valuations, and if we did not oblige local authorities to make payments equivalent to the amount of the negative valuation, the result would be an impediment to transfers.

I have considered the position from the point of view of the local authority or other public sector landlord whose tenants wish to transfer. Such landlords may argue that having to pay some new landlord to take away their housing would be a quite unacceptable form of asset stripping. I do not accept that, because if a house is in such a poor state of repair that it would cost more to renovate than the house would be worth when the work is done, the house in its present state is clearly a liability. In such circumstances, rent payments by tenants are probably insufficient to cover the cost of maintenance work necessary to prevent the housing deteriorating further. Moreover, in fulfilling its duties to the tenants the local authority would inevitably soon have to spend substantial sums to bring the property up to standard. By transferring the house to a new landlord the local authority is relieving

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

itself of the liability to meet such costs. The concept of negative valuations is therefore sensible, and fair to all parties.

Mr. Home Robertson: This is an outrageous proposition and the Minister should be ashamed of himself for reading a brief of such nonsense. There is an urgent need for investment in public sector housing to rent and a need for investment in house building because as many as 30,000 people become homeless in Scotland every year. It is an outrageous proposition in view of the huge waiting list for public sector housing to rent. Shelter estimates that as many as 192,000 Scots are now waiting for houses. All that the Government can think of doing is to siphon money out of the public sector housing budget so that they can pay private sector landlords to take over public sector property.

There is a desperate need for investment but there are many calls on the budgets of local housing authorities and it cannot make sense to raid those budgets for the Government's purposes. The Government are legislating to require local authorities to pay speculators to take over housing stocks. That is an interesting new twist to the concept of expropriation without compensation and we should reflect on that idea in connection with the case for the acquisition of private sector housing stock. There is a great deal of substandard and empty private sector housing in Scotland, but the Government are under the happy illusion that it will all be renovated and let under this legislation. I suspect that that will not happen.

Perhaps we should pursue the precedent being set by this provision and think about taking empty substandard private sector housing stock into public ownership under the housing action area procedure. As far as I know that is still on the statute book. Perhaps we should go the whole hog and require private landlords to pay the local authority for bringing houses up to standard. That is the precedent that the Government are setting in this amendment.

The Government tell us about tens of thousands of empty or substandard privately owned houses in Scotland and say that they want to do something about them. Let us consider some drastic action to get that criminally neglected property back into service for the benefit of people who desperately need houses in Scotland. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities is understandably alarmed by the prospect of the effects of this amendment. COSLA says:

"the Convention is extremely concerned at the prospect of local authority stock being transferred to private landlords at negative values which in effect will mean that local authorities will require to pay the new landlord to take over the stock. The method of valuation which will be used allows the District Valuer to take the state of repair of the house into account twice and the local authority is not allowed to appeal the District Valuer's decision."

The Government's provision is a totally unwarranted attack on local authorities. Why should a local authority or, more significantly, local tenants, pay speculators to take over property that may have considerable potential but which is in bad condition because of the combined effects of criminal architecture and the malicious under-funding of local authorities by the Government? This provision comes on top of the abolition of the cost floor for council house sales on terms that will be even more harmful than those which will apply under the English and Welsh legislation. Once again the remaining tenants will have to pay for the shortfall. They will have to pay for the effects of this legislation. That is wrong and unwarranted and the Minister should be ashamed of himself. We shall oppose this provision.

Mr. Bill Walker: One of the blights of Scottish housing along with many other blights in the United Kingdom is the vast number of houses which, for whatever reason, were not built to a standard to enable them to last. Many of them were post-war and many such houses suffer from condenssation, dampness and other horrors. Some of the schemes are not liked by the people who have been forced in the past to live in them and many houses have become derelict. Anything that can be done to revitalise those areas must be good. I pay tribute to Dundee district council, which has been imaginative and has shown the way that a combination of local government and private sector can bring a dramatic change to housing that is in a state of ghastly disrepair and houses the reputation of which was such that no one wished to live in them.

We have to view the amendment along these lines. I accept that in some circumstances—I trust not in all—it may be that the cost of bringing the houses up to an acceptable standard and of changing the face of estates so that people will be happy to live in them will be in excess of the value of the property, so the value of the property, taking account of its condition, may be negative. Sadly, some estates in Scotland have been knocked down before people have gone to live in them. Therefore, we cannot be proud of everything that has happened in housing in Scotland—quite the reverse. Too often, we should be ashamed of the properties and even more ashamed that we ask people to live in them.

It is in that light that I welcome the amendment, because it makes a contribution to real problems, and shows how we can quickly rehabilitate areas that are falling into disrepute and disrepair. I was pleased to see my old home town of Dundee being so progressive, and to see what the council has done to bring back to life estates that had the most appalling reputation over many decades.

Mr. McAllion: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) for the compliments that he pays to Dundee district council, which has been imaginative in the way that it has tackled the problems of empty and derelict houses and blocks in certain housing schemes. It has done so on its own, without any support from the private sector. It approached the private sector to see whether it would help in such projects, but it did not want to know. The district council conceived these plans, led their implementation and funded them. The private sector came in only at the last stages, so the council should get the credit. However, I am sure that this Minister, and other Ministers, will try to claim credit at the next general election and will tell us what a marvellous job they have done in Dundee, when it has been the Labour-led Dundee district council that has done a marvellous job. Like the hon. Gentleman, I am concerned about the blight that has affected Scottish housing over the past 10 years, not least as a result of Tory housing policy.

The hon. Gentleman says that the amendment deals with the problem of blocks that have become empty and derelict, but it does not because it deals only with inhabited blocks. We are dealing here with tenants' rights and the

right to pick. One has to be a tenant before the amendment comes into play. It is strange that the Minister tries to argue that district councils in Scotland collect rents and put tenants into flats that are so run down and neglected that they have a negative value. That is not so. Many tenants in public sector housing in Scotland live in houses that have been neglected for many years because of the failure to invest. The real problem is that the district councils have been forced to rely only on rents to maintain and manage housing.

A few years ago, Dundee district council received £8 million a year in housing support grant from the Government to help it to maintain the housing stock. It also had a huge rate fund contribution to the housing revenue account, which helped to maintain the housing stock for which it is responsible. That is no longer the case. It has to manage and maintain all its housing stock on the revenue from rents because the Government have stopped housing support grant and rate fund contribution while giving increasingly massive subsidies to the owner-occupier sector through mortgage tax relief. It is strange that the Government can say that they are right to use public subsidy to encourage owner-occupation but that it would be wrong to use public subsidies to maintain public sector rented housing at a decent level that would allow tenants to live in those houses in peace and contentment.

8.45 pm

The Minister is saying that if a council tenant makes an agreement with a private sector landlord, the council will have to accept that some negative value will be placed on the house and will have to pay the private sector landlord for taking the house and the tenant off its hands. At the same time, the district council and the ratepayers in the area will be left to pay off the massive borrowing cost for that house. The loans for public sector houses are paid back over 60 years, and most of the houses in Dundee are still being paid for by the district council. The Minister is saying that, on top of that burden, the council will have to pay the private sector to take the property off its hands.

The Government must accept responsibility for restoring public subsidies to the public sector as well as to the private sector. They must allow district councils to get on with tackling the real problems of housing in Scotland —condensation, dampness and overcrowding—and give public subsidies to enable councils to maintain and manage the stock properly. Instead, the Government are robbing the public sector to fill the pockets of the greedy people in the private sector. That is what this amendment is all about.

Mrs. Fyfe: I do not know whether the people of Maryhill are more streetwise than people elsewhere in Scotland, but I have yet to meet a district council tenant in Maryhill who has the slightest intention of choosing a private landlord. They are not naive or green or stupid or inexperienced about the wiles of private landlords and any poor soul who was likely to fall into the clutches would quickly be advised by their friends and neighbours not to do so.

The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) has argued that there is no other solution, and that when a house is in an inadequate state and has a low valuation, it should be valued negatively on the market. However, the local authority is not allowed to appeal to the district valuer against what the value of the house is supposed tho be. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) pointed out, had the Government maintained housing subsidy, things would not have been as bad. In Glasgow, the housing support grant is half what it was in 1979, and that is allowing for 1979 prices and inflation. In addition, the majority of Scottish housing authorities no longer receive any housing support grant.

When one considers that Glasgow district council has to spend 40 per cent. of its budget on paying the interest on debts to those who lent it money so that it could get houses built, one realises the size of the problem. That problem has been ignored while the Government's intention has been to make life easy for those who want to make easy profits as private sector landlords. They have the house handed to them for nothing and are even made a present of some money along with it. They can then sit back and make a killing doing nothing except filling out a rent book once a month. It is a farce and does nothing to ameliorate people's housing needs, and well the people of Scotland know it.

Dr. Reid: I agree with the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), who congratulated Dundee district council. My district council, Motherwell, and others have been struggling, despite the handicaps imposed upon them by legislation, to continue public sector housing. However, it is disingenuous of the hon. Gentleman to try to draw a comparison between those efforts and what has been done in the Bill. What this part of the Bill sets out is not a joint enterprise or a combination of private and public sectors working towards a common end for the benefit of both. Because of Government restrictions it is a zero sum game that one of them must lose. Under this part of the Bill, it is clear that it robs public sector Peter to make sure that private sector Paul is fattened up.

The Minister did what he could to defend us and I compliment him. His detailed explanation was as clear as mud. The Minister is a master of obfuscation. It occurs to me that had he been a defence lawyer at the Nuremberg trials it would have been no wonder if Goering had won the order of Lenin. Despite the Minister's explanation, this part of the Bill can be put simply. It forces councils to get rid of houses that they do not want to abandon and, because of laws that councils do not support, there is a loss that the council cannot afford, and they must pay for the privilege into the bargain. All that is done on the basis of a valuation which is negative only because the Government have refused in the first place to give the council the money to carry out the repairs.

When it is put as simply as that, a number of questions arise. Why should local authorities be so different from anyone else in the Government's view? The Government are always talking, not about the necessity to bear a loss, but about the need to make a profit. Who else would the Government force to sell off goods that they do not want to sell at a loss? Can we imagine them imposing that form of legislation on Tesco, Sainsbury or Wimpy? Can we imagine the Government leading with a slogan for private enterprise not of "make what profits you can", but, "Sell your goods on that basis not of 'buy one, get one free', but 'buy one, get one free and get a rebate thrown in'"?

Why is it always the taxpayer who has to lose? Why will taxpayers lose over the steel privatisation when the industry is sold off? Why did they lose over the land sales in connection with the royal ordnance factories? Why will taxpayers and ratepayers lose now when it comes to local

[Dr. Reid]

authorities? The authorities have already been wrapped up in a legal straitjacket. Their funds have already been withdrawn and they have been prevented from raising additional funds to carry out repairs by the Government's rate capping policy. They have had inadequate remuneration.

I agree with the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) that elected officials deserve proper remuneration, but there is a distinct difference between proper remuneration for our elected officials and greedy golden handshakes for those who abjectly failed to get elected in the first place and are being propped up by public money. All those problems have been inflicted on local councils and they are now being forced to sell at a loss.

The policy affects not just old houses but new houses. A district council near me has been forced to sell four new houses which did not have negative values and were not in such dire conditions. It had to sell them before new tenants came in because, as soon as a new tenant stepped in, it would have had to sell the house in good repair at a loss to the council, only weeks after it had been completed. How much worse will it be when it comes to houses where there is double jeopardy, as my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) said? It is not only unfair; it is a disincentive to build council houses in the first place.

There must be a growing suspicion that this measure, like other measures in the Bill, is not simply a matter of clearing up. This is not a technical amendment. It is an integral part of the Government's policy of undermining the provision of public sector housing by penalising councils in every way possible and forcing them to sell. This measure, which adds insult to injury, forces them to sell at a loss. That policy is mistaken. The policy of undermining council house provision is not born of principle. It has been born of the Prime Minister's prejudice. It is not a policy shaped by concern. It has been marked rather by callousness. The measure is intended to add to the crippling financial burden of councils and to ensure that there will be little or no new public sector building. If the Government insist on maintaining that policy and if they reject the amendment tabled by Opposition Members, the public will draw their own conclusions.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is entirely fair that there should be payment by the council to relieve itself of a liability in those few cases where a negative valuation may be appropriate. I shall answer the general point raised by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) that there should be sufficient funds for capital investment in Scotland. Total gross public capital investment in Scottish housing has risen in real terms since 1979-80 from £718 million to £847 million, which is a marked contrast with the 8 per cent. per annum decrease over the preceding five years when the Labour Government were in power.

I should like to give the House an example of how a negative valuation could work. If a house requires £6,000 worth of repair work to put it into a state of repair required by the landlord's common law and statutory repairing obligations, and if the district valuer took the view that the house would then be valued at £5,000, subject to tenancy, the current market value for tenants' choice would be £5,000, minus £6,000. That is a negative valuation of £1,000

Dr. Reid: I cannot understand why the Government are prepared to go through the rigmarole of valuations and assessments of repairs when a house is being sold off to the private sector, when, for years, councils such as Motherwell district council have been screaming at the Government for repairs. Tenants have to live in these houses needing repair, whether in the private or public sector. Why were the Government not channelling their efforts towards assessing those repairs and ensuring that the council had the money to carry them out?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I explained earlier that we have increased the sums available on housing. The housing revenue account last year was £411 million and this year is more than £441 million, so there has been a substantial increase.

I wish to deal with the point that has been raised about the financial arrangements for local authorities. The authorities will not lose out. In those rare cases where the valuer decides that the valuation is negative, the authorities will make payments from their housing revenue capital accounts. The loan charges resulting will be taken into account in the determination of housing support grant. Therefore, where an authority is eligible to receive housing support grant, it will recoup its costs and, if it is just outside housing support grant, it could come back into it.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister has just referred to something called the housing revenue capital account. Does he mean the housing revenue account or the housing capital account?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The words that I used were "housing revenue capital accounts".

Mr. Home Robertson *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have answered the hon. Gentleman's question.

I appreciate that some people take the view that authorities should not be expected to hand over their stock, but I hope that I have shown the House that it is in their interests, on occasions, not to keep what has become a liability. I imagine that negative valuations will be found occasionally and only in the very worst council housing. None the less——

Mrs. Fyfe: The Minister said a moment ago that the capital cost will be made up through the housing support grant. What will he do in the case of the majority of Scottish councils which receive no housing support grant?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I said that, if they were just outside housing support grant, they might come back into it but, obviously, that depends on the circumstances. We anticipate that negative valuations will occur occasionally and only in the worst council housing. The amendment to provide for the possibility of negative valuation is both practical and sensible and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the Minister confirm that tenants will pay for this through the housing revenue account?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If authorities are in receipt of housing support grant, that will be taken into account in the allocations that are made.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 198, Noes 143.

Division No. 458] **[5.59 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'th's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Knapman, Roger
Lang, Ian
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
McLoughlin, Patrick
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Ingram, Adam
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John

McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*	Mullin, Chris	Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*	Winnick, David
McKelvey, William	Murphy, Paul	Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*	Wise, Mrs Audrey
McLeish, Henry	Nellist, Dave	Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*	Worthington, Tony
Maclennan, Robert	Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon	Wall, Pat	Wray, Jimmy
McNamara, Kevin	Patchett, Terry	Wallace, James	
McTaggart, Bob	Pike, Peter L.	Walley, Joan	Tellers for the Noes:
Madden, Max	Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*	Wareing, Robert N.	Mrs. Win Golding and
Mahon, Mrs Alice	Prescott, John	Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*	Mr. Frank Haynes.
Marek, Dr John	Redmond, Martin	Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*	
Martlew, Eric	Reid, Dr John		
Maxton, John	Robertson, George		
Meacher, Michael	Rooker, Jeff		
Michael, Alun	Salmond, Alex		
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*	Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert		
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*	Short, Clare		
Moonie, Dr Lewis	Skinner, Dennis		
Morgan, Rhodri	Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*		
Morley, Elliott	Steel, Rt Hon David		
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*	Steinberg, Gerry		

Question accordingly agreed to. [Special entry.]

New Clause

SCHEMES FOR PAYMENTS TO ASSIST LOCAL AUTHORITY TENANTS TO OBTAIN OTHER ACCOMMODATION

Lords amendment: No. 46, after clause 62, insert the following new clause—

"62A.—(1) In accordance with a scheme made by a local authority and approved by the Secretary of State under this section, the authority may make grants to or for the benefit of qualifying tenants of the authority with a view to assisting each person to whom or for whose benefit a grant is made to obtain accommodation otherwise than as a tenant of the authority either—

(a) by acquiring an interest in a house; or

(b) by carrying out works to a house to provide additional accommodation; or

(c) by both of those means.

(2) A scheme under this section shall contain such provisions as the local authority considers appropriate together with any which the Secretary of State may require as a condition of his approval and, without prejudice to the generality, a scheme may include provisions specifying, or providing for the determination of—

(a) the persons who are qualifying tenants for the purposes of the scheme;

(b) the interests which qualifying tenants may be assisted to acquire;

(c) the works for the carrying out of which grants may be made;

(d) the circumstances in which a grant may be made for the benefit of a qualifying tenant;

(e) the amount of the grant which may be made in any particular case and the terms on which it may be made;

(f) the limits on the total number and amount of grants which may be made; and

(g) the period within which the scheme is to apply.

(3) The Secretary of State may approve a scheme made by a local authority under this section with or without conditions and, where a scheme has been approved, the authority shall take such steps as it considers appropriate to bring the scheme to the attention of persons likely to be able to benefit from it and shall take such other steps (if any) as the Secretary of State may direct in any particular case to secure publicity for the scheme.

(4) The Secretary of State may revoke an approval of a scheme under this section by a notice given to the local authority concerned; and where such a notice is given, the revocation shall not affect the operation of the scheme in relation to any grants made or agreed before the date of the notice.

(5) Where a scheme made by a local authority under this section has been approved, a person dealing with the authority shall not be concerned to see or enquire whether the terms of the scheme have been or are being complied with; and any failure to comply with the terms of a scheme shall not invalidate any grant purporting to be made in accordance with the scheme unless the person to whom the grant is made has actual notice of the failure.

(6) In this section, "local authority" and "house" have respectively the meanings assigned to those expressions by section 338(1) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Home Robertson: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, amendment (a), in line 41, leave out from 'authority' to 'enquire' in line 42 and insert 'may'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments to the Lords amendment:

(b) in line 43, leave out 'shall not' and insert 'may'.

(c) in line 45, leave out from 'scheme' to end of line 46.

(d) in line 49, at end insert—

(7) Where the Secretary of State gives approval to a scheme under this section, he shall increase the capital allocation of the local authority concerned by an amount which is sufficient to ensure the viability of the scheme.'.

Lords amendment No. 102.

I should inform the House that Lords amendment No. 46 involves privilege.

Mr. Home Robertson: Amendment (a) would provide for schemes for payment to local authority tenants to help

them to obtain alternative accommodation. I stress that we in the Opposition have always supported the principle of help for first-time home buyers. Our record on that is in stark contrast to that of the Conservative party, which is shoving up mortgage rates for all that it is worth—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is difficult for hon. Members who are in the Chamber to hear what is being said. *[Interruption.]* Order. I ask hon. Members who are not listening to the debate to carry on their conversations elsewhere.

Mr. Home Robertson: When we have a Scottish Assembly in Scotland to debate Scottish affairs, we shall not have the problem of extraneous people hanging around cluttering up our debates.

We have no objection to the underlying principle of the scheme, but I should like to talk about some detailed points. I shall not spend time on amendments (a) and (b) because we are short of time. I shall concentrate on amendment (d), which would require the Secretary of State to fund such a scheme separately and directly.

We are becoming accustomed to the dishonest claims of Ministers in this Administration. I have no doubt that the Government will go around saying that local authorities should implement the scheme and blaming them if they do not. Expectations will be raised as a result of Government statements in connection with the amendment and, as usual, local authorities will be left to face the music.

Local authorities in Scotland have more than enough obligations already to be met from hopelessly inadequate resources and they might have good reasons for deciding not to implement the scheme. I am happy enough that such incentives should be set up, but it is the Government who are proposing the scheme and who will undoubtedly claim credit for it, so I respectfully suggest to the Minister that, just for once, the Government should put their money where their mouth is and accept amendment (d), which would ensure that the Scottish Office funds such schemes separately from the rest of local authority housing finance.

Mr. Doran: I am a wee bit less sanguine and quite a bit more concerned about the provision than my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). The debate that we have just had on the negative value of council houses could be equally applied to this debate. Perhaps the Minister will say a wee bit more about what is intended, because it appears that what is being established is a scheme that would require local authorities to pay from either the capital or revenue account those tenants who wish or who are encouraged to be removed from local authority houses. We need to know in what circumstances it is envisaged that schemes would be approved. For example, will schemes be approved for the sole purpose of transferring those houses to the private sector? We should like the Minister to answer such questions.

I am extremely concerned about subsection (5) of the new clause. A scheme will be made by a public authority, that is the local authority, and approved by a public official, that is the Secretary of State for Scotland, but subsection (5) seems to rule out any challenge to the operation of the scheme. That strikes me as intolerable, particularly when we are talking about substantial sums of public money.

9.15 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have been asked whether there are resources for such schemes. Local authorities making payments to tenants will be required to find the resources from within their housing revenue account capital allocations for the year in which payments are made. The logic is simple. The payments are made, in effect, to release accommodation for letting as an alternative to new build. Such payments are therefore instead of direct capital expenditure. Local authorities have discretion on how to use capital consents issued to them under section 94 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

Among the factors taken into account in the allocation of resources will continue to be the levels of homelessness and the demand for accommodation locally, as shown, for example, by homelessness returns and the size of the local authority waiting lists. Payments made by authorities from their capital allocations will as usual be taken into account in the calculation of housing support grant.

Our reason for rejecting the amendment is that, while local authorities will not be given a specific allocation earmarked for the purpose of giving cash incentives to tenants, powers in the new clause will enable them to use the resources available more effectively in providing housing accommodation in their areas. For example, instead of building one new house, they might be able at the same cost to encourage tenants to vacate three to five houses, which could assist their provision for the homeless.

Let me further explain the positive approach. New clause 62 and the consequential drafting amendment to the title will give local authorities, with the consent of the Secretary of State, specific powers to make payments to their tenants to help them to obtain other accommodation. I hope and believe that the clause will be welcomed by the House, as it was in the other place. It is an enabling provision designed to allow local authorities to draw up schemes that will require the Secretary of State's approval, under which they will be able to offer payment to tenants to move out of their council houses. Such payments would be used, for example, as deposits on the purchase of houses in the private sector. That will leave council accommodation vacant, which will then be available for letting to, for example, homeless families or persons on the waiting list.

I stress that the new clause would not oblige local authorities to offer cash incentive payments; nor would it give tenants a right to a payment. I also stress that no tenants will be forced to move. Local authorities will be able to come to the Secretary of State seeking approval for schemes for making such payments. The nature and extent of cash incentive schemes will be for local authorities themselves to devise.

Mr. Home Robertson: As usual, the buck stops with the local authorities. The Minister has tried to develop a wonderfully circuitous argument to explain how such a scheme could be funded. The fact is that the Government are once again raising hopes among some people who will no doubt make approaches to their local authorities on the strength of publicity about the provision, but the Government are not prepared to put up the finances that will be necessary to implement it. It has done no harm to expose that. We are not opposed to the principle of such payments, but we feel that the Government should for

[Mr. Home Robertson]

once be honest and pay for the schemes that they are dreaming up. Having made that point, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave withdrawn.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 63

ABOLITION AND CAPITALISATION OF CERTAIN SUBSIDIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Lords amendment: No. 47, in page 38, line 25, leave out "instalments" and insert "payments"

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 48.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The amendment simply achieves consistency with the other references to the "payments". Amendment No. 48 is purely drafting.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 48 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 49, in page 39, line 21, leave out subsection (8) and insert—

"(8) Paragraph 1(b) of Schedule 16 to the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (duty of local authority to credit slum clearance subsidy to slum clearance revenue account) shall cease to have effect on 1st April 1989."

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 92 and 100.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under paragraph 1(b) of schedule 16 to the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, local authorities are required to credit to their slum clearance revenue account payments of slum clearance subsidy. However, under the provisions of this clause the only payments to be made to local authorities in respect of expenditure on slum clearance on or after 1 April 1989 will be capital payments made under subsection (3). Slum clearance subsidy itself will disappear. Such capital payments will be credited to the appropriate capital account and not to a revenue account.

Lords amendment No. 49 therefore replaces the existing subsection (8) with a more definite provision to remove the duty on local authorities to credit subsidy payments to the slum clearance revenue account with effect from 1 April 1989. Lords amendment No. 100 adds paragraph 1(b) of schedule 16 to the repeal schedule. The repeal will take effect from 1 April 1989. Lords amendment No. 92 similarly amends section 207 of the 1987 Act to import the relevant parts of section 200, which is being repealed, explicitly into section 207. In summary, the points are therefore technical ones, consequential on the rest of the clause.

I understand that COSLA welcomes the change because it gives local authorities more flexibility.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 66

RENT OFFICERS: ADDITIONAL FUNCTIONS RELATING TO HOUSING BENEFIT ETC

Lords amendment: No. 50, in page 40, line 5, after "instrument" insert

"which, except in the case of the first order to be made, shall be"

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 51.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: When the Bill left this House for another place, clause 66 provided that the orders to specify the functions of rent officers in relation to housing benefit subsidy were to be subject to negative resolution of either House of Parliament. However, the first order, which will set out in detail how rent officers will carry out their new role, seems to us to warrant a debate in this House. Hon. Members clearly have a major interest in the details of the provisions. Therefore, the Government have decided that the first order should be subject to affirmative resolution. Any subsequent order will, however, be subject to negative resolution.

As hon. Members are aware, the new role of the rent officer has been the subject of consideration by working parties comprising Government Departments, local authority associations and rent officers. The working parties have completed their deliberations and the Government are currently examining what they have proposed. The House will have an opportunity to discuss the detail of the new arrangements when we debate the first order within the next few months.

Mr. Home Robertson: I wish that that meant something. Clause 66 is an extremely offensive and alarming provision and we shall be able to say something about the principle behind it when we discuss the next group of amendments.

The Minister has represented as a concession the fact that the first order will be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure of the House. That still means that the restrictions will apply to housing benefit whether anyone likes it or not because the affirmative resolution does not provide for proper parliamentary scrutiny. The Minister said that this matter should be debated in the House, but I think that it should be debated in Scotland. I believe that the Scottish people would deliver the same verdict on this provision as they have delivered on the Government repeatedly in the past.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 51 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 52, in page 40, line 10, at end insert—

"( ) At the end of section 21(6) of the Social Security Act 1986 (regulations prescribing maximum family credit and maximum housing benefit) there shall be added the words "and regulations prescribing the appropriate maximum housing benefit may provide for benefit to be limited by reference to determinations made by rent officers in exercise of functions conferred under section 66 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988'."

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 53 and 54.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Lords amendment No. 52 brings the Scottish Bill into line with the English one. This is necessary since the housing benefit system with which the rent officers will become involved through clause 66, covers the whole of Great Britain.

The amendment allows my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security to take into account the determinations made by rent officers under clause 66 if he makes regulations limiting the maximum amount of housing benefit that may be paid in certain circumstances. That is designed to avoid obtaining unnecessarily the same information twice which would be wasteful and lead to inconsistency. If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did not have the power to use the information of determinations by rent officers, he would have to obtain the same information from a different source. Lords amendments Nos. 53 and 54 are simply consequential drafting provisions.

Mr. Speaker: I call Lord Home Robertson.

Mr. Home Robertson: Not yet, Mr. Speaker, but hope springs eternal.

The amendments establish a link between clause 66 of this Bill and the Social Security Act 1986 to provide for the limitation of housing benefit paid to claimants living in accommodation which Tory Ministers think is too good for them. We debated this point at length in Committee. As we now know, the carve-up of the housing benefits system in April has led to drastic cuts in support for hundreds of thousands of Scots.

About 650,000 claimants in Scotland are worse off as a result of the changes imposed by the Government in April and that includes about 120,000 claimants whose housing benefit has been stopped altogether. The transitional relief system is, frankly, little better than a fig leaf. Where it has led to any payments, it has not been much help to the claimants.

We all have constituency experience of the hardship caused by the changes. As a direct consequence of the housing benefit changes, we now have unprecedented levels of rent arrears throughout Scotland. I am sure that all of us have come across cases in our constituencies of elderly people who find themselves in debt for the first time in their lives because of the cuts in their housing benefit. Their family benefit can simply no longer cover their obligation to pay rent on time. That is causing terrible distress to many people.

On top of that, clause 66 means that a householder claiming housing benefit who happens to live in an up-market area or in a house deemed to be bigger than is absolutely necessary for the tenant, will have housing benefit entitlement cut. That is a nauseating provision designed to force the poor people of Scotland into ghettos.

I invite the Minister to take us through the sequence of events which might occur if a family in his home neighbourhood of north Berwick in my constituency was to find itself in this trap. If a tenant living in a nice house in that neighbourhood which happens to have one room more than is strictly speaking necessary for the family's needs were to lose his job, become ill and have to claim housing benefit, will the Minister acknowledge that in due course under this clause the claimant would find his level of benefit would be restricted and that he and his family would in due course be forced out of the home to look for cheaper or smaller accommodation, which is unlikely to be readily available in the same neighbourhood?

That is an appalling scenario, but that is what has been built up by the Government arising from this shameful clause and its connection to the Social Security Act 1986. We are violently opposed to that aspect of the legislation and we intend to vote against Lords amendment No. 52.

Mr. McAllion: Obviously we are dealing with housing benefit here. I do not think that we could be dealing with a more controversial subject now. A tremendous amount of heartache has been caused in Scotland, particularly to people on low incomes, as a result of the changes in housing benefit introduced in April.

I want to refer to two short examples of this hardship, gained from people who came to my surgery and drew my attention to their experience of what happened to them under the Government's transitional protection arrangements. The first example is of a lady who sent her application off in July and was told that if she had not heard within six weeks, she should give the transitional payment unit in Glasgow a phone call. She did that and was told that they were sorry and if she phoned back in two weeks they would let her know then. She called back in two weeks and was told that everything was held up because of the postal strike. She was told to wait until the strike was over and call back then. She called back last week and was told by a very harassed girl in the office that everything was in chaos. She was told, "We cannot find your letter. You need to re-apply because we don't know what has happened to your application and we don't know what you are entitled to." It is time something was done about the way in which the transitional payments unit in Glasgow is operating the housing benefit transitional protection payments. The unit simply is not working. Somebody somewhere in the Government will have to waken up to that reality and start to do something about it.

9.30 pm

In another case a man was told that if he lost in excess of £2.50 a week he would be eligible to apply for transitional protection. He did so, but after five or six months, during which time his applications was lost in the convolutions of the bureaucratic machinery that has been set up, he was sent a notice to say that he had been awarded transitional protection payments of 9p a week and that if he sent a stamped addressed envelope the payment would be sent to him. That is the sort of nonsense that is affecting ordinary people with low incomes, leading them directly into massive debt and leading councils into massive rent arrears. It is time that the Government properly funded the housing benefit system in Scotland.

The Minister mentioned that working parties have been set up with representatives from the Government, local authority associations and rent officers. May we have more information on the kind of recommendations that those working parties are likely to come up with? I want to know exactly how the rent officers will assess whether a rent is unreasonable for the purposes of housing benefit. What criteria will rent officers be expected to use in making such assessments?

For example, we are told that rent officers are supposed to use their professional judgment. However, since they have never before been required to consider this area and

[Mr. McAllion]

have no direct experience of what is required from them, I do not see how they can. Their professional judgment has never before required them to consider the specific problem of whether people should be receiving housing benefit for the particular house in which they happen to live.

We are told that rent officers are to be guided by the need to protect public funds. Are they also to be guided by the principle that the tenant's right to live in peace should be protected, or is that principle to be thrown out of the window for the sake of a miserable saving for the public purse so that the Chancellor can come here and boast about how the public sector borrowing requirement is falling year upon year, when it is doing so upon the back of the misery inflicted upon many poor families in Britain?

The Secretary of State for Scotland will be issuing guidance. As I understand it, one of the first things that the rent officers will be asked to do is to discover the address of a person who applies for housing benefit. Once they have that, they can judge what kind of area that house is in. If it is a good area of a town, they might decide that an unemployed person has no right to be living there and would be far better off in a less desirable area. Is that one of the professional judgments that rent officers will have to make?

What about people who, through no fault of their own, find that they have fallen on bad times? A husband might die or find himself out of work. Could such a family then be judged to be living in the wrong area? Will a wife who is left with the children have to get out of her house and move to a less desirable part of town as a result of clause 66? The Minister will have to answer those questions.

We are also told that the rent officers will have to consider details of the occupants of a property and the number of rooms in each house. Again, we suggest that a judgment will be made on whether a person applying for housing benefit has a right to stay in a house with more than one bedroom if he is the only person living there. Will a widow or widower living in the house that previously housed their family be required to get out if the rent officer decides that housing benefit cannot be paid because he or she is over-accommodated in the house?

The Minister cannot simply let this slip through as some kind of technical link between the Housing (Scotland) Bill and the Social Security Act 1986. These are serious matters which frighten many people in Scotland. The Minister has a responsibility to come to the Dispatch Box and say how the clause will operate in the kind of cases that I have outlined, and that he too is anxious about the transitional payment unit's failure to operate in Scotland and the Government's bureaucratic incompetence which has led to their failure to assist people who find themselves in serious debt.

Mr. Bill Walker: This amendment deals with the maximum housing benefit that can be provided, and comments have been made about the problems that have arisen resulting from transitional payments. I am sure that all right hon. and hon. Members have had to deal with constituents who have experienced difficulties as a result of the changes that occurred, but it is not all doom and gloom.

I took up a number of cases on behalf of my own constituents. One that particularly springs to mind concerns a man living with his common law wife and seven children who had been receiving more than £70 per week housing benefit. Changes were made and he found himself in some difficulty. The House will be interested to learn that under the transitional arrangements, that figure has now been paid in full—including the arrears that accrued during the weeks when there was some doubt about his payments. The fact is that the regulations that operated during the transitional period worked in my constituency. I say to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) that my experience is not the same as his and that the people who merit proper housing benefit are receiving it.

We regularly hear about the failure of the housing coffers to be sustained by the public purse, yet right hon. and hon. Members on the Opposition Benches regularly overlook the massive sums of public money that go into the housing coffers every week directly through housing benefit provisions, including the transitional arrangements operating at the moment. The sum involved runs into many millions of pounds. That has been the most massive increase of all in housing support to those in need.

I am not arguing that those who are in need should not receive housing benefit, because I believe that they should. One of the ways in which the public purse can assist people is by making sure that they may have the funds that allow them to live in proper homes. Housing benefit has worked and it will continue to work under this amendment. Much of the scaremongering we hear from the Opposition Benches is just that—scaremongering.

Dr. Reid: I hope that the Minister will give his attention to some of the very serious comments made from these Benches. He has been amazing in his resilience to the points that have been made; it has been like grappling with a wet Kleenex. I hope that on this occasion he will give specific answers to questions asked of him by my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion).

It is no use the Minister withdrawing into the fantasy world that he created when giving his answers in our debates on the last few amendments—the fantasy world of the benevolent landlord, which, like military intelligence, is a contradiction in terms. One cannot withdraw into a fantasy world if one is living, perhaps with a family, in a council house which is associated with one's past—perhaps with one's deceased spouse, with one's children, and with the good times—and where one's residence there is dependent upon housing benefit.

Enough difficulties have already been caused by existing housing benefit legislation, not only in itself but in respect of rent arrears. I can tell the Minister that in my own area, the arrears for Motherwell district council at the start of the financial year 1987-88 totalled just over £1 million. By July they had risen to £1·8 million. There can be no substantial reason for that increase other than the effect of housing benefit cuts. It represents an increase of more than 80 per cent. in rent arrears—more than £750,000 lost by the council. That is because the number of beneficiaries has been reduced by 3,000. Their benefit has not just been reduced—they have been taken off benefit altogether.

Between April and July 1987, benefit was being paid to the tune of £6,593,000. In the period from April to July 1988, the figure was only £5,441,000, which is a reduction of more than £1,100,000 for that quarter; a yearly equivalent of £4,607,000. That is the loss in benefits to a

constituency such as mine, which has among the highest public sector housing populations, if not the highest, in Scotland.

The Minister must answer the questions that have been put to him. I shall not burden him with all the cases that have come to my surgery, because time moves on. I shall give him just one example. It concerns not a young person but an 83-year-old man, who is not able-bodied. He has suffered from pneumoconiosis and he still does. The Minister will be aware that pneumoconiosis is not a medical characteristic of an idle life. It is not a sign of a life spent in a billiard room or in a bar; it is a sign of a life spent in the depths and the darkness of a pit, creating value by extracting coal. He was not someone who, when war came, asked what his country could do for him, or even what he could do for his country—he went out and did it. Now, at the age of 83 and crippled with that disease, his rent is raised from 72p to £27 a fortnight. He is entitled to ask what his country will do for him. He has asked, but he has received no reply. I hope that tonight he will receive a specific and sound reply that will at least give him some hope for the remaining years of his life.

Mrs. Fyfe: The electorate of Tayside, North certainly had negative value when they elected their Member of Parliament. It is true that housing benefit involves massive sums, but that is because people are out of work. They would rather be in employment than be unemployed and receiving housing benefit.

For the sake of brevity, I shall cite only one example of the effect of the limit on housing benefit. We have already discussed the problem faced by widows, but there is also the problem faced by women who have been deserted by their husbands. They might be left in houses that the Government consider to be too good or too big, but why should they have to leave them and their neighbourhoods, give up their friends and change their children's schools? They might have made many improvements to their houses, at great cost to themselves. Why should they hand them over with no return just because some Conservative politician thinks that they are too good or too big? The Government have failed to justify this legislation and it will not be welcome in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) asked about the transitional payments unit and how quickly applications were processed. I understand that the unit has received about 352,000 applications of which 218,000 have been processed, with 116,000 of them being successful. By the end of the week about 108,000 payments will have been made.

The Government have made it clear, at all stages, that housing benefit should be available to qualifying tenants paying rents at the level determined by the markets. Rent officers will have the task of verifying that the rent being paid by a private tenant who claims housing benefit is no higher than the market level. In cases where the rent officer judges the rent to be above the market level, he will assess the reasonable market rent for the property, and housing benefit subsidy will be available up to the level of that assessment. The local authority can pay benefit above that level if it chooses, but it will lose subsidy on the excess.

The housing benefit system is not designed to enable claimants to occupy, at public expense, the sort of accommodation that the vast majority of people could not reasonably expect to afford out of their own resources. That is why we made clear, in setting out our proposals on the housing benefit implications of deregulation, our intention to introduce in due course a limit on housing benefit itself—not just on housing benefit subsidy—in cases where a claimant is occupying accommodation that is at the top end of the market. We also indicated that we should consider further restrictions on benefit should that prove necessary to prevent abuse of the housing benefit system.

Accordingly, the amendments to clause 66 provide an enabling power for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to make regulations requiring housing benefit to be restricted by reference to rent officers' determinations. As hon. Members know, working parties involving the local authority associations, the Institute of Rent Officers and Government Departments, including the Scottish Office, are currently considering how the system will work. They are paying particular attention to the problem of identifying what houses are over-luxurious, but they have not yet reached a conclusion. When they do, hon. Members will have an opportunity to debate the outcome.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 199, Noes 136.

Division No. 457] **[8.44 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'th's)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Coombe, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stam'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John

Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jenman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Lang, Ian
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
McLoughlin, Patrick
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Wavaney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean, and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Begg, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Heller, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Ingram, Adam
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Salmond, Alex
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Lords amendments Nos. 53 to 57 agreed to.

Clause 70

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Lords amendment: No. 58, in page 41, line 10, after "force" insert

"as follows—

(a) section 65 and section 68 (so far as relating to Schedule 7) and this section and that Schedule, shall come into force on the day this Act is passed;

(b) sections 33 to 37, 62, 63, and 67 and section 68 (so far as relating to Schedule 8 and to the entries in Schedule 10 in respect of—

(i) sections 62(11) to (13), 151, 200, 254, 255, 296 and 297 of; and

(ii) provisions of Schedules 13 and 14 to,

the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987), and Schedule 8 and, in Schedule 10, those entries shall come into force at the end of the period of two months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed;

(c) section 68 (so far as relating to the entry in Schedule 10 relating to paragraph (1)(b) of Schedule 16 to the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987) and that entry shall come into force on 1st April 1989;

(d) the remaining provisions shall come into force."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Home Robertson: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, amendment (a), in subsection (a), leave out 'section 65 and'.

Mr. Speaker: With this we may consider amendments (b) to (c) and Government amendment (d) to the Lords amendment.

Mr. Home Robertson: Amendment (a) would retain the requirement for a statutory instrument on rent limitation for the SSHA, new towns and housing associations, which would be removed automatically and immediately, without further consultation or debate, if the Lords amendment were implemented.

Amendment (b) would similarly provide for further consultation about and consideration of the abolition of the cost floor for sales of councils houses, and would enable us to think about its impact on local authorities and their tenants. Under the Lords amendment it would be implemented automatically only two months after the Bill came into effect.

Amendment (c) would require a statutory instrument on the sales of new town housing land, which I know is a matter of particular concern to my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram).

These are all contentious issues and require proper consideration and consultation with the people who will be affected before the details of the implementation are finalised. The Bill originally provided for such consideration before regulations are made and Lords amendment No. 58 would provide a short cut for Ministers. They should not be allowed to get away with that, and the House should insist on being allowed to return to these matters and to give full consideration to the regulations before they come into effect.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Lords Amendments to the Housing (Scotland) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Lords amendments again considered.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: At present and because of unforeseen consequences of amending the definition of housing associations for the purpose of part VI of the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984, the SSHA, development corporations and co-operative housing associations are included within the scope of part VI of that Act. This means that, unintentionally, these bodies can have their rents determined and registered by the rent officer. Of course, this is nonsensical and has never happened. Having seen this mistake, we naturally want to correct it at the first available opportunity and have thus included clause 65 and an early commencement date—the day the Act is passed. That deals with amendment (a).

I cannot accept amendment (b) and can find no good reason why the provisions in clause 62 should not be commenced two months after the Bill receives Royal Assent.

Since the provisions in clause 62 were tabled by amendment on Report, they have been the subject of much debate in this House and in another place. I have listened with interest to what the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) has said but cannot accept the points that he makes.

In connection with amendment (c), despite misgivings expressed earlier in the House, the matter was not challenged in another place and I find it surprising that the hon. Member for East Lothian now returns to the provision in such an obscure way. I recommend that amendment (c) be rejected.

I shall now deal briefly with the amendment to Lords amendment No. 58 in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. Under the provisions of clause 63 some Exchequer subsidies are terminated on 1 April 1989. Because of a drafting error, the date of the consequential repeal of the existing powers is specified in paragraph (b) as being two months after the date of Royal Assent.

This error, if uncorrected, would leave a gap of about three months between the repeals and the coming into force of the new provisions on 1 April 1989. There would therefore be no legal right for a local authority to receive, or for the Government to pay, the grants and subsidies covered by these repealed provisions during that period. The amendment to Lords amendment No. 58 removes from paragraph (b) the references to existing provisions, leaving them to be repealed by a commencement order under subsection (2)(d) on 1 April 1989.

Lords Amendment No. 58 sets out on the face of the Bill commencement dates for certain of its provisions. An order will shortly be prepared setting out the commencement dates for the other provisions of the Bill. Hon. Members may find it helpful if I set our intentions out in broad terms. Scottish Homes will come into operation on 1 April 1989, but it will be necessary to bring some provisions relating to it in part I and the schedules into effect earlier, so that it can prepare itself for full-scale operation. The provisions relating to the private rented sector in part II and the related schedules will come into effect early in the new year. Finally, part III of the Bill relating to tenants' choice will come into effect on 1 April next year.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): I should like to ask the Minister for some assurances on clause 67. Will he give us an assurance that there will be no disposal of land or houses on land within the Scottish new towns before the full consultation process has been gone through? I understand that Lords amendment No. 58 would take away one aspect of the process by which there would be discussion in the House. It appears that two months after the Bill becomes an Act clause 67 could be applied in full.

The House should be aware that within the last four weeks the Government have twice called off the consultation document on the wind-up of the new towns. They did so without any consultation with the district councils or even with the development corporation. They simply said that they wanted those documents produced and in the hands of the public, and then called off the consultations at the last moment.

People in the new towns are worried that, as a result of Lords amendment No. 58, shortly after the Bill becomes an Act, the Government will start disposing of land and, more importantly, the houses on that land. Will there be full consultation? Will that consultation paper, when it is produced, be subject to the full rigours of the normal consultation period, and will the Minister give his assurance that there will be no implementation of the intention to wind up the new towns until that process has been gone through?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The short answer to the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) is yes. I am sitting next to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, who is responsible for new towns, and I can say that the consultation document will be brought forward soon.

Mr. Home Robertson: I have received so much satisfaction from hearing the Minister explain that these amendments arise out of a cock-up by the Scottish Office that I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment (d) to the Lords amendment agreed to.

Lords amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 59 and 60 agreed to. [Special entry.]

Schedule 2

Amendments Consequential on Establishing of Scottish Homes and Abolition of SSHA

Lords amendment: No. 61, in page 48, line 35, at end insert—

'Local Government Act 1988

16. In section 1(1)—

(a) after paragraph (j) there shall be inserted the word "and",

(b) paragraph (l) and the word "and" immediately preceding it shall cease to have effect.

17. In Schedule 2, the words "The Scottish Special Housing Association" shall be omitted.'

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 101.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: These amendments will ensure that Scottish Homes does not inherit the application to the SSHA of the wider competition requirements to be introduced in the course of 1989 by the Local Government Act 1988. The hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) raised this point with me when we debated the matter last summer.

The competition requirements are intended primarily for local authorities but apply to some bodies which are very similar to local authorities, as the SSHA is at present. They do not apply to the Scottish Development Agency or the HIDB and they are inappropriate to a wide-ranging body like Scottish Homes. This amendment will simply put Scottish Homes on the same footing as the SDA in this matter.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister has just confirmed that there is one law for a Tory quango and another for elected local authorities. The latter are forced to go through the farce of the competitive tendering process under the privatisation provisions of the Local Government Act 1988, but this Tory-inspired and principally Tory-manned quango is being specifically excluded from the duty to put contracts out to competitive tendering. If it is so good for a large authority to be compelled to go in for competitive tendering, why should Scottish Homes not also be required to carry out that process? This exposes the hypocrisy of the competitive tendering scheme in the public sector, and it has done no harm to draw attention to the Government's conduct in this connection.

Question put and agreed to.

Schedule 3

Scottish Homes: Amendments of Housing Associations Act 1985

Lords amendment No. 62 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 63, in page 50, line 48, leave out "15(3)" and insert "15—

(a) in subsection (2) at the end there shall be added the following paragraph—

"(f) in the case of housing associations registered in the register maintained by Scottish Homes, payments made or benefits granted by such an association with the approval of Scottish Homes (which approval may be given only in relation to a class or classes of case)."

(b) in subsection (3)".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This concerns a very important matter and one to which we have given much consideration—the granting of tenancies and other benefits to those involved in the running of housing associations or their close relatives.

Amendment No. 63 gives Scottish Homes the power to define classes of case in which the granting of benefits will be allowed. As such, existing controls will be relaxed but abuse of the system will not be allowed to creep in. We believe that we are getting the balance right and that is very important.

This amendment will allow Scottish Homes to introduce exceptions to the general prohibition against benefits, which are tailored to particular circumstances as they emerge. By confining this power to classes of case, rather than applying it to individual cases, we are ensuring the even-handed treatment of those closely involved in the running and decision-making of individual housing associations.

This subject has concerned all parties in this House and I am very pleased that we have been able to meet the concern which has been expressed. The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations wrote to say that it is grateful for the efforts taken to achieve this necessary and important change.

Mr. Home Robertson: I acknowledge this important concession to committee members, office bearers and staff of housing associations. The matter has been raised repeatedly over the years by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and by a number of hon. Members in Committee. I cited the case of one of my constituents who has two disabled sons and serves on the committee of a specialist housing association for disabled people. Because of her membership of that committee, her sons have hitherto been prevented from becoming tenants of that housing association. It has been absurd and unfair that membership of such committees should prevent members of such families from becoming tenants of housing associations. That has been demanded over a long period. I welcome the fact that the Government have conceded this significant point. Perhaps the Minister can tell us when he expects that the provisions will be implemented.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman to give him the precise date, but I should think that it will be extremely quickly.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Rating and Valuation

10.12 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Abolition of Domestic Rates (Domestic and Part Residential Subjects) (Scotland) Regulations 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1477), dated 22nd August 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 24th August, be annulled.

Despite the fact that we have lost some time for these regulations, I can assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have no intention of speaking at the speed at which you dealt with the final Lords amendments to the Housing (Scotland) Bill.

We have just considered what can now rightly be called the Michael Ancram Benefit Bill, set up to give him a job in his retirement from Parliament. In dealing with poll tax regulations, we now move to the measure that led to that gentleman's demise from the House. The only shame about that is that he is not here to apologise for the promises that he made about the poll tax, which are now being broken by the Government.

None of the six sets of regulations is of itself of great importance. Some of them give minor concessions to demands that the Opposition, local authorities in Scotland and COSLA have been making for some time. We have made it clear from the beginning that whenever we have an opportunity to debate the obscenities of the poll tax, we shall take it.

It is absurd that with only five months to go before the poll tax is imposed on 1 April 1989 we are still debating regulations that will bring the Act into force. When the Government introduced the commencement order for the Abolition of Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 over a year ago, they announced their intention to have, with the exception of the rebate scheme, all the regulations clear of the consultation process by the end of 1987. They said that the regulations would be laid and debated long before now. The report of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, which the Government commissioned, made it clear that if the timetable was not adhered to—it wanted a tighter timetable than that which the Government proposed—local authorities would be in considerable trouble in implementing the poll tax efficiently by April 1989. Ten months have passed and the tax will come into force in five months' time, and the process is still not complete.

Even the regulations that we are discussing will not complete the process. Several important issues are still being discussed with COSLA and local authorities in Scotland. Other regulations have been discussed, but they have not yet been laid before the House. They include the exemption from poll tax of care workers in residential homes, the registration of cross-border students from England and Wales to ensure that they do not become liable for two poll taxes, information from the Registrar General of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on deaths of those who are on the register for the poll tax to ensure that bereaved widows are not hounded, the prescription of base rates for non-domestic rates, and regulations on the direct reduction of poll tax from social security payments when arrears have been accumulated, which was one of the promises made in Committee by Mr. Michael Ancram. He said that that would never take place but now we know that it will.

There are also to be regulations on the provision of information to registration officers from the DSS, as we now have to call it. The promise was made by Mr. Michael Ancram in Committee that no information would be sought from the DSS. We find now that information will be given to registration officers on all those claiming income support. It is a great shame that promise after promise is being broken by the Government.

One major set of regulations is still to come, and they concern the rebate scheme. It appears that we are to have yet another broken promise. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has obtained a letter which was written by the Secretary of State for Social Security to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. It makes it fairly clear that the Government will break a promise that was given to those who are the hardest off in our society, the very poorest, who are living on basic income support, that their benefit would be uprated by the 20 per cent. that they will have to pay as a contribution to their poll tax liability. That promise will be broken by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

It is a pleading letter. The Secretary of State for Social Security pleads with his right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to ensure that the rating matches the average poll tax payment. He is asking for an uprating of £1·05 and £1·30 for single people under and over 25 respectively and £2·10 for couples. The uprating of £1·05 assumes an average poll tax in Scotland of £273. No one believes that that will be the average. It will certainly not be less than that.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Why not?

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): My hon. Friend will tell the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) in a moment.

Mr. Maxton: As my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) said, I will tell the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

Poll taxes will be considerably higher in local authority areas which have the most of social security benefit claimants. Before Conservative Members start claiming, as usual, that that is due to high spending Labour-controlled local authorities——

Mr. Bill Walker: It is.

Mr. Maxton: That having been said, I shall quote the Secretary of State for Social Security. He said:

"I should also emphasise that my officials' estimates are, if anything, on the low side because they are based on average liabilities to the community charge for the population as a whole whereas the Prime Minister's pledge was to protect the average liability for those on income support. The latter will probably be higher, as income support recipients are not spread uniformly throughout the country but tend to be in poorer authorities with higher levels of spending per capita."

Hon. Members should notice that the authorities referred to are not high-spending Labour-controlled authorities, but poorer authorities, which have greater demands made on them and, equally, a lower tax rate to start with. That is the point that hon. Members should bear in mind.

One other point that is made by the Secretary of State for Social Security is that, unlike any Scottish Office Minister at any time, he is prepared to concede that the average poll tax in Scotland will be higher because local authorities may not be able to collect all of it. He says:

[Mr. Maxton]

"The fact that local authorities may not collect the community charge in full is one, but by no means the only, reason for these estimates being higher than those published for the current year."

The letter reveals a very serious breach of promises made by the Prime Minister, by the Secretary of State for Scotland and by junior Ministers in Committee. The Miniser has a responsibility tonight——

Mr. Foulkes: A duty.

Mr. Maxton: The Minister has a duty to say that that will not happen, that the promise that has been made will be fulfilled and that, if necessary, the rating will be even higher than the Department of Social Security is asking for, so that those who are the poorest in our society will receive their full entitlement.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): My hon. Friend is being too kind and lenient. Despite the lateness of the hour, we should ask for a Treasury Minister to come here to reply to the letter before we give the regulations our blessing. That should have happened before now.

Mr. Maxton: My hon. Friend makes a good point. The Treasury Bench should ensure that a Treasury Minister is here before 11.30 pm, when the debate finishes. It would make more sense for a senior member of some standing in the Government to be here, even the Secretary of State for Scotland, rather than his underling. That would add a little more weight to the debate.

I do not want to speak for long because many hon. Members want to take part in this short debate. However, I must say that we await the details of the rebate scheme with interest. There has to be a rebate scheme with the poll tax. If many Conservative Members had their way, there would be no rebate scheme. Over a month ago, the Minister and the Secretary of State for Scotland hyped the rebate scheme in Scotland and made a great deal of play of its being generous and taking account of ability to pay.

But everybody must pay a minimum of 20 per cent. That is the first point to be made about the rebate scheme. If there is not full uprating, someone under the age of 25 will pay a minimum of £1 a week even in the lowest rated authority in Scotland. In other rating authorities, the amount will be considerably more. That amount is nearly 4 per cent. of a low income. My wife and I will pay £500 in poll tax, but that is only 1·5 per cent. of our income. That is what makes this tax so obscene and unfair: someone on the lowest possible income will pay a higher percentage of his income than someone on my income will pay.

We shall continue on all occasions to fight the poll tax. We shall put the case to the people of Scotland and the people of Great Britain as a whole. As is clear from the last general election, the tax will bring down the Government. It will lose many Conservative seats in England and Wales. We shall form the next Government, and we shall withdraw the poll tax.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. As this is a short debate and many hon. Members wish to take part, brief speeches would be appreciated.

10.25 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) has continued his speeches of misinformation. We seem to have gone round and round the buoy several times on the community charge, as directed by the hon. Gentleman.

In a general debate on the community charge, I think that we should record the good news that registration has gone so well in Scotland. Only an infinitesimal proportion of people have not registered. That is entirely contrary to the expectation of Opposition Members, who hoped that it would be a rating disaster. It has turned out exactly the opposite: the Scottish people have shown great responsibility, and have reacted to the registration procedure as we had anticipated. I think that they now understand, despite the Opposition's efforts, that it is a fair system and particularly helps those on low incomes. The Opposition have gone out of their way to avoid discussing the rebate scheme, and have spent the last few months scaremongering in Scotland and trying to create dissatisfaction and dissension about a new system that is entirely different from the rating system, based as it is on fairness and the ability to pay.

As the day of implementation gets closer the Opposition are realising how wrong they have been about the views of the majority in Scotland—despite the public opinion polls. As we all know, anyone can get the right answer out of any public opinion poll. I anticipate that by next summer there will be even less opposition to the charge than at present, especially when people find out what the charges will be. The hon. Member for Cathcart —with, no doubt, his cohorts behind him—has grossly inflated the likely charge. The hon. Gentleman said that the average charge might be £250, but obviously a good many local authorities will charge less if the average is as high as that. My authority, which has not been the warmest supporter of the charge, estimates it at £230, including the water rate. I believe that it will be very much lower than the figures bandied about by the Opposition.

Until now—when they realise that the charge is so imminent that they will have to accept it—Opposition Members have dodged explaining to the Scottish population about the rebate scheme, that 80 per cent. will be available to those with the appropriate income level and that those who thereafter still cannot afford the 20 per cent. will have support from the DHSS. There could be a 100 per cent. rebate for those on the lowest incomes.

Mr. Foulkes: That has not been published.

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman says that it has not been published. Opposition Members do not seem to read what is in the newspapers or listen to what Ministers say. Let me give them some examples. A married couple with two children aged under 11 would not pay the full community charge unless their gross income was more than £8,800 a year, the equivalent of £135 a week.

Mr. Foulkes: That is great.

Sir Hector Monro: Yes, it is nice to know. That couple would probably be paying more under the present rating system.

A pensioner couple would need to have a gross unearned income of £6,300 a year—the equivalent of £115 a week—before they would pay the full community charge.

Mr. Foulkes: Did the hon. Gentleman get permission to leak this?

Sir Hector Monro: Well, it is much better than the stuff that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) produced—that was the greatest non-event of the year. After listening to the one o'clock news I thought that something dramatic was going to turn up later on, but it all fell as flat as a pancake.

A single pensioner would need to have a gross unearned income of more than £3,530—a net income of £66 a week—before he would have to pay the full community charge. I could give a whole list of cases that would show the effectiveness of the rebate scheme. We should all welcome that and publicise it rather than try to sweep it under the carpet and, at the same time, claim that it is a raging disaster.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): Will my hon. Friend confirm that in Scotland, as well as in England, the Labour party proposals would replace one unfair taxation with two—a capital valuation as well as a valuation based on local income tax? Surely that would hit the pensioners, those who can least afford to pay? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) will resist the temptation to discuss matters other than those before the House.

Sir Hector Monro: Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but my hon. Friend is right. The scheme presented by the Labour party is so complicated that no one understands it.

Given that I have explained some of the rebate scheme to the Opposition—there is a great deal more to it, but I shall obey your suggestion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be brief—we are entitled to know where the Opposition stand on the issue.

I am glad to note that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) is present, because on 17 September she was quoted in a newspaper as saying:

"if voting does not get you what you want and the Government does not reflect the will of the people, then you have to resist that Government by any means open to you."

The only man of sense and the only man in step in the Labour party is the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) who has said:

"you can't argue for the rule of law when the right people are in charge and have the luxury of picking and choosing when they are not. A party which takes this course forfeits respect."

The hon. Gentleman is the only chap to understand that the rest of his party is forfeiting respect.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Earlier, when we were discussing the Scottish homes legislation, the point was raised about the landlord who attempts to continue charging rents and rates on a house when the poll tax is implemented. The Minister said that, in that case, the tenant was being charged fraudulently for rates and that he should complain and refuse to pay. That is the Minister's advice to a tenant who may be poor, young or elderly or who may have difficulty with the English language. The Conservatives are on the side of the landlord who attempts to defy the law by obtaining money under false pretences. We are on the tenants' side.

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Lady does not understand the point. That landlord would be breaking the law and it would be wrong to pay something when it is illegal. The objective of our legislation is to help people who are paying the community charge.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): The hon. Gentleman should take the balls out of his mouth because I cannot understand what he is saying.

Sir Hector Monro: The Door is over there if the hon. Gentleman cannot understand. The people of Dumfries understand more than they do in here. I would like to retort to that remark, but I would only embarrass the hon. Gentleman.

This week Opposition Members have been visiting Govan and we are entitled to know what the Labour party candidate had to say about paying the community charge, the candidate said:

"The policy allows individuals like myself to refuse to pay as a personal gesture of solidarity"——

[Interruption.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are moving away from the issues before the House. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will confine his remarks to the motion before the House.

Sir Hector Monro: As I appreciate the embarrassment on the Opposition Benches, I will not proceed with that line.

However, the people in Scotland would certainly like to know where the Labour party—which seems to be fractured in every direction—is going with respect to the community charge. The intention to defy the law is a shocking example from any party that aspires to government in Scotland, and that applies as much to the Scottish National party and the Democrats as to the Labour party.

The regulations that are the subject of the Prayer tonight help to clarify a number of important parts of the community charge legislation. They add substantially to helping those who need help and we should have no problem approving them tonight. I warmly support my hon. Friend the Minister's proposals. We have had another opportunity tonight to show that the Labour party does not understand the community charge. It is hopelessly split and is against the wishes of the people of Scotland.

10.35 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): When I saw that these regulations had been brought forward tonight, my immediate reaction was to say: "How much longer is this going to go on? How many more bits and pieces will be brought to the House in a patched-up job?" Will the Minister assure us that the regulations will help the individuals and the local authorities which collect the poll tax? Will he also confirm that no individual will be excluded from the electoral register simply on the grounds that he or she is exempt from the personal poll tax due to severe mental impairment?

That exemption clause should probably be extended. The revised definition of severe mental impairment extends the original definition to include those suffering from an injury to the brain causing severe impairment of intelligence and social functioning which appears to be permanent. It could be argued reasonably that dementia—and Alzheimer's disease is the commonest form of dementia, in neurological terms—can be described as

[Mrs. Ray Michie]

injury to the brain. Should those sufferers be included? We should also consider dementia sufferers in residential care or in hospital who will be exempt from the charge while those living in the community will remain liable to it. That does not seem to be particularly fair.

I am also interested in the need for a certificate to qualify for exemption. I understand that the registration officer requires information from a general practitioner. With all due respect to general practitioners, who are busy people, I believe that "general" is the operative word. I am worried because it is the general practitioner who will say whether someone is severely mentally handicapped. Quite rightly, few general practitioners can make the proper assessment and conduct the proper investigation into whether someone is severely mentally handicapped.

Will those people who have to produce a certificate from the doctor for the registration officer have to pay for it? Will they get it free? With regard to the question of the invasion of privacy which was raised earlier, the form from the DHSS requests the date of birth in Scotland only. That has caused a great deal of resentment in my constituency. Here is the Department sending a form to the community charge registration officer saying "This person is getting income support. It may be that you do not know they are living at the address given below. You may wish to register them for the community charge." Already, information about where a person is staying is to be passed on from one to the other.

You asked us to be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I hope that I shall be. I hope to goodness that this is the final word on this awful poll tax. *[Interruption.]* Some hon. Members seem to think that there will be more, but it remains unfair and regressive, and the Government will rue the day that they ever introduced it.

10.40 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Following the trend set by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) and my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), may I say that I too am delighted that the registration process has gone so well. It has gone so well that the Opposition have gone quiet about it all.

It is also interesting that the hon. Member for Cathcart, if I understood him and our previous debates and discussions, complains that the Department of Social Security is to be consulted, yet any other proposals for amending local authority rates, from wherever they come, involve local income tax. That would necessarily involve substantial consultation and would mean that the town house would have access to information that it does not have at present. That shows the sort of humbug that we are hearing from the Opposition in their proposals.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will take this opportunity to answer a query that has arisen in my constituency on the views being taken by the assessors in Forfar. They have been advising some of my country constituents who have cottages which they let for holiday purposes, on an ad hoc, not an annual, basis to people on vacation.

My understanding of the debates that took place during the passage of the Scottish legislation was that such cottages would be treated as a business. I see the hon. Member for Cathcart nodding his head. However, the assessors in Forfar are advising my farmers and others with cottages in that category that they will have to pay the double community charge, whether or not the cottages are let.

That is a fundamental and important difference because if the cottages are let for holiday purposes the rate charge can be set as an expense against the income from the lets, whereas the community charge falls into a different category.

I have been interested in some of the Opposition's comments on the rebate scheme. There is no question but that this has been welcome. It may interest the House to know that during the recess, in common with many other Scottish Members, I went round my constituency knocking on doors asking my constituents for their views on current affairs. *[Interruption.]* I do it every year. Is that unusual? I should have thought that I was merely doing what everyone else does.

I can tell the House that out of the many hundreds of homes on which I called, I received only two critical comments about the community charge. That says much more about public reaction to the community charge and why people have registered to pay it. All the other comments made to me were complimentary, with people saying, "It is long overdue, and we cannot see it come in quick enough." That is certainly the situation in North Tayside.

That did not surprise me, because I was able to advise single pensioners on state earnings only, that if they had £4,000 in savings, they would receive a rebate of nearly 70 per cent. of the community charge. I was able to advise married pensioners that those of them receiving £69·90 gross per week would receive the maximum rebate, which reduces progressively until income rises to £115. That was seen as being a responsible way of offering rebates and of making the community charge acceptable to the population at large.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): When the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) explained to pensioners that they will receive a 70 per cent. rebate of poll tax, did he also explain that they did not have to pay any rates at all before?

Mr. Walker: I may first tell the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) that I never once discussed the poll tax—it does not exist. I discussed the community charge. I discussed with those individuals their current situation, which is what I believe the hon. Gentleman meant. I discussed also what will happen after the community charge comes into operation. I assure the hon. Member for Clydesdale that there were no complaints from any of the pensioners to whom I spoke.

What is important and relevant, certainly in my constituency, is that pensioners are among the most responsible and sensible of those in the community. They recognise that services must be paid for, and they acknowledge also that 14p in every £1 as their contribution, if they are paying the maximum community charge, is not unreasonable. If they enjoy a rebate, as in the case of the couple that I mentioned, they will receive a rebate on that 14p. The rest is paid for by taxation through central Government and the non-domestic rate.

I assure right hon. and hon. Members that what I have told them is no fairy tale. It can all be checked. I can mention the names of some of the towns I visited. They

included Aberfeldy, Pitlochry, Dunkeld, Blairgowrie Forfar and Kerriemuir. The people there all know that I have been to those places.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) obviously has detailed information about how the rebate system will operate when it is introduced in Scotland. I wrote to his hon. Friend the Minister of State six weeks ago, asking for detailed information about how the rebate scheme will operate, but he has yet to reply. Will the hon. Member for Tayside, North explain how he obtained his detailed information, when other hon. Members have been unable to gain access to it?

Mr. Walker: I obtained my information from the sources from which I normally obtain it. As hon. Members may recall, some time ago in the Scottish Grand Committee I commented that I always prepare my own briefs. That seemed to cause quite a stir. I can tell the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) that I obtained my information from the sources that are available to any hon. Member who wishes to make the effort.

10.48 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): The hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) said that right hon. and hon. Members should read the papers to learn what is happening. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that on 25 October, *The Scotsman* carried a headline,

"Half Scots on poll tax rebate 'would soon be in arrears'."

Does the hon. Member for Dumfries believe that that is true? The article begins:

"Half of Scotland's 1·5 million community charge payers who next year will qualify for a rebate will be in arrears after only three months of its operation, it was claimed yesterday."

The responsible person making that claim was an officer of the Scottish Consumer Council, which has carried out a survey of what is happening just now—as the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) suggested one should do. Currently, people are in debt with their rent and rates, but they will be even more in debt come 1 April 1989. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) mentioned a letter from the Secretary of State for Social Services to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. The letter states:

"I am copying this letter to Nick Ridley."

There is no suggestion that the Secretary of State for Scotland was sent a copy, yet it is far more pressing for Scotland than it is for England and Wales that there is some understanding of the rebate system and the cut-off points.

What is the position in Scotland? What is the Treasury saying? What defence will be forthcoming? What can the Secretary of State and his Ministers plead in aid?

My views about the tax are probably too well known for my own good. I have made my position clear and I only hope that others will join me in my regretful defiance. I do not take any pleasure in defying the law—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah".] Let those who say, "Ah" be clear about what we are doing. What is the cost of imposing the law?

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam) *rose*——

Mr. Douglas: I am not giving way because when I spoke on the Local Government Finance Bill I was told by the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) that I had no right to speak as it was an English and Welsh measure, despite the fact that there were hundreds of Scottish amendments——

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): The hon. Gentleman votes on English measures.

Mr. Douglas: One way to cure that would be to give us a Scottish Assembly.

The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) spoke for the so-called Democrats—I mean no disrespect to her—about the severely mentally impaired. I shall briefly explain what the Government are doing by putting this measure on the statute book. There have been slight concessions and we understand that, in round figures, they will affect about 6,000 people in Scotland.

Let us examine the conditions being laid down for exemption for someone who is severely mentally impaired and living in the community. They do not apply to someone in a hospital or a home; they relate to someone who is being compassionately cared for in the community and who has to go through such a rigmarole to gain exemption. All conditions must be fulfilled for someone to be granted exemption on ground of severe mental impairment. They are:

"(a) he is severely mentally impaired;
(b) he is stated to be severely mentally impaired in a certificate of a registered medical practitioner;
(c) he satisfies at least one of a number of benefit/pension conditions—see Annex A."

I will not go through that. The procedure when a poll tax registration officer has been notified of a possible claim on behalf of a person with severe mental impairment is that he will use the form annex B to request:

"(a) evidence of the applicant's entitlement to one of the relevant social security benefits"—

which is an invasion of privacy—[HON. MEMBERS: "Nonsense."] It is not nonsense. One thing for which I have fought throughout my life in politics is not to humiliate the poor and those whom we are sent here to defend and who cannot defend themselves.

The conditions continue:

"(b) the name of the applicant's general practitioner or other registered medical practitioner with knowledge of the applicant;
(c) agreement to the CCRO approaching the doctor to obtain a certificate"

and so on. They go through all that.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): That is sensible.

Mr. Douglas: The hon. Gentleman says that it is sensible. From his point of view, it may be.

Mr. Harris: Surely if we do not have checks on these matters, there will be widespread abuse and evasion. We must have sensible checks—nothing more than that.

Mr. Douglas: There has been widespread abuse for 6,000 people. We are talking about 6,000 people having to go through the rigmarole to obtain exemption. The most pointed fact is that, when all that is done, if the community charge registration officer declines to treat a person as exempt, he will enter the name on the register. What expertise has the poll tax officer to determine that matter? What assistance does he have? If he does so determine, there is a right of appeal, but who will appeal and humiliate themselves?

I have written to the Secretary of State, but he has still to reply. Should not the onus of proof be the other way?

[Mr. Douglas]

If a medical practitioner adjudges a person to be severely mentally impaired, and if that person is in receipt of benefit, and if there is widespread abuse, should not the poll tax registration officer have to prove to the contrary?

Mr. Patnick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Douglas: No, I shall not give way.

That is what we are doing to impose a tax on society. As my hon. Friends have said, it means that, in terms of a youngster of 18 earning about £4,000, the proportion of tax is greater than that of someone earning £80,000. It is nonsense to argue that that is ability to pay. The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute has rightly pointed out that there are severe restrictions and restraints. Members of the House of Commons are asking people to humiliate themselves to get narrow exemptions.

The House and the country should be ashamed. Conservative Members want to ensure that the more fortunate in society bear a lesser burden than the poorer section of the population. If that is the type of society that Conservative Members want to live in, we in Scotland should completely reject them. I hope and trust that, in the forthcoming Govan by-election, the signal goes out for a complete rejection of them.

10.57 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): For a second or two, I was fascinated by the speech of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). That was unusual. I thought that he was about to raise the flag of revolt against an aspect of the tax, but then the revolt fizzled out. Once again, he treated us to reminiscences of his personal canvassing around his constituency. I have distrusted these reminiscences since a previous poll tax debate just before the district elections. Hon. Members will recall that the hon. Member for Tayside, North assured us that his personal canvassing in his constituency detected an upsurge of support for the poll tax legislation. That was followed in the elections not only by the defeat of many Conservative councillors but by the fact that the Conservative party was out-polled by the Scottish National party in Tayside, North.

Like the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), the hon. Member for Tayside, North claims to be well understood by his constituents. I suspect that that will be a major problem for them both at the next election.

Sir Hector Monro: After the humiliation of the SNP in the general election, I am not surprised that they did marginally better.

Mr. Salmond: I am always disappointed by the hon. Gentleman's interventions. We shall settle for the result of the Govan by-election as being an accurate reflection of the relative standing of the parties in Scottish politics.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): While mindful of the necessity for the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) to maintain his position as the low flyer of the Tory Benches, may I ask the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) whether he believes the story that, of all the constituents the hon. Member for Tayside, North met, not one was worse off under the poll tax? If he does believe it, can he give us some advice on how to get a house in north Tayside?

Mr. Salmond: I recall that fantasy, but the hon. Gentleman should recall that the hon. Member for Tayside, North has turned down more Government posts than the rest of us would dream of being offered.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. Salmond: The hon. Gentleman must forgive me. I resisted the temptation to intervene in his speech, and I shall now resist the temptation to let him intervene in mine.

I shall follow the unusual example in this debate of the hon. Members for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) and for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) and speak briefly about the regulations. Conservative Members seem to believe that the registration process is over. What is made clear by statutory instrument No. 1539 is that the registration process is a continuous one and the registration officer at any point from now until this dreadful legislation is repealed can demand information with menaces from any one of us. A snoopers' charter, once in place, will stay there until it is repealed.

I shall not attempt to emulate the eloquence of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West on statutory instrument No. 1541 concerning the mentally handicapped, but I do want to put this question to the Minister. How and why is it that the Government can spend so much time drawing the offensive distinction between the severely mentally impaired, who will be exempt from the poll tax, and the merely mentally impaired, who will have to pay poll tax, but cannot draw the distinction between those on average earnings, the rich and the very rich in terms of their liability to pay the poll tax? How can the Government make such efforts to draw the first distinction but no effort to make the second?

Conservative Members seem to believe that the poll tax debate is coming to the end of its term, but it is just beginning. The full ramifications of what is being done are just beginning to be understood. I hope that the hon. Member for Dumfries can explain to his constituents why a young, single person on just over £50 a week will bear the full blast of the poll tax next year or why a pensioner couple on £85 a week will pay one full poll tax between the two of them. Is he really saying that the levels of rebate are satisfactory and reflect the principle of a person's ability to pay? That is without going into the shameful deceit that is being practised in terms of the rebate system for those on income support.

The impact of the poll tax in political terms is just about to be felt at the Govan by-election. But the real level of resistance to the poll tax will be at its highest and greatest at the point of payment next April. I give the Minister my personal assurance that I shall be part of that resistance, as will my colleagues.

11.4 pm

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I am sure that all Scottish Opposition Members who are not members of the Scottish National party listened with fascination to the electoral predictions of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond). I am sure we are all fascinated to know whether that party's candidate, who is, after all, a traitor to the Labour party, will win the Govan by-election for another brief spell of emotional fantasy —a glimpse or two of the tartan miasma. Like other salmon, such people come to Scotland only occasionally and go away for a long time thereafter.

I pay a sincere tribute to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas). His speech was responsible, and the House should honour it.

The Opposition have overlooked one matter of importance. Their criticism of the community charge is that it is a standard charge that is imposed regardless of ability to pay. An income of £60 a week has been mentioned. But Opposition Members never stop talking about the National Health Service, which is central to Socialist philosophy. How do we pay for the NHS? [HON. MEMBERS: "Through taxes."] We have a standard charge, called the national insurance contribution. People who earn £30, £40, £50, £60, £70, £80, and £90 a week all pay exactly the same charge—or their employers pay it on their behalf.

In the context of the poll tax, therefore, we must ask who introduced the concept of a standard charge for an essential service—whether or not for the mentally handicapped. The answer is: the Labour party. It was the biggest fraudulent poll tax ever imposed on the British people in the name of the emotion of Socialism.

I have noticed no objection from any party to the fact that everyone, regardless of ability to pay, pays the same for a motor car licence, or a television licence——

Mr. Foulkes: Or a dog licence?

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), being a chap who wants a Scottish Assembly, is one of those who are particularly ignorant of Scottish history. The dog licence was not introduced to entitle someone to have a dog. It was introduced because, in 19th century London, people stole and sold dogs, so the only way to establish that one's dog was not stolen was to produce a licence for it. I remember my father——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman is not going to tell us too much about his father, and that we can now return to the prayer.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I was answering a charge about a dog licence from the wolf, the hon. Member who sits for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley. The licence was introduced because in the last century men stole dogs. It was not introduced to entitle people to have dogs.

I have never heard anybody complain that the rich man and the poor man pay the same price for a loaf of bread or a lettuce, a haggis or even a dog. The attempt to make out that the community charge is unfair is hysterical and foolish. We are replacing a system of grotesque unfairness with a system that is fair. It exempts those who are ineligible and it is correct. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley asked how much I will save on my castle. I was impressed when the BBC sent a team of 12 people from London to do a programme about how much I will save on my castle which, incidentally, I bought for £100.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a short debate and other hon. Members are waiting to take part. The House has established the principle of the community charge and we are now debating some very narrow regulations. I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will confine his remarks to them.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I shall, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The hypocrisy of the debate is evident from the sedentary illustration given by an Opposition Member. A team of 12 with four Mercedes at Edinburgh airport came to photograph this great castle of mine to prove how much I will save. Before they left they asked me where they could get the best meals and the richest hotels. On that trip alone they spent money contributed by pensioners and mentally handicapped people for their television licences and spent more money than I have paid in rates on my castle since I restored it. That is an illustration of the attempt to introduce a false air of unfairness into the debate. We have redeemed a pledge of fairness to those who have to pay their rates towards local services.

When all the hullabaloo and the attempts to get marchers out is over, when everybody is drained and when the Scottish National party has got the last bit of blood out of the Labour party, and when the Labour party has got the last bit of blood and guts out of the Scottish National party, people will say that this is a wise and fair tax that is also honourable and responsible.

11.13 pm

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): It is clear that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) has recovered all the faculties that he had prior to his recent operation. The statutory instruments that we are debating are considerably more serious than either the hon. and learned Gentleman or his contribution.

Like some of my colleagues, I should like to focus on statutory instrument No. 1541 against which the Opposition have also tabled a Prayer. That and the letter to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury from the Secretary of State for Social Security, form two more pieces of that evil jigsaw that has become the poll tax/community charge in Scotland. It shows how much more evil it is than was predicted by many of the most bitter opponents of the poll tax. These regulations show a deliberate attempt by the Government not to target rebates at significantly mentally handicapped people, nor to absolve them from the need to pay poll tax on compassionate grounds. Instead, they are designed to ensure that these are the very people who do not claim, because it is too humiliating to claim.

In my work with the mentally handicapped in the eight years before I became a Member of Parliament, I built up many contacts with families with mentally handicapped people and with organisations that have done far more than all Tory Members put together have done for the mentally handicapped, or ever will. They tell me that this is the most pernicious legislation affecting mentally disabled people. As a result of it, many parents, who have to suffer because their children will never achieve what the rest of us might—although their achievements in their personal struggle are so great that many hon. Members would be ashamed to compare their modest achievements with them—will not go through the humiliation of going to the doctor to ask him to certify their mentally handicapped relatives as severely mentally disabled.

The doctors have written to me, as they have to organisations that deal with the mentally handicapped, to say that they are not qualified to distinguish types of mental handicap. That is not in any of their medical training. However, the Government are using them as a convenient way to cut the numbers of those exempted, so that almost nobody will be eligible for exemption.

Even those handicapped people who are in the same category as all those who will have to pay the standard payment will have to pay far higher rates than has hitherto been admitted. That brings me to the letter and to the information that the Minister gave me on 25 April, in a written reply.

Next year, the community charge in Edinburgh is likely to be £442 for a single person, and £884 for a couple. After the water charge has been paid in full—there is no rebate on the water charge—at £105 for a single person and £210 for a couple, according to the figures given by the Secretary of State for Social Services, a couple in Edinburgh will be presented with a bill for £206·80 for their poll tax, and will receive from the DHSS only £109·20 to pay for it. That is a shortfall of almost £100, or more than £1·90 a week. Single people—the handicapped, the disabled and the pensioner on the basic state pension—will receive only £34·60 from the DHSS to pay a poll tax bill of £104·40—a shortfall of £69·80—almost £1 a week of their meagre incomes.

In Glasgow, the comparable figure is £912 for a couple, who will have to pay £1·54 a week out of their benefits over and above anything that the Government are offering. In Dundee, a couple will be £1·13 a week worse off, even after the payments promised by the Secretary of State. In Aberdeen, the shortfall will be £46. In Edinburgh, the mentally handicapped will have to pay not just the 20 per

cent. that was set out in the Government information leaflet, not even the 25 per cent. that the Minister admitted would be the liability to personal community charge and water charge, but nearer 30 to 35 per cent. In Glasgow, the figure will not be 26 per cent., as the Minister predicted in April, but closer to 35 per cent. In Aberdeen, the minimum fee will not be 30 per cent., but closer to 40 per cent.

It is clear that, when the figures are adjusted as councils have been telling the Minister they will have to be adjusted because they may not collect the community charge in full —those words are now being echoed by the secretary of State for Social Security—the bill for individuals will be considerable.

Mr. Winnick: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that his figures are based on the assumption that Labour-controlled councils will continue to waste a great deal of money?

Mr. Griffiths: I shall not confirm that. The trend in Lothian region, when Labour lost control in 1982 and regained control in 1986, showed that, in each of the four years of Tory rule, the Tories failed to meet even the Secretary of State's guidelines and the electors threw them out on their ear. That is why there is a responsible Labour council there.

Mr. Winnick: Rubbish.

Mr. Griffiths: The hon. Gentleman says that because his intervention was more ineffective and detrimental to the Government's case.

There is no doubt that what councillors, including Tory councillors, Opposition Members and even some Conservative Members critical of the Government have been saying is true. Tonight we see that the poll tax figure for Scotland will be far higher than has been predicted and that has now been endorsed by a Minister.

11.21 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): The regulations reflect the sensitivity and flexibility with which the Government have approached the implementation of the community charge in Scotland, taking account, as many of them do, of arguments advanced and pledges given during the passage of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. They also show the progress of the community charge arrangements towards full implementation next April.

The House has this evening identified an important underlying theme to the debate, which was apparent in almost all the contributions—the question whether the Opposition believe in obeying the law. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I know that they had a conference in Govan to decide their view on this matter and it was plain after that conference that the party was suffering from a multiple fracture in its opposition to the community charge. Seven Opposition Members set up a committee of 100 prominent citizens against the community charge and a further four—the hon. Members for East Lothian (Mr. Hoom Robertson), for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood), for Glasgow, Pollock (Mr. Donnachie) and for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray)—also said that, although they were not taking part in the commission—presumably because they were not sufficiently prominent in the class structure of Socialism—they were also unwilling to pay the community charge. The hon. Member for Provan dismissed the committee of 100 as elitist and bourgeois.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) put his finger on the issue when he quoted the comments of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) in the *Morning Star*. She said:

"If voting does not get you what you want and the Government does not reflect the will of the people, then you have to resist that Government by any means open to you". That appears to be the reality of the policy of the Opposition. It is no wonder that we now have organisations spawned by attitudes such as that, represented——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the Minister heard me reproach other hon. Members for straying wide of the matter. I hope that he will confine his remarks to the prayer before us.

Mr. Lang: Thank you for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall reply to some of the other points.

For months, the Labour party has sought to frustrate the law through its "Stop It" campaign and its urgings to procrastinate or overwhelm registration officers with delaying tactics. They produced experts to talk about a shortfall in registration of 10 per cent., 15 per cent., 20 per cent. or more, whatever happened to suit them at the time.

I am glad to be able to tell the House that, in spite of the Opposition's feeble attempts to disrupt the system, and the assertions of prophets of doom that it would be unworkable, preparations have gone ahead as planned. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries said, the community charge registers have been drawn up successfully. The preliminary signs from registration officers are that the number of people included on the registers, which came into force on 1 October, amount on average to over 99 per cent. of the adults resident in their areas according to the Registrar General's population figures, not 80 per cent. or 90 per cent. The registers are subject to checking by the residents concerned and to the appeal process if there is any question about their accuracy.

This is a splendid result that gives the lie to the criticisms of the system that have been made. We have always said that the system is entirely workable and practicable. It is clear that the people of Scotland are more law-abiding than the Opposition give them credit for.

Over the next few months, it will be for local authorities to establish who will be eligible for community charge rebates and then to prepare community charge bills once the levels of the charge for 1989-90 have been set. We shall play our part in the process by undertaking a comprehensive publicity campaign to ensure that everyone is aware of the availability of rebates for those on low incomes. From now, on the standard procedures for updating the register as people move will apply. I am confident that they too will work smoothly.

Mr. Salmond: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lang: I am sorry, but I do not have time to give way.

I look forward with confidence and great anticipation to the abolition of the domestic rating system on 1 April 1989. I am sure that the majority of the population of Scotland will join me in that.

Mr. Maxton: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lang: No. I have a number of matters to cover and I do not have time to give way. I am sorry.

The regulations before us range over a number of issues that are connected with the abolition of domestic rates and the introduction of the community charge system to replace them. The need for the new provisions in the regulations arises for the most part from changes which have been made to the community charge system and to primary legislation in the Local Government Finance Act 1988. I make no apology for that. We have always made it clear that we would consider carefully the application to Scotland of any changes to the system that were made during parliamentary consideration of the Local Government Finance Bill, as it was, and that is what we have done. The revised and improved system of community charges will therefore apply on both sides of the border.

We have also made clear that we shall keep in close touch with the registration officers and other local authority interests to ensure that none of the changes that we shall be introducing will jeopardise the timetable for the introduction of the community charge system in Scotland. I am happy to say that the system is well on course for introduction next April, as we intended. The registration process has gone ahead and it has achieved nearly complete coverage. Preparations are well advanced for the setting up of a billing and collection system. I am confident that work will go forward smoothly in accordance with the planned timetable.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) referred to a letter that came into the possession of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). I shall make no comment on the propriety of the publication of letters between Ministers. I cannot anticipate the statement on the uprating of income support that is to be made tomorrow by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. The Government have given a clear pledge that income support levels will include an element that reflects the average minimum liability for the personal community charge, and we shall honour the pledge.

A number of those who contributed to the debate——

Mr. Douglas: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lang: No, I shall not give way. I wish to respond to the arguments of the hon. Member for Cathcart about the severely mentally impaired.

It has always been our intention to exempt from the community charge liability on the ground of severe mental impairment only those who are unable to play any meaningful part in the democratic process. The 1988 Act amended the previous provisions to allow for the exemption of those who have become severely mentally impaired as a result of an accident in adulthood, for example, as well as for those who are congenitally mentally handicapped.

The hon. Member for Cathcart referred to the mechanics of the exemption process. I believe that the system that we have devised is a sensible and humane one. It will be for the person who looks after the application for exemption to inform the community charges registration officer that he or she wishes to claim exemption on the ground of severe mental impairment. The officer will ask him or her to nominate a general practitioner to provide a certificate. The officer will then approach the nominated doctor and request a certificate, and make his decision accordingly. Any decision will be open to appeal. This procedure will keep to a minimum the inconvenience that is caused to those who care for a severely mentally impaired person.

Our debate marks another step forward in the process of removing the totally discredited domestic rating system. We have heard a number of criticisms of the regulations and of the community charge system in general, but I remind the House that they pale into insignificance in contrast to the huge and entirely justified weight of criticism that has been directed at the domestic rating system over the years. I rejoice, and so do the people of this country, that we are now within six months in Scotland of the ending of the domestic rating system for ever. I commend the regulations to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 123, Noes 183.

Division No. 468] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Hood, Jimmy
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Hoyle, Doug
Battle, John	Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Beckett, Margaret	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Ingram, Adam
Bermingham, Gerald	John, Brynmor
Blunkett, David	Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Boateng, Paul	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Boyes, Roland	Kirkwood, Archy
Bradley, Keith	Lamble, David
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Lamond, James
Brown, Gordon *(D'mlins E)*	Leadbitter, Ted
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Lewis, Terry
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*	Litherland, Robert
Buchan, Norman	Livsey, Richard
Buckley, George J.	Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Caborn, Richard	Loyden, Eddie
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	McAllion, John
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	McAvoy, Thomas
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	McCartney, Ian
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Macdonald, Calum A.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	McFall, John
Clay, Bob	McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Clelland, David	McLeish, Henry
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	McNamara, Kevin
Cohen, Harry	McTaggart, Bob
Coleman, Donald	McWilliam, John
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	Madden, Max
Cousins, Jim	Mahon, Mrs Alice
Cummings, John	Marek, Dr John
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Martlew, Eric
Darling, Alistair	Maxton, John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*	Meacher, Michael
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Meale, Alan
Dewar, Donald	Michael, Alun
Dixon, Don	Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Dobson, Frank	Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Doran, Frank	Moonie, Dr Lewis
Douglas, Dick	Morgan, Rhodri
Eadie, Alexander	Morley, Elliott
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*	Mullin, Chris
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*	Murphy, Paul
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*	Nellist, Dave
Foster, Derek	Patchett, Terry
Foulkes, George	Pendry, Tom
Fyfe, Maria	Pike, Peter L.
Galloway, George	Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
George, Bruce	Redmond, Martin
Godman, Dr Norman A.	Reid, Dr John
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*	Robertson, George
Henderson, Doug	Rooker, Jeff
Hinchliffe, David	Salmond, Alex
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*	Short, Clare
Home Robertson, John	Skinner, Dennis

Smith, Andrew (*Oxford E*)
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann (*Dewsbury*)
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (*Gower*)
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew (*Angus E*)
Williams, Alan W. (*Carm'then*)
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Lia Golding and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (*Gravesham*)
Arnold, Tom (*Hazel Grove*)
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas (*Dorset N*)
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas (*Pembroke*)
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael (*Brigg & Cl'l's*)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, (*Luton N*)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael (*Rochford*)
Clark, Sir W. (*Croydon S*)
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (*Wyre F'rest*)
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. (*Stamf'd & Spald'g*)
Davis, David (*Boothferry*)
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David (*Welwyn Hatf'd*)
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael (*Stirling*)
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony (*CambsSW*)
Greenway, Harry (*Ealing N*)
Greenway, John (*Ryedale*)
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter (*Portsmouth N*)
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie (*Epsom*)
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. (*B'ham H'll Gr'n*)
Hargreaves, Ken (*Hyndburn*)
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas (*Gr'th'm*)
Howarth, Alan (*Strat'd-on-A*)
Howarth, G. (*Cannock & B'wd*)
Hughes, Robert G. (*Harrow W*)
Hunt, David (*Wirral W*)
Hunt, John (*Ravensbourne*)
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (*Cardiff N*)
Jones, Robert B (*Herts W*)
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Lang, Ian
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mayer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (*Gedling*)
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (*Taunton*)
Nicholson, Emma (*Devon West*)
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris (*Bath*)
Patten, John (*Oxford W*)
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David (*Waveney*)
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William (*Corby*)
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David (*Dover*)
Shaw, Sir Michael (*Scarb'*)
Shephard, Mrs G. (*Norfolk SW*)
Shepherd, Colin (*Hereford*)
Smith, Tim (*Beaconsfield*)
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andy (*Sherwood*)
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M (*Solihull*)
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. (*Calder Valley*)
Thompson, Patrick (*Norwich N*)
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (*Bridlington*)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (*T'side North*)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (*Bexhill*)
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George (*Acton*)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

Question accordingly negatived.

GCSE (History Examination)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

11.41 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I am delighted to have this opportunity to speak about the concern that has been expressed by teachers and parents about the GCSE history examination.

I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science to the debate. I remember with affection when we were both councillors attending the Association of Metropolitan Authorities conference in Liverpool in 1980. There were a total of four Conservatives at that conference and we made sure that the Conservative viewpoint was made known during every debate. I also welcome the Minister's private parliamentary secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) to his first Adjournment debate in his new capacity.

I must make it clear at the outset that I am not opposed to the reform of the exam system. In some ways the GCSE is an improvement on the O-level examination. The traditional O-level was not perfect. It could be dull and success was often possible by repetition of the facts without necessarily understanding them. The GCSE has brought about improvements in teaching method through a wider use of documents and sources and it has increased pupil interest. I believe that it was right to widen the scope and type of question and to evaluate more fully the skills used in history.

The GCSE history examination, however, has fatal flaws. It has lost the best of the O-level examination and gained some of the worst attributes of the CSE. My interest in this examination goes back to my time as a schoolteacher, when I taught CSE and O and A-levels, although I left teaching before the GCSE came into operation.

I believe that history is valuable for its intrinsic merit. It is a subject that should be taught to children because it has an interest separate from anything else. It is also essential that pupils should know the past if they are to understand the present. Two weeks ago, at the Conservative party conference at Brighton, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science said that a sense of history is essential to the well-being of any nation. We are right to insist in the GCSE that national identity and national history are at the forefront of the objectives set for examination groups.

There has also been some debate and concern about the divide between skills and content. I believe that that division is a false dichotomy. Without the content as a basis for study, there can be no historical skills. Equally, without some skills—for instance, the ability to analyse evidence or appreciate the context of historical data of the society being studied—we can only truly speak of pupils knowing historical facts. We cannot say that they understand. It is important that they understand the context as well as knowing the facts.

The argument that skills and content can be divided is a false one. It is important that we should have both. That point was made by R. G. Collingwood, perhaps the leading philosopher of history this century, in his seminal work, "The Idea of History" in which he wrote:

> "The enlargement of historical knowledge comes about mainly through finding how to use as evidence this or that kind of perceived fact which historians have hitherto thought useless to them".

That leads me to the major concern expressed by critics of the examination, which professional historians have taken up recently, the so-called empathy questions. An HMI document "History in the Primary and Secondary Years" published in 1985 defines empathy as:

> "Simply a word used to describe the imagination working on evidence, attempting to enter into a past experience while at the same time remaining outside it."

The HMI definition, which concentrates on the evaluation of evidence while resisting direct and emotional involvement in the events, is very valid. G. R. Elton in "The Practice of History" went further. He said:

> "Understanding what the evidence really says and understanding how it fits together is of crucial importance for the historian . . . Imagination controlled by learning and scholarship, learning and scholarship rendered meaningful by imagination—these are the tools of enquiry possessed by the historian.
>
> It is the use of imagination based on the facts as known to understand the actions of participants from where the evidence is missing or imprecise to make informed supposition as to what may have happened."

That is a far cry from the empathy of the GCSE. Macaulay's statement that

> "a perfect historian must possess an imagination sufficiently powerful to make his narrative affecting and picturesque",

has been corrupted into fiction writing.

Questions such as "Imagine if" and "Explain the feelings of" litter the GCSE papers. They are nothing but historical fiction. Here are examples from the Southern Examining Group on a question of the United States of America 1898 to 1968:

> "Show how a democratic newspaper might have replied to these criticisms of Republican comment about the new deal."

A question on Japan and China 1890-1960 says:

> "As a Japanese general at the time, explain your country's reasons for involvement in Chinese affairs in the 1930s."

A question on Britain and Europe 1945-1985 states:

> "Explain the feelings and reactions of each of the following to the economic condition of Britain at the end of the Second World War: the owner of a pottery works; the manager of a shop selling pottery; a customer in that shop."

Those are the kind of questions that pupils are asked to answer in history examinations. There was a classic question on the welfare state 1942-1985:

> "Explain the feelings and reactions of local education authorities to the issue of Circular 10/70. Explain the feelings and reactions of parents after the issue of Circular 10/65"

—as if parents and local education authorities were some kind of cohesive block with one point of view. Those are false questions which one should not ask 16-year-old pupils to answer.

Questions were also asked about the partition of Pakistan and India in 1947. Pupils were asked to write about the reactions of a person living in that country at the time. However, the pupil was not told whether that person was Moslem or Hindu, or what community that person belonged to. It becomes very difficult for a 16-year-old to put himself in the position of a professional historian and answer that kind of question.

It goes against the whole idea of education and history to suggest that there is only one viewpoint and only one way of teaching it. We should not encourage that in the GCSE.

I have another example taken from a trial paper issued by one of the boards:

"Write an article from the point of view of a supporter of President Castro living in Havana in 1962 explaining the missile crisis and condemning American policy in the earlier Bay of Pigs episode."

That is an open invitation to fiction writing. It may be good fiction writing, but it is not history.

Moreover, such questions are politically dangerous. They give a teacher with a political point of view to put across the opportunity for biased work within the class course work, and they can lead to indoctrination.

Indeed, some of the trial papers from the exam groups are outrageous. One said:

"Draft a speech to be made by a representative of the Palestine Liberation Organisation. This speech will justify these actions: the hijacking of aircraft to Jordan in 1970, the shootings at Tel Aviv airport and the attack on Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic games."

GCSE empathy is a parody of the real thing.

What was Her Majesty's inspectorate's view on the issue? The interim report, which came out in March, contained no comments on the concern that by that time had already been expressed. I think of the case of the dog that barked in the night. The remarkable thing was, of course that the HMI dog did not bark. In the latest report, issued only last week, the question of empathy received three lines. The dog is now whimpering but it is still not addressing the concerns that have been occupying the national press and teachers for some six or seven months.

Some of the empathy questions, especially on world history, are concerned with recent issues, which, in some cases, are still current. Indeed, one exam group stresses the need for pupils to read the newspapers for the purposes of the examination. We as politicians are aware of the fact that what seems urgent and relevant one week does not merit a footnote in the next. The problem with recent or current events is that they lack the perspective that history offers. Should we be devoting history lessons and examinations to the study of current affairs? By all means, let pupils learn about current affairs, but should the history lesson and examination be used for such purposes?

I want to deal briefly with other worries about the examination. First, there is too much project work. That is of special concern to pupils because every GCSE examination involves project work. Bright young children taking eight or nine subjects have eight or nine projects to do. That weight of work is counter-productive. My experience from teaching the certificate of secondary education is that they are rarely done well and almost never contain any original or individual research.

Leaving aside empathy questions, the structure of questions is debatable. Little exam history appears to be taught within a chronological framework. Nor is it thematic, except in a small number of cases. For instance, questions on the evolution of parliamentary democracy concern themselves with only the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Therefore, the pupil has no idea, unless he was taught it earlier in the school, of 1215 and 1265 and the development of Parliament over the centuries. It creates a ragbag of disconnected topics.

The level of questions rarely stretches the bright child. There are few extended essay questions, unlike on the old O-level papers where a student could be forced to analyse, think logically and write coherently. The level of questions rarely stretches a child at all and is often facile in the extreme. Indeed, the questions can insult the intelligence of the child of average ability.

Let me give some examples. The Northern Examining Association shows a cartoon by Low of Hitler with a smoking gun. The questions include:

"Name the person, shown in source A, holding a smoking gun."

That is given one mark.

"How did the cartoonist in source A indicate that this person was a Nazi?"

The answer is that he has a swastika on his arm. That earns another mark.

The Midland Examining Group had a question about the European Economic Community. It consists of two paragraphs with some missing words. They are at the bottom of the page. Anybody of average intelligence with a smattering of general knowledge could guess where the missing words go. That may be an English exercise, but it is not a proper history exercise.

Some questions are confusing. A question on one paper talks about Zimbabwe and the fight for national independence. The question asks how the student knows it was a British colony. There is nothing in the extract to say that it is a British colony. It could belong to Germany or elsewhere. Therefore, the question does not follow on from the source material in the question. That is true of many questions.

Sometimes the terminology is not suitable for the time and place being referred to and could be confusing to the pupil. An example from another board starts off: "Hey Dad, this plebiscite—or whatever it is called—about staying in the Common Market." The 1975 referendum was not, to my knowledge, ever called a plebiscite. That was a word from the 1930s. It is historically out of place, and anybody being taught about the European referendum will wonder what on earth was the plebiscite. It appears that the exam boards are not thinking clearly before phrasing the questions, and about how ambiguous some of them are.

Turning to the evidence questions, many of them require no historical knowledge but are merely comprehension questions more suited to an English paper. They raise serious questions in themselves. In many cases the pictures and cartoons shown are irrelevant and would only confuse. I have one such example taken from the Southern Examining Group paper of summer 1988. It shows Disraeli carrying a Turk. The paper states:

"Study the cartoon below and then attempt all parts of the question which follows."

The three questions have no relevance to the cartoon; they are about the Eastern question, but otherwise they are irrelevant. It appears that, often, examining boards have stuck in cartoons to make the exam paper look pretty or interesting, but they do not help the student answer the questions.

Another famous cartoon from 1878 shows Gladstone and Disraeli covered in mud, accompanied by three questions. They refer to the cartoon, but the cartoon itself does not help one to answer them. I do not know who it is in the examination board who has the copyright on *Punch*, but its cartoons appear almost without fail in virtually every examination board paper.

In some cases—and I have studied many examples—the primary source material is not what it claims to be. I have another good example taken from the Southern Examining Group paper. I do not want to be seen to be getting at that group, but it seems to have the worst empathy questions of them all; it actually puts the empathy into the examination paper. It concerns a cartoon

[Mr. Nicholas Bennett]

of the 1921 triple alliance—a very famous *Punch* cartoon. If one compares it, as I did, with the original in the issue of *Punch* for 20 August 1921—as an eccentric, I have a very large collection of *Punch* magazines—one finds that key words have been omitted from the cartoon, as it is reproduced in the exam paper. The title has been left out. The whole purpose of the cartoon has been totally changed. If one wants to teach children about historical material, it ought to be reproduced as it originally appeared.

I am sure that there is scope for an enterprising university student to write a thesis on how extensively source material has been altered to suit the requirements of exam groups. There is scope for evidence questions, but the answers need to be obtainable from the source, they need to be relevant, and some thought needs to be given to them by the student—for instance, as to how they cohere with other material he might have.

My final point concerns marking of the examination. Sir Keith Joseph, as he then was, as Secretary of State for Education, called for criterion referencing—that is, that marks should be based on an accepted criterion that remains constant from year to year, in order that comparisons can be made. The previous system of norm referencing, whereby exam grades were fixed in accordance with a particular cohort being examined, was to go. Her Majesty's inspectorate claimed:

"There has been a move away from norm referencing towards criterion referencing."

According to Her Majesty's inspectorate, that is

"giving credit for positive achievements, or what pupils know, understand or can do according to predetermined assessment criteria."

That is from the "Introduction to the GCSE in schools 1986-88" published last week.

A report in the *Daily Telegraph* on 3 August called "History in the marking", which concerned the London and East Anglia Group shows that it is in the business of fixing grade boundaries:

"Our two chief examiners disagree on the minimum mark required: one says 12, the other says 15 . . . 'Oh this is no good,' somebody mutters. 'I've got a 10 and a four here. Anyone got two sevens?'"

That exercise, as I said, is called fixing grade boundaries; in other words, translating marks into grades. That is a classic example of norm referencing. Certainly is not criterion referencing, when the grades move around according to the marks and to the numbers of pupils who have achieved certain numbers of marks. I thought that the GCSE was trying to get away from that, but it seems that bad habits die hard among some of the exam groups.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can give an assurance that those points will be examined. In conclusion, I shall make a number of suggestions. First, the empathy questions be transferred from assessment to the general aims section. Secondly, "imagine" style questions should be abolished, and that longer primary source extracts be used. Next, traditional, unstructured essay questions of the sort that ask the entrant to describe an account be reintroduced. Also, there should be a great variety and diversity of types of GCSE paper, with different historical approaches, so that teachers are not faced with solid uniformity. If need be, let us divide the history paper, as we do the maths paper, into two overlapping ability papers. If we do that we shall eliminate some of the major problems that have been faced during the past few years.

Finally, we must ensure that English comprehension is no longer part of the history paper. We must return to finding out what the students know about history rather than testing their English—something that should properly remain within the English papers.

12 midnight

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I wish to pay the usual courtesies to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) and congratulate him on securing this debate. I certainly welcome the opportunity to discuss aspects of the new GCSE examination, especially his points about the teaching and examining of history. It is an appropriate time for such a debate as the dust begins to settle after the first GCSE examinations.

As my hon. Friend mentioned, we also have a report from Her Majesty's inspectors who have studied the introduction of the GCSE in our secondary schools. I shall draw a little on the report as the basis for assessing the early progress of GCSE. It attempts to identify the issues that must be addressed. Although my hon. Friend does not think that it deals sufficiently with empathy, the work as a whole is professional and is the result of close monitoring over the past two years. I wish to put on record my gratitude to HMI for producing the document.

The report confirms that, overall, the GCSE is off to a good start. I think that we would all agree with that. It concludes that the examination has achieved many of the objectives set for it. In particular, it has led to improvements in learning across a range of subjects; it has succeeded in raising pupils' motivation and enthusiasm. The vast majority of those involved with the exam like it, which is a change; it has helped teachers to improve their teaching approaches and raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve.

The inspectors found that, overall, there was a significant increase in the number of lessons where effective learning was taking place. They judged that about four out of five fourth and fifth-year lessons were satisfactory or better. As we know, the results are encouraging. Early analysis of the first results shows that more candidates achieved higher GCSE grades—A to C—than with the equivalent O-level and CSE grades in previous years. Fewer candidates were left without anything to show for their years in school and their hard work during the GCSE courses. That should not in any way be taken, as some might mischievously take it, as meaning that the GCSE is an easier exam than the two exams that it has replaced.

I noted with interest my hon. Friend's clear critique when he dealt with history papers and set out for the House the individual exam questions. The Department does not believe, and nor do HMI, that at this stage we should be complacent. There have been some well publicised teething troubles, which have arisen in part because some of the independent examining boards did not get their act together as well as we had hoped. I have been known to criticise those bodies, and my hon. Friend has graphically illustrated the problems when reading out some of the questions. There have been difficulties with questions, and the examining boards are only too well

aware of some of the shortcomings that have caused disappointment and frustration for teachers, pupils and parents alike.

The HMI report makes it extremely clear that, although overall the GCSE has been successfully implemented, many improvements are still required. Everyone who is involved with the exam must study the HMI report and make sure that the GCSE is better next year, and that certainly applies most particularly to independent exam boards.

I now turn to the points that my hon. Friend raised in relation to his concern about history and the examination that youngsters have taken over the past two years. The assessment of work done during the GCSE course—it includes but is not limited to extended project work—is a central element of the concept of GCSE. At least 20 per cent. of marks in virtually all syllabuses must be allocated to course work. An element of assessed course work provides a better assessment of achievement than a system based only on the old end-of-course exams. Course work has certainly helped to make GCSE results a fairer and more accurate reflection of achievement by the individual pupil. It certainly enables teachers to tailor work more closely to individual needs and allows full credit to be given for a wider range of pupils' achievements. The HMI has seen course work of an exceptionally high quality—contrary to what my hon. Friend has said—from pupils of all abilities, and it has found that it has contributed in general to higher levels of performance.

I agree that there is a need for improvement in the way in which some course work is done. Certainly in some cases the work load on pupils has been excessive. Examining groups and the new statutory School Examinations and Assessment Council should look closely at some aspects of the assessment and moderation arrangements. I hope that my hon. Friend will welcome that statement. The GCSE examining groups are already urgently reviewing syllabuses and administrative procedures in the light of experience.

Schools and teachers too should build, as always, on their experience of the first GCSE course work. There is certainly room for improvement in school and classroom practice—for instance, in better integrating course work into normal classroom teaching. My hon. Friend's concerns about project work need to be addressed. The HMI has found many examples of good practice, but, as always, there is need for further improvement to bring the general standard of course work tasks set for pupils up to the level of the best.

Inspectors see a need also for a continuing programme of training for teachers, focused in particular on assessment of course work. I hope that that will be in relation to history just as much as to anything else. The Government have allocated about £40 million over three years for introductory training for the GCSE. In the current year, about £15 million of that is specifically intended to train teachers in the techniques of assessment. In 1989-90 and beyond, GCSE teachers will benefit from the national priority that will be given to training in the assessment requirements, which will be associated with the introduction of the national curriculum.

My hon. Friend's concerns about GCSE history are shared by others within and outside teaching. The issue of empathy has been picked up in the HMI report. Although he described it as a whimper, we all agree that we must closely examine the issue.

In broad terms, "empathy" is shorthand for teaching techniques that are designed to help pupils to understand different viewpoints in history by encouraging them to look through the eyes of a contemporary observer. My hon. Friend has given many illustrations of how that is done. As my hon. Friend said, the merits of the empathy approach are the subject of current debate within the teaching profession in the context of history teaching generally, not just in the context of GCSE courses and examinations.

Of course, many of the aims of the empathy approach are welcome. As my hon. Friend said, empathy is one of a range of skills expected of a good historian. History teachers have long sought to find ways of making their subject rather more interesting, if I may say so as an ex-history teacher. They need also to look for ways of stimulating a wider range of pupils.

In my office this morning, I took a straw poll of officials. It confirmed my general impression that, by and large, O-level history has not done justice to what should have been an attractive and exciting subject. For example, one senior official barely scraped through O-level history because his teacher generated enthusiasm by teaching only the topics that enthused him, which, unfortunately, bore little relation to the syllabus. My private secretary's teacher never covered part of the syllabus because she believed that study of the Renaissance was unsuitable for a 14-year-old girl. Perhaps a proper use of empathy techniques can not only make history more attractive, but help children to develop genuine historical understanding.

There is also a danger that teaching that relies too much on a crude approach to empathy will result in superficial treatment of the subject, giving little benefit in terms of a proper understanding of historical events. I fear that there is a temptation to use empathy too much, particularly for the less able child, and that empathy may squeeze out knowledge and understanding rather than reinforce them. Empathy must not be a substitute for learning.

I sympathise with my hon. Friend's concern to see full criterion referencing in GCSE. This has long been central to the Government's education policy, and will come about when our plans for a national curriculum are implemented. Criterion referencing—the assessment of all candidates against clear attainment targets—is a central feature of the intended national curriculum assessment arrangements.

However, the GCSE is already a substantial improvement in this respect on O-level and CSE. The system of grade descriptions for the main GCSE subjects is a major step forward. The grade descriptions set out in general terms the types of performance expected at key grades. HMI confirms that the first GCSE exams have largely succeeded in the key aim of rewarding positive achievements.

A great deal of effort has gone into developing more thorough-going grade criteria to spell out in greater detail what these achievements are by grade and by subject, but this is a complex business that has not yet produced a workable system. The work must continue so that GCSE can become an integral part of criterion-referenced national curriculum assessment arrangements.

[Mrs. Angela Rumbold]

I note the many suggestions that my hon. Friend itemised at the end of his speech, but I must emphasise that GCSE has led to the start of many major improvements in the education of individual pupils——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock on Wednesday evening, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at eleven minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 27 October 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Royal Assent

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts and Measures:

1. South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Act 1988
2. Harwich Parkeston Quay Act 1988
3. Church of England (Pensions) Measure 1988.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF LONDON (SPITALFIELDS MARKET) BILL
Order for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time upon Tuesday 1 November.

NORTHAMPTON BILL *[Lords]*
Considered; to be read the Third time.

RIVER HUMBER (BURCOM OUTFALL) BILL *[Lords]*

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *(By Order)*

FALMOUTH CONTAINER TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

AVON LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 3 November.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Balance of Payments

1. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the outturn of the balance of payments at the end of the current financial year.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): I will, as usual, be publishing a new forecast in the Autumn Statement next month.

Mr. Michael: In the light of the facts that we have now had a deficit for 16 consecutive months, that in this calendar year the deficit is approaching £10 billion and that on the three-monthly figures the level of imports is growing at twice the rate of exports, should not the Chancellor give us a forecast now and, more seriously, tell us what he is going to do about it?

Mr. Lawson: As I indicated, I have undertaken to make a new forecast in the Autumn Statement next month in the usual way. The hon. Member is quite right to say that imports are rising very fast. That is a consequence of domestic demand rising very fast, and I have taken steps to deal with that by raising interest rates substantially and tightening monetary conditions at a time when the fiscal stance is already very tight indeed, so the necessary steps have been taken.

As for exports, I think it is striking that today's figures confirm——

Mr. Skinner: They are only for one month.

Mr. Lawson: No, I would not rely on one month. I think it is very dangerous to take one month alone; but, taking the whole of the third quarter, exports are set at an all-time record level.

Mr. John Townsend: Is it not vital, if the balance of payments deficit is to be significantly reduced, that, over the next year, we should have wage restraint to enable British industry to become more competitive? Therefore, would it not be appropriate to use the prices and taxes index—which has gone up over the past 12 months by only 3·9 per cent., compared with the retail prices index at 5·9 per cent.—in wage negotiations? Will the Government set an example in public sector settlements by keeping the increases down to that lower figure?

Mr. Lawson: The Government are certainly very conscious of their responsibility for public sector pay, at least in that part of the public sector where the Government themselves are directly the employer.

As for the wider issue which my hon. Friend raises, he is quite right in pointing out that the tax and prices index gives a more accurate account of the overall cost of living than the retail prices index does. It is certainly true that it is very much in the interests of companies and the economy as a whole that those companies keep firm control of their costs, including their wage costs, but that is a matter that they have to decide in the light of business

conditions and in the light of what is happening with their competitors overseas. It is not a matter of being tied to a particular index.

Mr. Darling: Does the Chancellor accept that his policy of high interest rates will make it more difficult for businesses to borrow money to start investing and producing goods in this country and, therefore, make the balance of payments crisis even worse?

Mr. Lawson: We are having at the moment in this country the greatest investment boom that we have known for a very, very long time, with manufacturing industry leading the way. Not only is there more investment going on, but it is profitable investment—really profitable investment—with a good rate of return on capital. That is something that we never had in the past, and badly lacked.

New businesses are being created net of those which have failed and those which have died. New businesses are being created this year at the rate of over 1,000 a week—every week this year. That is far higher than we have ever known before.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Is it not significant that expectations are now so low that the definition of an improvement is a balance of payments deficit of £4 billion over three months, of nearly £10 billion over the year and a trend in which imports are rising twice as fast as exports? Will the Chancellor answer the question that is posed directly by industrialists, by exporters and by small business men up and down the country: when will our interest rates fall to the level of those of our competitors?

Mr. Lawson: Our interest rates will fall when it is appropriate for them to do so, and not before then. Really I have no idea what the hon. Gentleman's expectations are, but we shall no doubt discover.

As for the question on the current account of the balance of payments, I would be more impressed by his sudden latching on to the current account of the balance of payments if, during the six years on the trot—from 1980 to 1985—when we had a current account surplus, he was telling us how well we were doing. I do not recall that.

Manufacturing Investment

2. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of manufacturing investment.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): In the second quarter of this year the level of manufacturing investment, at constant prices, was at its highest ever level in real terms.

Mr. Hunter: In the light of that most welcome answer, will my right hon. Friend confirm that, despite what Opposition Members would have us believe, investment in manufacturing industry this year is likely to exceed that achieved in any year under the last Labour Government?

Mr. Major: I certainly confirm my hon. Friend's point. The DTI investment intentions survey projects 16 per cent. growth in manufacturing investment this year and further significant investment next year.

Mr. Henderson: What effect does the Minister believe ever-escalating interest rates will have on manufacturing investment in the first six months of next year?

Mr. Major: The principal threat to investment next year, or at any other time, is inflation. Interest rates and my right hon. Friend's present policy are intended to curb inflation.

Mrs. Peacock: Does my right hon. Friend agree that investment in manufacturing in areas of Yorkshire and Humberside is at an all-time high and that such areas are seeing new factories being built on a scale that they have not seen for centuries?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend is correct. The growth in manufacturing in each and every region of the country is exceedingly good at present, and we hope and expect that it will continue.

Dr. Marek: For the period 1979 to 1988, does the Chief Secretary know of any country with a worse record in investment in manufacturing than the United Kingdom? If he cannot think of one now, perhaps he will write to me later and I shall give it all the publicity that it deserves. Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for another of his Back Benchers to ask the same question in a year's time? Will he be telling us then that the rate of manufacturing investment for the last quarter is just another of the Chancellor's blips?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman clearly has a one-eyed sense on this matter, because productivity, profits and investments are up, and unemployment is down, especially in manufacturing industry. The reality is that the outturn of manufacturing investment this year is on course to be the highest since records were first kept.

Mr. Cran: Does my right hon. Friend accept that manufacturing in Humberside is hale and hearty, as is evidenced by the fact that unemployment has fallen by 30 per cent. in Beverley during the past year, and that there is now a shortage of factory space?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend is quite right about the success of manufacturing. Profits are the best incentive for further investment, and profits are rising.

Independent Advisers

3. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many independent advisers he has who are paid from public funds.

Mr. Major: I have one, as does my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary.

Mr. Macdonald: Given that the Prime Minister is now adding to her economic advisers by hiring Professor Alan Walters from January, and as Professor Walters warned the Chancellor as far back as July that a 12 per cent. interest rate would be required to atone—his word—for the mistakes of the Budget, is the Chancellor looking forward to receiving the benefit of Professor Walters' foresight in future?

Mr. Major: I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is trying to make mischief, but he is wholly unlikely to succeed. As my right hon. Friend made perfectly clear in his Budget speech, the Government's policy remains what was set out in that speech, and it will remain so.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Have any members of the Labour Front Bench been parliamentary advisers, and can my right hon. Friend comment on their success rate?

Mr. Major: Speaking from memory, several Opposition Members on both Front and Back Benches were special advisers during the last Labour Government. The fact that it was the last Labour Government amply demonstrates their success rate.

Mr. Beith: Have any of those advisers, who are currently employed from public funds, made any detailed studies of the poverty trap? Have they given the Chief Secretary, in particular, any advice that would have helped him to consider child benefit so that he might recognise that it is a form of benefit that produces no poverty trap? If he is able to claim victory later this afternoon over the Secretary of State for Social Security, will it not prove to be an own goal on which he should have had better advice?

Mr. Major: The advice given by advisers to Ministers is for Ministers, and I have no intention of retailing it or saying whether it has been received.

IMF and World Bank

4. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the joint annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

8. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the joint annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Mr. Lawson: At the meetings of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and G7 in Berlin last month the major industrialised countries agreed to continue to work closely together and to pursue the policies of sound finance and exchange rate stability which have led to improved growth in the world economy. All countries accepted the need for vigilance against any build-up of inflationary pressures.

On the debt of the poorest, we secured final agreement on the necessary arrangements to implement a scheme to ease the official debt burden of the poorest and most heavily indebted countries in sub-Saharan Africa, following the initiative which I launched in April 1987.

On middle income debt, support for the current strategy was reaffirmed, with emphasis on the central role of the IMF and on the importance of encouraging new market-based schemes, without transferring risk from the private to the public sector.

Mr. Jones: I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's personal contribution to the progress that has been made. Does he agree that there are still many barriers to free trade which ought to come down—especially barriers in advanced countries to exports from developing countries?

Mr. Lawson: I very strongly agree with my hon. Friend. Of course, it is desirable that trade barriers should come down all round. That is the purpose of the Uruguay round of the GATT, which is going on to negotiate that, and I very much hope that it is successful, but it is particularly important to the developing countries that they have markets open to their goods. I deplore the protectionist tendencies of many in the Labour party, who would like to try to frustrate the opportunities that those countries have, and so badly need, to sell their produce in the developed countries.

Mr. Powell: Was my right hon. Friend able to discuss with his colleagues the growing confidence, which so many outside Britain feel, in the resurgence of the British economy? Was he able to highlight the fact that half the inward investment into EEC countries at the moment is being made in Britain and that, as a result, there is likely to be a substantial improvement in our balance of manufacturing trade? In particular, exports from Nissan, Peugeot and Ford will redress the imbalance in the motor car industry. Is my right hon. Friend aware that much of the investment is taking place in Corby?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend has an enclyclopaedic knowledge of his own constituency and other important matters, and indeed he is aware of far more things than I am. Therefore, I always find his questions extremely informative, and I am most grateful to him. He is right that I did notice in the International Monetary Fund and World Bank meeting in Berlin last month that there was a very strong respect and admiration for the strength and success of the British economy, and I have to say that, if we had not been speaking from that position of strength, I do not think that over the 18 months—or whatever it took—I would have been able to persuade the other countries to come along with the debt initiative which I had earlier launched to help the very poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Chancellor confirm that during the past six years there has been an increase in the number of Third world and semi-developed countries that are unable to pay their way? Does he accept that there are now more than 50 countries out of about 160 in the world that are in that category? Will he confirm that the United States cannot do as much as it has done before because of its massive deficit on trade and on its Budget? Will he also confirm that Japan and West Germany have a massive surplus of $120 billion on their trade? What can Britain do about it when it is currently running a balance of payments deficit approaching £15 billion?

Mr. Lawson: What we can do about the difficult situation—indeed, the hon. Gentleman is right that there are a great many countries in the world today having difficulties with their foreign indebtedness. We are in a particularly strong position. Our net overseas assets are second in the world only to those of Japan, and we are playing a very large part, in the way that I indicated in my answer to an earlier question, through our membership of the IMF, in the debt strategy generally and in another area which is particularly important. Our private investment in the developing countries, which is so important for the success of those countries' economies, is greater than that of the whole of the rest of the European Community put together.

Mr. Holland: Putting on one side the fine print of the authorship of the debt relief proposals, which come from the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs rather than from the Chancellor, and putting on one side the fact that the recent impetus of debt write-off comes from the Government of France rather than from the Government of this country, does the Chancellor recognise that there is no secondary market solution to the debt, and that we

really need a public intervention of funding for the developing countries on the lines of the Baker plan, but on a much larger scale?

Secondly, does he admit that one of the key issues before the recent Bank-Fund meeting in Berlin was that of cross-conditionality, whereby the independent roles of the Bank and the Fund have been merged so that countries have to apply to both rather than to one for funding? What did he do—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Long questions lead to long answers.

Mr. Holland: What did the right hon. Gentleman do to make a contribution to more positive conditionality for developing countries to help them with programmes for housing, health, education and social services?

Mr. Lawson: If I can remember the various points which the hon. Gentleman made, on his first point, I am sorry that he has such a distaste—even hatred—for this country that when this country takes a successful international initiative he cannot bear it.

As for his middle question, I think it was, I certainly do not accept that there should be, as he suggests, a transfer of risks from the private sector to the public sector and a great injection of public funds. Indeed, to say that that was what lay behind the Baku initiative is plain and arrant nonsense. There is no one who alongside myself has maintained the line harder than Jim Baker that the risk that the commercial banks have and that the private sector has should not be transferred to the backs of the taxpayers.

As for his final point, it is highly damaging if there is any merging of the roles of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They have to work together; they have to co-operate together. That is sensible in the debt strategy. But they have different roles, and I have been concerned in the recent episode with Argentina that those roles have been merged. I hope that that will not happen and that it will be clearly understood that it is the IMF which is in the lead and it is the IMF's seal of good housekeeping which is all-important.

Mr. Gow: Did the managing director of the IMF remind my right hon. Friend of the series of begging letters sent to his predecessor by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey)? Did the managing director mark the contrast between the strength of the United Kingdom economy under my right hon. Friend's stewardship compared with its weakness under the stewardship of the Labour party?

Mr. Lawson: Mr. Camdessus, the present and highly expert managing director of the International Monetary Fund, is fully appreciative both of the strength of the British economy and of the role that we play in the world economy. Whether he keeps on him, as I know, my hon. Friend does, a copy of Dr. Witteveen's celebrated correspondence with the right hon. Member for Leeds, East, (Mr. Healey) I do not know, but I certainly think that it would be helpful if my hon. Friend were to remind him, because it was a very important episode even if a humiliating one, in our country's history.

Interest Rates

5. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will assess the impact of current levels of interest rates on the economy.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): The full effects will take some time to come through, but we are already seeing a fall in new mortgage commitments.

Mr. Clarke: In the light of the 11 increases in interest rates since the Chancellor's Budget, and as that seems to be the only instrument the Chancellor is prepared to use to deal with the present crisis, what action will the Government take in the interests of those regions in Britain which did not experience overheating and which have to meet the growing industrial costs arising from increasing interest rates and to cope with the disincentive to exporting and industrial growth that the Chancellor's policies have brought about?

Mr. Lamont: All the evidence available from manufacturing industry and commerce is that investment is continuing, and will continue, at a high level in the regions, despite the increase in interest rates. Also, despite the increase in interest rates, the profits of British industry remain at their highest level for 20 years. That is the best hope for the regions as well.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Opposition do not seem to understand the elementary rules of economics—that for every pound borrowed, there is a pound lent—and that pensioners and small savers in Britain are receiving a higher income as a result of higher interest rates?

Mr. Lamont: Higher interest rates are good for savers. We wish to see consumption come down somewhat, and obviously we would like to see savings increase.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The Government have probably added over £1 billion to industry's costs since May through high interest rates. Will the Financial Secretary admit to the House that the Government's high interest rates policy is hurting most those whom the Conservative party most purports to support—small business men, those with mortgages and the self-employed?

Mr. Lamont: Above all, what matters for British industry is that we should get inflation down. That matters more than a temporary rise in interest rates. Profits are strong in British industry and it is able to continue to finance investment from that source. The hon. Gentleman seems to be under the impression that industry finances its investment on overdraft on short-term interest rates. In fact, it is also financed through long-term borrowing, and our long-term interest rates have not moved nearly as much as short-term interest rates.

Mr. Marland: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the investment plans of emerging small businesses are often inhibited by high interest rates? Would he be prepared to consider once again a system of dual rates—one for consumption and one for investment—bearing in mind that one could link the investment borrowing to a company's VAT number?

Mr. Lamont: I do not believe that a system of dual interest rates is likely to be practical. Of course high

interest rates affect small companies, but I must point out that the high profits made by industry at the moment apply to small businesses as well. The small business sector in our economy is doing better than it has for many years.

Pound Sterling (Exchange Rate)

6. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the Confederation of British Industry about the exchange rate of pound sterling.

Mr. Lawson: I receive representations from the Confederation of British Industry from time to time on a wide range of matters.

Mr. Turner: Surely the Chancellor is aware of two extremely hostile resolutions which are down for the CBI conference on 6 November. If he is not aware of them, I shall be very pleased to send him copies of two resolutions. I ask the Chancellor, as I have before, when he will give some support to industry instead of giving support, as he has continued to do, to the City?

Mr. Lawson: As for the first half of the hon. Gentleman's question, if he had gone on much more about resolutions at the CBI conference I might have read to him one or two resolutions of the Labour party conference. Industry is well satisfied with the policies that the Government are pursuing. If I may, Mr. Speaker, I shall read one quote from Mr. David Wigglesworth, the chairman of the CBI's economic situation committee. On Tuesday, introducing the CBI's quarterly industrial trends survey, he said:

"Industrialists strongly believe that the Chancellor's measures to curb excessive demand and credit should be given sufficient time to work."

He went on:

"Manufacturing industry was not 'losing its nerve' and was still in a 'winning situation'."

That is the view of the CBI.

Sir Peter Hordern: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that if industrialists and business men raise the wages and salaries of their workers by nearly 10 per cent. he will not bail them out by reducing the exchange rate? Would it not be a good idea to align sterling more closely with the deutschmark and with the European monetary system when the time is right—which it must nearly be?

Mr. Lawson: As for the first part of my hon. Friend's question—and over the years he has been a particularly acute observer of economic affairs in this country and in the world as a whole—the answer is yes. As for the second half of the question, yes, indeed, there are many advantages, I believe, for the United Kingdom in joining the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS, and we are committed to do so. As for the question of when the time will be right, that is a matter for the Government as a whole and not just for me.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Is not the high exchange rate in danger of repeating the problems of 1979 to 1981, when we had a high exchange rate and high interest rates at the same time? The high exchange rates prevented many people from exporting, and the high interest rates meant that many people could not compete at home in comparison with imports. Are we not in danger of repeating that disaster, and what will the right hon. Gentleman do to alter that?

Mr. Lawson: A firm exchange rate and adequately high interest rates are absolutely essential in keeping on top of inflation and getting inflation down. Indeed, the right hon. Gentleman will recall that they were extremely effective in doing that in the period to which he referred—1980-81. The situation is totally different now. Then, industry was suffering because it was inefficient. It had inherited from the previous Government gross overmanning, inefficiency, in many cases poor management, very low profitability and very poor liquidity. It was extremely vulnerable. Now industry is stronger than it has ever been and is well able to cope with the present level of interest rates and exchange rates.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend accept that, when interest rates came down in June, many of us thought that he was right to help the pound not to be so strong? If a strong pound helps to squeeze out inflation, is there not a real chance that it could also squeeze out profit from exports, and that that could be equally damaging?

Mr. Lawson: What it ought really to squeeze out is excessive pay rises in British industry. That is the lesson that British industry has to learn.

Mr. Chris Smith: Will the Chancellor confirm to the House what he said on Tuesday? He said:

"there can be no question of . . . permitting the exchange rate to depreciate."—[*Official Report*, 25 October 1988; Vol. 139, c. 185.]

Does the Chancellor realise that that policy places an enormous burden on British exporters? Does he also realise that his policy of high interest rates to maintain the exchange rate places enormous burdens on British industry and on home buyers in this country?

Mr. Lawson: To listen to the hon. Gentleman, one would think that it was somewhat unusual for interest rates to be raised. There have been a number of periods during my time as Chancellor during which I have had to put interest rates up, and I have always kept them up for as long as it was necessary to do so. So far from that, damaging British industry, it is doing better than it has ever done before.

Economic Outlook

9. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the economic outlook for the remainder of the current financial year.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor will be publishing a new forecast in the Autumn Statement next month.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the present high interest rates will deflate the domestic economy? Is that wise, given that there are more than 2 million people out of work?

Mr. Major: As my hon. Friend is aware, unemployment has been falling rapidly and we expect it to fall still further. Of course high interest rates may be unwelcome to some but they are necessary to control inflation, and they will remain high for as long as is necessary.

Dr. Mawhinney: In view of the difficulty that the Treasury has in predicting the future, does the Minister agree that he might be well advised to add an astrologer to his special advisers?

Mr. Major: I am perfectly content with my present special adviser.

Hospital Radio Broadcasting Equipment

10. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further representations he has received seeking the zero rating of value added tax on hospital radio broadcasting equipment.

The Paymaster General (Mr. Peter Brooke): My right hon. Friend has received one letter since the reply given to my hon. Friend on 14 July at column *313* of the *Official Report*.

Mr. Amess: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the National Association of Hospital Broadcasting Organisations on the excellent work that it does throughout the country? Will he agree to consider carefully representations that may be made to the effect that hospital broadcasting should be treated exactly the same as are talking books for the blind and consider zero rating VAT on hospital radio broadcasting equipment?

Mr. Brooke: I salute my hon. Friend's interest in these matters and join him in praising the hospital radio services. In these matters I am a pallid understudy for my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary, but I shall tell him that my hon. Friend has raised the subject.

Corporation and Income Tax Revenues

11. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of *(a)* corporation and *(b)* income tax revenues in (i) the fiscal year 1988-89 and (ii) the fiscal year 1987-8.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The estimates for corporation tax are £19·8 billion for the current year and £15·7 billion in 1987-88. The corresponding figures for income tax are £42·1 billion and £41·4 billion. The forecasts for 1988-89 are those made at the time of the Budget.

Mr. Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that that is further proof that a low-tax, high-incentive regime is not only more effective in raising revenue but that, because the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers pay a higher proportion of the tax take, it is also more equitable? Does he agree that demographic changes over the next 25 years will mean that we shall have a higher proportion of elderly people, and that for their needs to be properly met it is essential to continue with such policies?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He may have noticed that income tax receipts in the current year are 6½ per cent. higher than for the corresponding period last year, indicating the great buoyancy of the economy. We predict that receipts from corporation tax will be some 26 per cent. higher than they were last year. Both those examples illustrate the point made by my hon. Friend—that it is possible to cut rates and generate higher revenue as well. That has been illustrated in change after change that we have made in the tax system, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for underlining the point.

Mr. Armstrong: The Chancellor told us that the main reason for cutting income tax was to encourage investment in industry. Does the Minister agree with those in the City who say that most of the money given back in income tax—more than 80 per cent., I understand—has been spent on luxury goods and has thus added to our balance of payments problem?

Mr. Lamont: I do not know what evidence the hon. Lady has for that last assertion, but she has produced none. Investment is at an all-time high. Investment in manufacturing industry is experiencing strong growth this year and investment in the economy as a whole has never been higher. The hon. Lady's question has little substance.

Privatisation

12. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many share sales have taken place since 1979 as a result of the Government's policy of privatisation.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Since 1979, the Government have privatised 18 companies, most of them by sale of shares to the public.

Mr. Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the principal benefit of privatisation lies not in the sale proceeds, welcome though they are, but in the outstanding improvement in productivity and performance of privatised companies, generated by the psychology of enterprise? Is he aware that the profits of the top five privatised companies have increased threefold since 1979 to £4·3 billion, thereby securing far better job prospects than under social ownership?

Mr. Lamont: I do indeed agree with my hon. Friend. The main reason for privatisation is the greater freedom that it gives companies, which they have exploited to improve efficiency and increase production. My hon. Friend could have made his point not only about the top five privatised companies, because every one of the quoted privatised companies is making substantially higher profits in the private sector than when they were in the public sector, and that is very good justification for privatisation.

Mr. Allen McKay: Is it not a fact that, since Barlow Clowes, people's confidence in the City, the Government and the Department of Trade and Industry has been so severely shaken that it is time the Government took the initiative and bailed out Barlow Clowes?

Mr. Lamont: That does not arise from this question.

Manufacturing Productivity

13. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of manufacturing productivity in the economy since 1980.

Mr. Brooke: Output per head in manufacturing rose by an average of over 5½ per cent. a year between 1980 and the three months ending August 1988—faster than in all other major industrial countries.

Mr. Burt: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we speak an awful lot about statistics in this place, but that behind the improved figures that he has given are the skills and qualities of individual men and women, who have worked hard to improve their businesses over recent years?

Is it not an appropriate time to pay tribute to them and remind them of the debt that they owe to those who are training them increasingly well for the future of industry in this country?

Mr. Brooke: I wholly agree with my hon. Friend. In terms of his constituency interests, he may be interested to know that regional gross value added in manufacturing in the north-west grew faster than the United Kingdom average between 1979 and 1986.

Balance of Payments

14. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what forecasts he has regarding long-term trends in the balance of payments.

Mr. Lawson: I will, as usual, be publishing a new forecast in the Autumn Statement next month.

Mr. McAvoy: In his Budget speech the Chancellor predicted a current account deficit of £4 billion. Will he be less prudent and more straightforward in answering the question? What is the deficit for the year likely to be?

Mr. Lawson: I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Member, but he will have to be patient for a little while. I shall publish a new forecast at the time of the Autumn Statement in the usual way next month.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is an enormous difference between a country that is running a trade deficit and a deficit on its finances—Government finances—and a country that has a huge surplus on its finances and a trade deficit?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is quite right. I discussed this at some length in my speech at the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in Berlin last month. There is indeed a fundamental difference between a Government who are running a surplus on their public accounts and one who are running a deficit on their accounts and therefore having to finance that by importing capital from overseas. That must be corrected by direct Government action to bring down their deficit. That is the position in the United States, as the United States authorities widely acknowledge. The United Kingdom is running a surplus on its public accounts; indeed, it is repaying its debt. Where a deficit arises simply and solely as a result of investment in the United Kingdom—private investment being in excess of private savings—it is a self-correcting process, even though it will take a little time for the correction to come through.

Personal Debt

15. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the level of personal debt in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Personal sector financial liabilities in the first quarter of 1988 were £294 billion, roughly one third the level of personal sector financial assets.

Mr. Banks: Is the Minister aware of the extreme financial difficulties that large numbers of people are getting themselves into because of the easy availability of credit, albeit at high interest rates? Does the Minister intend taking any action to curb the irresponsible behaviour of banks, finance houses, credit card companies and stores in inducing people to get themselves into a debt that they cannot repay?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman has obviously not noticed that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs has announced a number of changes to the Consumer Credit Act 1974, which will enable the Government to take action against particular lenders, especially those who are in any way acting against the public interest. Obviously, some situations cause difficulty. My hon. Friend has put forward a number of proposals.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 October.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Campbell: Given the press speculation this morning about the leaked letter from one of her Departments, is the Prime Minister still committed to the poor and the pensioners on the rebates of the poll tax?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman refers to a leaked document. I remember when a Labour Prime Minister was faced with the publication of a leaked document preceding the statement made by the Secretary of State for Social Services about child benefit. I remember full well what the Labour Prime Minister said—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] In June 1976 he said:

"This is a very grave matter. For, on the face of it, it could only have been brought about by theft, or by a betrayal of trust involving a breach of an undertaking voluntarily entered into, by someone with access to the documents."

May I remind the hon. Gentleman—[HON MEMBERS: "What is the right hon. Lady's answer?]

Mr. Speaker: Order. A question has been asked and we are receiving the answer. It is fair enough.

The Prime Minister: I remind the hon. Gentleman of the reply by the then Leader of the Opposition, which I well remember.

Mr. Campbell: I did not ask the Prime Minister that. What is her attitude?

The Prime Minister: The reply was:

"Is the Prime Minister aware that we fully share his view about the gravity of this matter? It is essential that confidentiality of discussions and documents should be assured."—[*Official Report*, 17 June 1976; Vol. 913, c. 738.]

In those days there were certain standards of conduct and integrity. [*Interruption.*]

Mr. Speaker: Order. Prime Minister's Question Time is a very precious time. Interruptions lead to delay.

Q2. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dame Jill Knight: To what extent is the conduct of Government business affected when ministerial confidence in correspondence cannot be maintained as it should be? Does not the thoroughly dishonest behaviour of one civil servant in this recent leak severely damage the reputation of the whole Civil Service? Does this not reflect equally badly on members of the Opposition who are prepared to receive and use stolen property?

The Prime Minister: Yes, but let me pay tribute to the loyalty and integrity of the vast majority in the Civil Service. Indeed, I was dismayed to find—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Disorderly conduct does not help our reputation in this place.

The Prime Minister: I was dismayed to find that the Opposition had been party to publishing and destroying highly classified documents. I trust that they will co-operate fully with any investigations.

Mr. Kinnock *rose*—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer!"]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The same rules apply to both sides.

Mr. Kinnock: I hear the views of the Prime Minister of Westland on these matters. I consider leaks to be grave, but what I consider to be more grave is the theft of child benefit from families who need it.

It is clear that British Aerospace stands to make a huge killing because it was allowed to buy the Royal Ordnance factories at a give-away price. What does the Prime Minister intend to do to secure the full reward which must be due to the British taxpayer from any sale or development of those assets?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman asked about child benefit—*[Interruption.]*—for almost all the time and then went on to ask a second question—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister must be given a chance to answer the question.

The Prime Minister: I will reply to the three points raised by the right hon. Gentleman. I repeat that I trust that he will attempt to live up to the standards of the Labour Prime Minister in those days and that he will co-operate fully with any investigations. I challenge him to say whether he will do that.

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman knows that there will be a statement on child benefit later. He also knows that for almost all the time that Labour was last in government, for families on average earnings the value of the child tax allowance and family allowance or child benefit in real terms was far below what it has been under this Government. That was so for the entire period of the last Labour Government, with the exception of one month. One month before the general election they put up child benefit.

With regard to Royal Ordnance, the Government will be responding to the Public Accounts Committee by means of a Treasury minute in the normal way in due course. The National Audit Office has already investigated the sale. The report by the Comptroller and Auditor General acknowledged that. It said:

"the sale to BAe was achieved in a competitive situation"—*[Interruption.]*

I am quoting from the Comptroller and Auditor General's report:

"The sale to BAe was achieved in a competitive situation and the evidence"—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are making very slow progress, which will be to the detriment of Back Benchers.

The Prime Minister: I quote:

"The sale to BAe was achieved in a competitive situation and the evidence available suggested that the competition was sufficiently widely based to secure the highest price likely in the prevailing commercial climate."

That was the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on this matter.

Mr. Kinnock: That reply does not begin to answer the question that I addressed to the Prime Minister. Does she not understand that the give-away and any losses that result from it are the fault of her Government? Does she not understand that if she does not take action to recover the money that is due to the British people she will be doing a Barlow Clowes on the British taxpayer?

The Prime Minister: It is quite clear, then, that the right hon. Gentleman has absolutely no respect for the Comptroller and Auditor General. The right hon. Gentleman has respect for no one, and least of all for the standards of this House.

Mr. Onslow: I thank my right hon. Friend for those replies and ask her whether she is aware that she will have the full support of Conservative Members and of most people outside the House if, on any future occasion on which she is faced with loutish and unparliamentary insults from the Leader of the Opposition, she continues as she began last Tuesday and treats the little twerp with the contempt that he deserves.

The Prime Minister: Most of us in this House were brought up to know that those who resort to personal abuse have already lost the argument—if they ever had one.

Mr. Ashdown: Is the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are only on the second question and these interruptions take up a lot of time.

Mr. Ashdown: Is the Prime Minister aware that her new-found concern for the greenhouse effect is most welcome? The House well knows of her love-in with the nuclear industry, but I wonder whether she has read the United States report which shows that measures to improve energy efficiency are seven times more cost-effective than money spent on nuclear power. If the Government are serious about the greenhouse effect, what strategy will they now introduce to improve Britain's appallingly low energy efficiency?

The Prime Minister: One of the most effective things would be to reduce the amount of fossil fuel that is burnt to provide ordinary energy for domestic and industrial purposes.

I read a report that sounded similar to the one to which the hon. Gentleman referred. It pointed out that we need an increase of about 2 per cent. a year in energy efficiency and that we also need to go back to afforestation on a

considerable scale, to prevent the greenhouse effect from getting worse. We are giving considerable attention to both those items.

Mr. John Browne: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 recommends that every employer, even in low-hazard industries, of more than 150 people has on-site first aiders, and that no such cover is recommended for schools? Will she ensure that in future schools are brought up to the same level of cover as even low-hazard industries?

The Prime Minister: With all due respect, I think the two are very different. Some of the industries concerned are very dangerous. I do not think that it would be necessary to have someone on site at schools. Obviously it is necessary to have the capacity to get someone there quickly for help, should it be needed.

Q3. **Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Beckett: Will the Prime Minister tell the House whether we should give any more weight to her assurances about poll tax rebates than we now give to her assurances on child benefit, and if so, why?

The Prime Minister: I think the hon. Lady will find that the assurances on the community charge are fully honoured.

Mr. Dickens: Does the Prime Minister realise, on a happy note, that her statement that she is prepared to lead the Conservative party at the next general election and beyond has introduced stability to the economy, and that inward investment will grow even more? Will she be sure not to be put off by the carping of one or two of yesterday's men, but to rely on all of us around her who are behind her 100 per cent? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that the House wants to hear the answer.

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his support. Everything that I have seen and heard from the Opposition this afternoon reinforces me in what I said to *The Times* the other day and of the necessity for it.

Q4. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Janner: Does the Prime Minister recall recently endorsing a lottery intended to benefit the grossly under-resourced National Health Service and then having to remove her endorsement when the lottery turned out to be illegal? Is she proposing to endorse a further lottery launched today for the same purpose, which appears to be illegal under both current and intended legislation?

The Prime Minister: If something is illegal, one cannot possibly endorse it. *[Interruption.]* No, certainly not. On that particular private sector lottery, the advice was that as far as could be seen it was legal. When the advice came that it was illegal, of course one did not endorse it. I have not the slightest intention of having a national lottery organised by the Government. I disapprove of them.

Social Security Benefits (Uprating)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. John Moore): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the uprating of social security benefits. The necessary statutory instrument, which will bring my proposals into effect, will be laid before both Houses and debated. Uprating will take place for most benefits in the week beginning 10 April next year, the first full week in the tax year. The provisions will apply in both Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

This year I have more increases than usual to announce. I am varying some of the increases to target them better on those who need them most; and I am pleased to announce additional help for claimants to ensure that we are more than correcting for the error discovered in the retail prices index last year.

I propose to concentrate on the main features. I have set out the details in a full schedule which is now available in the Vote Office and which, with permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall publish in the *Official Report*.

The social security budget is huge; nearly £50 billion a year, almost one third of all public expenditure. The increases I am announcing today amount to more than £2 billion. It is thanks to the growth in the economy and to the success of our economic policies that we are able to afford to bring this substantial help to pensioners, disabled people and lower income families on benefit. It is right that we should continue to help in this way everyone who needs that help, but it is equally right that we should continue to target this massive expenditure, to ensure that it is concentrated to best effect, on those who need it most. I should like to make it clear that this is where my priorities lie, in carrying forward the policies which I began last year, of redirecting increases within these large sums, to be most helpful to those in most need of help and to stimulate the proper responsibilities and personal efforts of those who do not need to rely on benefit.

I start with the main rates of contributory benefits and benefits for war pensioners, disabled people and others. The retail prices index published on 14 October showed an increase in prices over the 12 months to September 1988 of 5·9 per cent. But the RPI was subject to a minor error which was corrected during this period. That increase of 5·9 per cent. corrects the error which was made earlier in the RPI. That is, 5·9 per cent. includes both the correction for the error and the rise in prices since then, but to make quite sure that benefits are uprated by at least as much as they would have been if the error had not occurred, they will be uprated either by the published figure of 5·9 per cent. or by the amount arrived at by recalculating the benefit from the last correct rate in July 1986, using the adjusted movement in prices since then, whichever figure is the higher.

I should like to emphasise that. We shall pay whichever is the higher figure from the two calculations which we have done for each benefit. If we had not done this, pensioner couples, for example, would, using recalculated figures for past upratings, have been 5p a week worse off. This approach more than fulfils the promise which my hon. Friend the Minister of State gave the House last December, when the error was discovered.

On top of the special payments of over £100 million already made to pensioners and others earlier this year, I am now putting the benefit rates right for the future in the most favourable possible way. I am placing in the Library of the House full details of all the rates, and of all the calculations needed to carry out our intention to adopt a "best of both worlds" approach.

The basic retirement pension for a single person will thus rise by £2·45 a week, from £41·15 to £43·60, and for a married couple by £3·90 a week, from £65·90 to £69·80. Pensioners' total incomes, including their occupational pensions and savings, have grown steadily since 1979, by over 23 per cent. on average in real terms compared with a miserable rate of 0·6 per cent. a year between 1974 and 1979. After allowing for inflation, pensioners' incomes have increased twice as fast as those of the population as a whole between 1979 and 1986. A range of Government policies has played its part in this record, and it is one of which we, as a Government, are proud.

Public service pensions will be increased by 5·9 per cent. This fulfils the pledge given by the Paymaster General to correct the RPI error.

I turn now to the income-related benefits. I restructured these benefits last April in a simpler scheme with new rates which is already proving much easier to understand and operate. I propose to uprate these benefits in the normal way by the published movement of prices less housing costs. In addition, in recognition of the minor error in the RPI, there will be further increases for pensioners, disabled people and families comparable to those for people on contributory benefits.

Overall, these measures to take account of the RPI error will cost some £10 million more than simply uprating by the published indices.

We are making a once-and-for-all adjustment to income support levels to help meet the minimum 20 per cent. contribution which recipients will have to make to the community charge. This will also provide help for the rates liability which recipients in England and Wales will face next year. To this end, we are including £1·15 a week for single people under 25 and £2·30 for couples. I am leaving the figure for single people over 25 at £1·30, the present level, since that is the assistance they are currently receiving towards their domestic rate liability. This significant group will thus be more than compensated over the longer term—a more than adequate settlement.

Before I come to the other increases I wish to announce, hon. Members will expect me to say something about child benefit. I have never made any secret of my belief that this benefit is not the most effective use of social security resources. It is paid to virtually every family in the country, no matter how large their income, at a cost of over £4·5 billion this year, a tenth of all benefit expenditure on social security. Furthermore, if we were to uprate it across the board, most of the money would go to better-off families, including the very wealthiest. The poorest—those on income support—would gain nothing at all from the child benefit increase; neither would those claiming family credit. That would, I believe, be perverse targeting in the extreme.

I have decided, therefore, as last year, to direct help where it is most needed, to the lower income families with children. I propose to put substantial aditional resources into the benefits going to those families. I have already said that there will be a prices uprating of the child allowances and premiums in income support, family credit and housing benefit. That uprating will cost £135 million. But, on top of that, I am adding an extra 50p a week to all these

child allowances. This will cost an additional £70 million. The result is that we shall be directing over £200 million to the greater benefit of some 3 million children in lower income families. The rates for some children—for example those under 11—will go up by as much as 9·3 per cent.: well in excess of a normal uprating. These families will clearly be better off than if we had simply uprated child benefit, which I propose to leave unchanged.

I know that some of my hon. Friends have expressed concern about the position of families on low incomes. Unlike other parts of the benefit system, however, such as income support, when it comes to helping working families with children, there is no cut-off point at low income levels. Family credit goes well up the income scale—for example, to those people earning £9,300 a year with two children aged 12 and 14, and even higher in some cases. I firmly believe that it is better to target resources in this way than to improve child benefit for all, including those on the highest incomes.

I have further increases to announce, for disabled people, the elderly and families with young children. This is the tenth anniversary of Motability, the scheme set up to help disabled people to obtain cars on favourable terms. The scheme has been extended and has a fine record of success. It is now helping 60,000 people. I am pleased that this anniversary has been marked by the grant in May this year of a royal charter. I am very glad to announce today that the Government will be contributing £5 million to a special trust fund which is being set up to celebrate the anniversary. Motability is a joint venture between Government and the private sector, and the clearing banks also will be contributing £5 million. These new funds will increase fivefold the money available for Motability to spend each year, and in particular will in future provide extra help for the more severely disabled people who need a specially adapted vehicle.

I shall also be bringing forward legislation to extend the upper age limit for mobility allowances from 75 to 80. This will be an interim measure pending our consideration of the series of reports on the OPCS survey of disabled people. All this is good news for disabled people.

Finally, I propose useful and what I hope will be welcome improvements to the very good scheme that we already have for giving help during periods of very cold weather to pensioners, disabled people and families with young children on income support. First, I am changing the rules for the period over which temperatures are measured. This will in future be any consecutive seven days, and not limited to seven days starting on a Monday. Secondly, I am raising from two to five the age below which a child can make a family eligible. That will extend the scope of the scheme to nearly half a million more families. I shall be amending the regulations recently laid before the House to include these improvements which, taken together, could double expenditure on the scheme. I believe that it will be extra money well spent.

This is an uprating which directs massive resources to where they are most needed. My proposals amply fulfil our pledges to pensioners and others who receive long-term benefits. They provide substantial extra help to families on low incomes and to disabled people. And, with other measures which I shall be bringing forward, they encourage those who are able to do so to support themselves and their families. Some 16 million pensioners and others in all will benefit, at a total cost of over £2 billion. That is the full measure of the success of this Government.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): The Secretary of State began by saying that the increase that he was announcing would result in an increase in expenditure of over £2 billion. The right hon. Gentleman will recall that the planning figures in January's White Paper showed the social security budget increasing by over £2·5 billion. Is he telling the House that in a year in which inflation has doubled he is to spend less on social security than the planning figures in January? If so, will he explain why he has secured less than his planning figures in a public expenditure round in which his colleagues have secured over £3,000 million for other expenditure?

The Secretary of State has announced that for the sixth year running pensions are not to be uprated by a fraction of 1 per cent. more than the rise in prices. I am sure that pensioners will be grateful that he has secured for them the additional 5p to which he referred. Will he also confirm that if his Government had not smashed the link with earnings the married couple's pension would, after today, be worth £18 per week more than he has announced? Is that not the measure by which his Government have cheated pensioners of their share of Britain's wealth?

The Secretary of State announced that income support is to increase by 4·7 per cent. Is he not aware that one in five of those on income support will not receive even that increase? Will he confirm that half a million of the long-term unemployed, disabled and pensioners who found their benefit cut last April received no increase last year and will receive no increase from this announcement? Is that the way in which the Government protect the income of some of the poorest people in Britain?

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): The hon. Gentleman did not listen.

Mr. Cook: I not only listened to the statement; I read it.

I invite the Secretary of State to convey our thanks to the Chief Secretary of the Treasury for having obliged him to settle for higher compensation for the poll tax demand than he himself bid for. Will he confirm to the House that the figures he has announced to the House mean that the Government are expecting the average poll tax demand to be £299? That is one fifth higher than any of his colleagues has so far admitted—a clear admission that the poll tax is not only unjust but that it will be expensive and inefficient as a tax as well.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that he is seriously proposing to increase housing benefit by reference to the RPI less housing costs? How does he expect to explain to housing benefit claimants that it makes sense to increase their benefit without reference being made to the rise in rents and rates?

The Secretary of State has announced an extra £70 million for family credit and child additions. Will he concede that the amount that he has saved by freezing child benefit is £206 million, and that therefore he is pocketing £136 million at the expense of child support? Will he admit that current expenditure on family credit is well below planning figures because the take-up rate is a disaster? Does he recall promising the House that the family credit take-up rate would be 60 per cent.? Will he

[Mr. Cook]

confirm that it is currently running at the pathetic level of 30 per cent.—barely half the figure he promised the House?

The Secretary of State keeps telling us that he is in favour of targeting. Why then does he place so much reliance on a benefit that is so badly targeted that it misses two out of three of its targets? Child benefit is the best targeted benefit for putting cash in the hands of mothers who feed and clothe children. Will the right hon. Gentleman admit that the value of child benefit is now £1 less than it was in 1985? To a mother of two children, that is a loss of more than £100 per year—the price of two pairs of shoes and two winter anoraks. If, as we are constantly promised, Britain has the strongest economy in Europe, why are we approaching 1992 with the lowest level of child support in Europe?

Will the Secretary of State explain to the House what was meant by his party's manifesto pledge that

"Child benefit will continue to be paid as now"?

In view of his statement that he has made no secret of his view that it is a poor and badly targeted benefit, why did he not share those beliefs with us before polling day last year? Is not the truth now that all ages, from children to pensioners, are being cheated out of the full benefit and the full uprating that they should receive?

The Secretary of State has just announced his annual budget for the poor. He will be aware that we shall judge it by the generous standards set by the Chancellor's Budget for the rich. The question asked today by millions of claimants is, "Why can the Government find thousands of millions of pounds for tax handouts but cannot find any extra money for the social security budget?" The Government will be judged on their answer, not by the House, but by a nation that is weary of watching the poor being cheated so that the rich can be rewarded.

Mr. Moore: This statement, as well as the Budget, will continue to be judged by the nation which will continue to return Conservative Governments after performances of the kind that we have seen in the House today.

I shall try to deal as quickly as I can with the points raised by the hon. Gentleman. He will be aware that we are looking forward, in the next month, to the Autumn Statement to be made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He will see the reality of the increase in the size of my overall programmes and he will understand what he might have understood before—I should have expected him to—the relationship between the large reduction in unemployment, happily welcomed by both sides of the House, and the consequential major reduction in unemployment benefit. He will then be able to put the figures together.

On the point about pensioners, I find it extraordinary that a Labour party spokesman should have the temerity even to debate this issue when we have spent the past nine and a half years putting good Labour's dereliction of duty to the pensioners. Over five years of Socialism, the pensioner not only had his savings stolen but saw a mere 3 per cent. average increase in his income. That 3 per cent. over five years can be compared to our record of 23 per cent. For the first time in decades, the pensioner, in comparison to those in work, saw his income decline under Socialism. That was the product of five years of Socialism.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about income support. He obviously has not checked thoroughly. I will give him more details about the precise position in regard to income support and transitional payments, but for the period that we are discussing, from the uprating forward, for example, 97 per cent. of all pensioners will receive an increase and only 13 per cent. of pensioners still receiving income support will not. The vast majority will be out of transitional protection by the time we reach the second part of this year.

As to the community charge—I say this with great care to an hon. Member whom I have known for a considerable time—I have the greatest contempt for those who steal and leak documents, and for those—*[Interruption.]*—and for those—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moore: —and for those who traffic in them. I am surprised and dismayed at the actions of the hon. Gentleman, for whom I have some regard, and at the way in which he has damaged his standing and reputation by being a party to receiving, destroying and publishing highly classified documents. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moore: He has been misled and has misled others by extracts from a confidential document taken out of context. I trust that the hon. Gentleman is listening very carefully. I hope that he will help to identify the person who gave him that letter; or does he wish us all to assume that he gives his protection to people who handle stolen documents?—*[Interruption.]* In regard to the hon. Gentleman's question, he is, of course, utterly wrong in his conclusions. We live—this party always does when in government—up to our pledges. We promised that the income support rates would include the average amount that recipients would have to pay towards the community charge, which is not the same as the expected average community charge. The figures that I have announced more than meet that pledge.

The hon. Gentleman asked about housing benefit. I do not begin to understand the nature of his question, because he knows—and those Opposition Members nodding and grinning inanely from a sedentary position also know—that all those uprated on income support will have a 100 per cent. protection.

The hon. Gentleman finally asked about child benefit in comparison to family credit. I find it utterly bewildering that in 1988 the Opposition cannot recognise the massive increased resources that have gone to the poorer families because of this statement. To argue the matter, as they have, in the context of a year when many have seen radical reductions in their taxation and large increases in their earnings is to ignore the enormous targeted impact that we have been able to make. Of course, they are right to say —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very unseemly to shout.—*[Interruption.]* Order. The House has asked for details. We should now receive them.

Mr. Moore: The Opposition, of course, are also right to say that all of us should encourage better take-up of family credit. I fully accept that, but that is no reason

indiscriminately to waste taxpayers' money. They conclude by asking whether this matches. It matches completely my party's manifesto pledge at the last election.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before I call Back Benchers to ask questions on this very important statement, I remind them, as the Secretary of State has said, there will be debates on these matters. I ask hon. Members to put single questions and not to repeat what may have been said by those who are called before.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his policy of seeking to concentrate resources on those who are in need, rather than to spread them indiscriminately, must be right? Is it not absurdly inconsistent for Opposition Members to object to reductions in income tax and at the same time say that we should give help on a completely tax-free basis to those same families who in another context they would describe as the super-rich?

Mr. Moore: My right hon. Friend is exactly right. I shall give an illustration of the kind of impact that my announcement will make upon those families for whom I thought that we should all be caring. I shall take a couple with two children, aged 11 and 14, with a father earning gross about £135 a week. As opposed to the £14·70 a week that family is currently able to claim on family credit, it will be able to claim £20·73, which is an extra £6 a week.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Having made his announcement today, does the Secretary of State have some sympathy for Jimmy Thomas who, after making a similarly difficult statement to the House, said that if one was unable to ride two horses at once one could have no part to play in the "bleeding circus"? Is the Secretary of State's position not more difficult because Government policy is driving the horses in different directions? The more successful he is in targeting help on the poorest families in work, the greater will be his and the Government's defeat in loosening people from long-term welfare dependency.

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, until we get a party, whether on this side of the House or the other, which is prepared to be radical enough to phase out largely middle-class tax welfare so that we can have a standard tax rate of 10p in the pound and a doubling of child benefit, we shall never give people at the bottom of society the incentives that we have given to people at the top?

Mr. Moore: I always listen carefully to the hon. Gentleman. Not everybody is as erudite on this subject as he might be, but I hope that he will enable others to understand the relativity of what we are doing. Approximately 45,000 people on the upper bands of low income are brought into the potential of family credit advantage as a result of what I have announced. That must be seen in the context of the 1·6 million families who benefit directly as a result of what we are doing. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will also remember that, because of the major changes that we made to align income support and family credit earlier this year, there is no longer a poverty trap with rates of tax and benefit withdrawal of over 100 per cent.

There is, therefore, very little impact—other than a beneficial one—on the families we are talking about because they are already in work. The impact occurs only when their income increases. I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that being able to help 1·6 million families with 3 million children is a worthwhile target and will have very little effect in terms of bringing people into the benefit culture.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): There will be universal approval, acclamation and congratulation from the ranks behind my right hon. Friend on his statement. We thoroughly approve of and support what my right hon. Friend has said about pensions, help for the disabled and child benefit. Does not my right hon. Friend think it ridiculous that the Opposition support people being able to claim child benefit on the very day that they put their son down for Eton? Will he explain that there is all the difference in the world between giving a handout and allowing people to keep a little more of their own money?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend will remember that our hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) was recently told that about £1 billion of child benefit money goes to families who earn more than £20,000 a year.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Perhaps the most significant thing about today's statement is the fact that the Secretary of State said nothing about the future of child benefit. It would be of assistance to the House if he could say whether we can expect it to wither on the vine.

Is the right hon. Gentleman satisfied with the take-up of family credit? Is it not languishing at a rate of 30 per cent. at the moment? Is that not an indictment of targeting? Will he confirm that, as a result of what he has announced, more families will be brought into high marginal rates of tax? What does that do for personal incentive and the ability to earn more and better oneself? Can the right hon. Gentleman estimate the number of claimants who, by next spring, will lose transitional protection to the extent that they will get no cash increase at all?

Mr. Moore: I thought that I covered the hon. Gentleman's latter point earlier. About 97 per cent. are out of transitional protection, but I shall send the hon. Gentleman the details. The hon. Gentleman is making a valid point about the degree to which some people are included if benefits are extended up the scale. The consequence is that their replacement ratio is changed. The hon. Gentleman must realise that such people's replacement ratios are low. They are not on the highest replacement ratios. The effect that the hon. Gentleman is worrying about is not nearly so significant as the corresponding benefit. The ability to target on 1·6 million families is significant. We have been able to provide help for them.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the future. I am statutorily bound to look at and review, in the context of each year's public expenditure round, the level of child benefit. That is what I have done. The House may have forgotten that, in 1975, when the Child Benefit Act was introduced, a Labour Secretary of State for Social Services —Barbara Castle—refused even to have a statutory review until her Back Benchers, with the support of the Opposition, forced it upon her. She argued strongly that the benefit should never be indexed, but that it should be

[Mr. Moore]

reviewed annually. That is what we will do. My party keeps its pledges. We said at the general election that we would maintain child benefit as it is. That obviously means that I still have a statutory responsibility next year to reconsider, in the light of the economy and all other factors, what I should do with the benefit system then.

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): The House will welcome much of the statement. As, on the Government's own optimistic figures, only 60 per cent. of the poorest families will take up family credit, whereas child benefit has a nearly 100 per cent. take-up, how does my right hon. Friend justify making nearly 40 per cent. of the poorest families in Britain even worse off for the second year running?

Mr. Moore: I do not think that my right hon. Friend is as aware as he might be of the working of family credit. I accept what he says about take-up. Our job must surely be to increase take-up rather than indiscriminately to waste public money. The Government will introduce new take-up campaigns and hon. Members should do what they can to encourage take-up. That must be the right way forward, as a result of which I can, as I could today, help 3 million more children, and families who are less well off rather than those who can afford not to hvhave an increase. The House is debating the issue as though we are abolishing child benefit. We are not. Some £4·6 billion will still be sent at a rate of £7·25 to every child indiscriminately.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the introduction of child benefit —I was one of the Ministers involved in the battle to get it implemented—meant that, for the first time, women got a benefit in their own right? I know from experience in my constituency that there are thousands of women who are grateful for that. Because of the ceiling on child benefit, its value is being reduced. This is a retrograde step. The Secretary of State should upgrade child benefit this year in line with inflation.

Mr. Moore: I should like to remind the right hon. Gentleman of what Mrs. Castle said in July 1975, with, I believe, his and others' support. She said:

"There is a difference between routine national insurance benefits and this new benefit. Indexation of the child benefit is inappropriate. National insurance benefits are major means of support when earning capacity is interrupted, but the child benefit is a tax-free supplement to families whose major source of income is earnings. Clearly maintenance benefits must be capable of moving automatically in line with changes in the cost of living. The child benefit is in a different category."—[*Official Report*, 7 July 1975; Vol. 895, c. 238.]

The only difference today is that we are in government —we were then in opposition—and recognise some of the arguments that were advanced. The right hon. Gentleman should remember that the Labour Government, in which he was a well-known Minister, decided not to index child benefit automatically.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the majority of fair-minded people in this country will accept his broad purpose of concentrating help on the most needy, but does he accept that the most effective way to achieve that yet identified by the House is the tax credit scheme that was put forward in 1972 by Lord Barber and supported by an all-party Select Committee which reported to the House in 1973?

Mr. Moore: I am aware of that scheme, but, with great respect to my hon. Friend, the benefit structure has moved on considerably since then. However, I agree with his first remark that we must find better ways of helping the poorest families, as I believe we have done today.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Is the right hon. Gentleman making any provision for increasing the uptake of benefits? It seems that many voluntary organisations are left to try to increase the number of people who take up benefits. Surely the Government have a moral responsibility, particularly in the light of today's very depressing announcement about not uprating child benefit. Since he is so keen on targeting allowances, will he refer back to the heating allowance scheme which he has announced and say why he does not target such an allowance to take account of climatic conditions, since it is 40 per cent. more expensive to heat a house in Aberdeen than in Bristol? Why do we not have a continuous, automatic payment for pensioners, the ill and the handicapped during winter months?

Mr. Moore: Taking the last point first, the hon. Lady should be aware that we use 63 different weather stations, so we take into account varying weather conditions. On her main point about family credit, we have had two major advertising campaigns using television commercials and the national press. During the summer the Department of Employment had a campaign—"How to be better off in work"—which featured family credit, and I shall be introducing a new campaign in November, trying to contact all those in receipt of child benefit—a very targeted campaign. Obviously, we shall consider whether to introduce even more campaigns, certainly in advance of the uprating next spring.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): Does my right hon. Friend recall that in 1985 there was a most exhaustive examination of the whole of our social security policy which led to the conclusion that child benefit should be retained? Is it not the case that to retain child benefit but not to increase it is tantamount to a major change in policy? Does my right hon. Friend recognise that any decision to lower child benefit in real terms would cause great disappointment to many Conservative supporters, and would be a breach of a very long tradition in this country that those with children need special help from the state?

Mr. Moore: I know my right hon. Friend's sincerely held views on the issue. I assure him that I do not consider this to be a change in policy. I am statutorily required to examine the whole pattern of benefits, as well as the way in which earnings and taxation in the economy have changed during the year. I then have to reach a judgment on the most effective way of handling the very important structure of support for children. We are spending nearly £10 billion on helping families with children. I reassure my right hon. Friend that if we express the points that I have sought to make this afternoon, if we show our friends in the country, and all fair-minded people, that we are trying to help families with children even more than we could if we simply raised child benefit, we shall have their universal support.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Is it not the case that all the talk about targeting benefits is completely bogus when the Government gave £3 billion to the richest? Is it not the case that the changes in capital gains tax alone for a minority of the wealthiest people in our society would have covered the uprating of child benefit? The targeting that has taken place under this Government has been targeting money out of the pockets of the poor and into the pockets of the rich.

Mr. Moore: Thanks to the extraordinary success of the economy, and especially to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's supply side policies, I am able to make massive increases, so that there has not been a single question about the Government's ability to increase pensioners' incomes this year. I am able to do that as a direct consequence of the successful economy from which we are receiving the wealth that comes from taking less instead of giving more.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his Department's first task is to ensure that the take-up of family credit is heartily increased and is made an excellent first step in totally computerising the system? His Department must move forward into the modern world on all other fronts and computerise all benefit systems so that there is proper take-up of all benefits. While he is doing that, no doubt he will examine the case of families above the £10,000 take-home pay level who still badly need family credit or child benefit.

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right to say that, at the beginning of family credit, it was difficult to set up a completely new system. She will be pleased to know that the turnaround, even with having to contact employers, is now running at the target of 18 days, and there is a 70 per cent. success ratio. All hon. Members should be anxious to encourage people to apply for family credit. On her last point, I reiterate that on top of the measures I have announced today we are still spending £4·5 billion on child benefit for all.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): How can the Secretary of State justify the fact that people with children are now worse off compared with those without children? If he is so keen on targeting to those in need, when will he change the attendance allowance system to provide help for families with severely chronically sick babies? It is nearly a year since Opposition Members proved the necessity for such help.

Mr. Moore: From our discussions in the Social Services Select Committee I know that the hon. Lady makes the mistake that is frequently made of assuming that the only way in which we can help families or anyone else in our society is through the benefits system. She cannot ignore the major changes that have taken place in earnings and in the taxation system in our country over the past few years which have benefited many families.

On the hon. Lady's last point, although I well remember the debate upstairs on that issue in which she participated, we are in the process of receiving the OPCS reports, and we must receive them and digest them in trying to decide what to do on that issue, as well as on the other points she made.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Although I welcome the changes that my right hon. Friend has announced on family credit and income support, at the risk of expressing what I know is a minority view on these Benches, may I ask whether he will confirm that no benefit other than child benefit is paid to the woman and has a take-up close to 100 per cent.? In those circumstances, will he confirm that that is ideal targeting and that it is difficult to go beyond that? If we are to take a major decision on these matters, should we not look closely at the continued existence of child benefit altogether? To have it but not to uprate it and to cause it to be eroded seems to be getting the worst of both worlds.

Mr. Moore: I do not think that it is the worst of both worlds when one considers the overall pattern of help to families with children. Each year we are statutorily bound to make a judgment, which in this instance not only targets £4·6 billion indiscriminately to all families with children but gives the families who are least well off more than £200 million. It seems to me that is an intelligent judgment which does not deny our election commitment and does not deny my ability to target more effectively.

As for my hon. Friend's second point, of course family credit goes to the mother, but 100 per cent. take-up is not difficult to achieve if the benefit goes to everybody. I do not understand how people can believe that that is an effective example of how to help, as everybody is given something, including those of us who do not think we merit an increase in our child benefit. I am not quite sure what point that proves in the effectiveness of the delivery of the benefit. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that we must find better ways to get across the exceptional value of family credit.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): The Secretary of State will be aware that basic requirements such as heat, food and electricity cost 30 per cent. more in Northern Ireland than anywhere else in Britain. He will also be aware that no provision was made for that differential when the terms of the new social security provisions were drawn up. Does he agree that that is a basic injustice to the people of the North of Ireland inasmuch as they will always be 30 per cent. poorer in relation to social security than people in the rest of Britain? Will he give a commitment that the differential will be dealt with? If he does not, allied to the freezing of child benefit, the people of the North of Ireland will see themselves as 31·5 per cent. less equal than the rest of the people in Britain.

Mr. Moore: I am not sure that I follow the hon. Gentleman's point. He addresses one particular differential within the kingdom. The benefit structure throughout the United Kingdom has always been such as not to differentiate between different areas. There may be advantages in one or two areas in doing that, but I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman would wish to pursue that point. I shall certainly draw his comments to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and I shall look at his comments myself.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I welcome my right hon. Friend's civilised and well-thought-out statement. However, will he deal in slightly more detail with the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) about the fact

[Mr. Nicholas Winterton]

that child benefit is the only major benefit paid directly to the mother and that that money is used directly to benefit the children, whereas family credit is not? However, we welcome the substantial rise in resources available for family credit. Is not child benefit important because it goes directly to children through their mother?

Mr. Moore: I thank my hon. Friend for the first part of his question and remind him that, although family credit is not as extensive in its coverage, it goes to the mother. That is the point I was trying to make to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle).

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): If the Secretary of State believes that the child allowance is an indiscriminate waste of taxpayers' money aimed at the wrong people, why did he support the commitment in the manifesto that it would continue?

Mr. Moore: I did not say that. I said carefully—my statement is on record—that I have to make a judgment each year and that I believe we have acted in the most effective way. That is the judgment I have to make in the allocation of the large amount of resources.

Sir Charles Morrison (Devizes): Last year my right hon. Friend said that, because of the ill-targeted nature of child benefit, he would keep it under review. To my mind, that implied either that, having done so, he would uprate child benefit to take account of inflation or he would abolish it and replace it with something else. Why has neither happened?

Mr. Moore: No. My precise words were that I have a statutory duty under the Social Security Act 1986 to keep it under review and to look at the uprating each year. That is what I will continue to do. That does not imply that we are committed to any change or any decision for next year. It means simply that for this year I do not believe that uprating would be the most effective use of the resources.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Does the Secretary of State agree that it is dishonest to try to make out, as he has, that the uprating of family credit is some form of substitute for index linking child benefit? As he knows, child benefit has an almost 100 per cent. take-up whereas the take-up for family credit is about 50 per cent. Most women who are not taking it up are the poorest and least advantaged women who need it most.

Mr. Moore: Surely the hon. Lady should join me in trying to assist in a series of announcements designed to enable us to help the poorest families with children even more than if I had simply uprated child benefit. The hon. Lady is saying that we are not communicating properly and that we are not reaching those people. That is what we should be doing, not wasting money.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement and on the way in which he delivered it under great provocation. Does he agree that there is a serious problem with the take-up of benefits and that there is a serious problem with fickle men who expect their wives to do without cash and of divorced women who cannot get their hands on their just maintenance but that not one of those problems will be solved by uprating child benefit?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend has expressed his point extremely well. That is exactly what I was trying to get across. I hope that we will all join in a major national campaign to try to help our constituents to understand the potential benefit for them in family credit.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): About 10 minutes ago the Secretary of State quoted the answer given to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) some time ago that £1 billion of child allowance goes to families earning more than £20,000 a year. That was said with disapproval as if it had been abolished. He has allowed that to continue. He must accept that Members on both sides of the House agree that a judicious mixture of means-tested benefits and universal benefits is what is needed. Universal benefits do not suffer from a stigma and have a high take-up rate, whereas means-tested benefits have a stigma and a low take-up rate. Does he agree that what he has announced today is another step down the slippery slope towards American-style welfare policies, which have been such a disaster in the ghettoes and rural areas of America?

Mr. Moore: I urge the hon. Gentleman to reconsider his comments. When he asked for a judicious mixture of benefits, he expressed almost exactly what I have announced today. I have sought to make a judgment so that some people on means-tested benefits benefit more as a consequence of what I have said. I do not believe that in the world in which we live there is stigma attached to the receipt of benefits such as family credit. If there is such a stigma, it is our job to eradicate it so that we can effectively use public money genuinely to help people.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his statement showed his compassion, commitment and courage? Will he accept that the argument about child benefit is yesterday's argument and that tomorrow's argument is the twin-track view of targeting and take-up? In achieving his objectives for tomorrow, will he please let us know a little more about how he can improve the take-up levels, bearing in mind that it is a matter not just of information but of complexity versus simplicity and of the time available to benefit officials to work through problems with claimants?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right. We have tried to simplify the system. There was considerable difficulty in starting the new family credit system, especially as there was a postal strike in the middle of it, which did not help —*[Interruption.]* The postal strike was nothing to do with humbug but was to do with people. However, I should not be persuaded to take account of idiotic interruptions from a sedentary position.

We have tried advertising on television, in newspapers and with employers. We will now try targeting specifically those who we feel might be able to take up family credit. I am looking carefully at ways in which we can add to those campaigns. I would appreciate any and all suggestions, including those from my hon. Friend.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): If the Government feel that child benefit is ineffective because it is universal and not targeted, how can that be reconciled with their commitment to the married man's tax allowance—it will

become the married couple's tax allowance—which is similar in that it is across the board but addresses a far less tangible cost than that of bringing up children?

Mr. Moore: I repeat that child benefit is one of the benefits on which I have to make a judgment. The rest are related to family credit and income support, to child credits and family premiums. In my judgment, I thought that simply uprating child benefit this year would not be the most effective use of resources. I know that the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) follows these matters. I hope she will consider carefully the fact that in particular circumstances major increases in the real incomes of poorer families have occurred as a consequence of the changes that I have been able to announce today.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): The logic of my right hon. Friend's decision on child benefit is irrefutable. It is interesting that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) made no serious attempt to refute it. The trouble with logic is that it carries one forward into unexpected areas. Will my right hon. Friend explain to the Chancellor of the Exchequer the attractions of applying the same logic to tax relief on mortgages—another indiscriminate benefit accounting for precisely the same sum of £4·5 billion? *[Interruption.]* Perhaps the Opposition will wish to aid the well-off to buy houses as well as to have children. That would be a very interesting ideological position for them to take. Well-off people have had their taxes reduced from 60 to 40 per cent. They still benefit from indiscriminate mortgage tax relief. They still benefit from child benefit which they do not need, and they will benefit from the introduction of the community charge. Will my right hon. Friend therefore talk to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and explain the attractions of a more logical approach by the Government to all these matters?

Mr. Moore: I shall certainly talk to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, as I frequently do. I think that I already have enough issues to cover in the uprating, but I shall draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the point that my hon. Friend has made.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the Secretary of State consider a return to the system of linking old-age pensions to earnings or to the rate of increase in the cost of living, whichever is higher? Does he agree that that is the only way in which elderly people can have a share in what he calls the growing wealth of this country?

What am I to say to the young women who come to my surgery on Saturdays and Sundays, who have already lost £7, £8, £9 or even £11 a week in housing benefit, and who are now to suffer what is tantamount to a further cut as a result of the freezing of child benefit?

Mr. Moore: It is important to understand what actually happened when pensioners were theoretically advantaged by the existence of the link to which the hon. Gentleman referred. In fact, over the whole period of that link pensioners were much more disadvantaged than they are today. One cannot isolate the effect on pensioners of one part of Government policy. It was a tragedy, and not something that the former Labour Government wanted, that a combination of policies meant that average pensioner incomes decreased in relation to earnings. We have now returned to the position that existed before the Labour Government's period in office. I cannot espouse policies, as the last Labour Government did, that would hurt pensioners.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that, despite the welcome aspects of his statement, we are inevitably concentrating attention on ways of getting effective family support? Does he also recognise that that unites us rather than divides us, but that some of us at least believe that until we can *substantially increase the take-up of* family credit, piling more of the onus on family credit and removing it from child benefit can only mean that many of the poorest families will simply not receive the support which he and I agree they need.

Mr. Moore: I know of my hon. Friend's deep commitment and interest. I am sure that he would not have wished me simply to increase child benefit given that, despite the take-up problem, which I accept, as a result of the changes that I have announced poor families will potentially be better off.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Does the Secretary of State accept that in constituencies such as mine the freezing of child benefit will be viewed with dismay? It will be regarded as another turn of the screw for families living just above the poverty level. Is the Minister honest enough to accept that if the Tory party manifesto had contained a commitment to freeze child benefit for two successive years he would probably not now be sitting on the Treasury Bench?

Will the right hon. Gentleman address himself to a specific question and tell us what his statement contains for the families of 16 and 17-year-olds—of whom there are several hundred in my constituency—who from next Friday, contrary to Government guarantees, will have no jobs, no YTS places, no benefits and no money? How does he square his unctuous expressions of compassion with the fact that 16 and 17-year-olds, having been betrayed by the Government, are to be cast on to the street without a penny of legal income from any source? Does the Secretary of State accept moral responsibility for that action?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman's constituents will view what I have said with dismay only as a consequence of the inaccurate way in which their interests are represented in the House and of his continuing to argue the same point. I know something of his constituency, and if the hon. Gentleman did his work as a Member of Parliament rather than pursue that argument, more of his lower-paid constituents could benefit from increased take-up.

Hon. Members: Answer the question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mrs. Peacock.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen) *rose*——

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Surely it is not in order for the Secretary of State to refuse to answer a specific and readily comprehensible question and then to accuse my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) of not doing his job. Surely it is the Secretary of State who is not doing his job.

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for answers from the Front Bench, provided that they are in order.

Mr. Wilson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take it, although I suspect that it is a point of irritation.

Mr. Wilson: Is it in order for the Secretary of State to cast such aspersions and, in the course of doing so, to refuse to answer a question about 16 and 17-year-olds? Who is not doing his job properly, given that the Secretary of State refused to answer a specific question affecting a substantial number of people? I am concerned about 16 and 17-year-olds in my constituency; clearly the right hon. Gentleman is not.

Mr. Speaker: I am anxious to call as many hon. Members as possible. I cannot be held responsible for the answers that are given. I am sure that the Secretary of State did not intend to cast any aspersions. *[Interruption.]* Order. I shall give the Secretary of State an opportunity to say that he did not mean to make any personal aspersions against the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) or any other hon. Member.

Mrs. Peacock: Does my right hon. Friend recognise that all hon. Members would wish to help their constituents to know exactly how to claim family credit? When he prepares his campaign, will he let hon. Members have a draft copy so that we may take it to our local newspapers and radio stations and thus encourage our constituents in need to apply for benefit?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. As I said earlier, so far 70 per cent. of applicants for family credit have been successful. It is a high ratio. In the interim —before we have more campaigns—hon. Members wanting to help their constituents could draw their attention to the fact that application forms are available, not just at benefit offices, but at all post offices.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Does the Minister accept that, despite the pensions uprating announced this afternoon, our state pension provision is among the lowest in the EEC? Does he also accept that, as a result of the phasing out of the state earnings-related pension scheme, many manual workers and women will continue to be worse off? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, every time he talks of better targeting, the Government save money at the expense of many of the most deprived and needy people in the country?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman's EEC comparisons are utterly bogus. Only three EEC states, including the United Kingdom, have flat-rate basic pensions. As to the overall commitment of the state to help pensioners, the United Kingdom comes third for help and support.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Will my right hon. Friend accept that he is morally correct and will receive the support of fair-minded people in targeting help on the needy? When my right hon. Friend finds the person who has taken letters in a thieving manner to the Opposition, will he get him to make a photocopy of the *Official Report* of 25 May 1976, when the Labour Secretary of State for Social Services made a special statement on child benefits and explained precisely why they were being frozen as part of the Government's overall economic strategy? Why should Labour Members carp on and shed crocodile tears when they were having to put up with it at exactly this time in 1976? They are hypocrites.

Mr. Moore: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reminded us at Prime Minister's Question Time, it was only in their last month of office—April 1979—that the Labour Government increased child benefit to a level that could be compared with what it has been under this Government.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Is the Secretary of State aware that thousands of claimants are experiencing serious hardship because of the inadequate provision made through the social fund? Why has he ignored what in all probability is one of the worst aspects of the horrible social security review? Is he aware that many people are being deprived of the means to enable them to sleep on a bed? Why has he ignored this important problem affecting the poor?

Mr. Moore: From the hon. Gentleman's comments, I do not recognise the workings of the social fund, the loan profile of which is running at over 90 per cent., while the figure for community care grants is 52 per cent. I should like to be able to say what we shall be putting into the social fund in the future, but so far I regard it as having been one of the unique successes of the transformed social security system.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): I welcome what my right hon. Friend said about child benefit, but many of us think it wrong that the Inland Revenue is allowed to take £4·5 billion from husbands so that the Department of Social Security can give it back to their wives. My right hon. Friend is right to use whatever additional money he has to help low-income families, through family credit and income support. Will he take every opportunity to explain to the country and the Opposition, who do not seem to understand, that increases in child benefit are of no use whatever to 25 per cent. of lowest income families because their income support or family credit will be reduced by exactly the same amount?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right. It is an exact offset, which is one of the reasons why I was so determined to ensure that those families benefited this year and in double terms.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): What has the Secretary of State to say to the widow living in Bradford with five children, who earlier this year—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is perfectly in order for the hon. Gentleman to make that point.

Mr. Madden: It seems that Conservative Members have as much compassion for widows as they have for 16 or 17-year-old youngsters living in this country with no money.

What has the Secretary of State to say to the widow living in Bradford with five children, whose income earlier this year was 14p above income support, thereby depriving her children of free school meals? As a result of the decision made by Tory-controlled Bradford city council to increase the cost of school meals, from a week next Monday she will be paying £20 a week for her children's school meals. Does the Secretary of State realise that that case was referred to my by Bradford's citizens advice bureau, the funding of which has been taken away by Bradford city council, which is threatening to close benefit shops and the welfare rights campaign——

Mr. Speaker: Order. A question must be related to the statement.

Mr. Moore: I do not wish to comment on Bradford city council, because it would not be appropriate to do so. As to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, there is no comparison between the position of a widow under a Conservative Government and the appalling characteristics of being a widow under a Labour Government.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his statement will be welcomed by the recipients of family credit, not only for the substantial additional funding that he has announced, but because the total spending on family credit is already running well above the Government's original estimate? Does he agree that one possible reason for the apparently low take-up might be that families, unlike the offices of the Department of Social Security, have a better idea of all their sources of income and therefore know that they are not entitled to it in the first place?

Mr. Moore: I shall not go into detail on my hon. Friend's last point, but he is right to say that although the caseload is less than we would like, it is running at profiled expenditure, which shows that people are applying effectively for family credit. I should like to encourage further take-up, despite the increased costs that are associated with it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Minister aware that old-age pensioners in this country receive, on average, £20 a week less than those in the Common Market? Is he further aware that later today a Treasury Minister will introduce the Third Reading of the European Communities (Finance) Bill, which will hand over £765 million to the Common Market? Why did he not have the guts to fight the Chief Secretary to the Treasury for that money and put it on child benefit or give it to old-age pensioners? When he finds the person who leaked the document that has been referred to this afternoon, will he recommend to the Prime Minister that he or she should get a job as a commissioner in Brussels?

Mr. Moore: I understand why the hon. Gentleman is not welcome in the chair of the national executive committee. Never have I heard such complete inaccuracy. His European Economic Community comparisons are utterly wrong. *[Interruption.]* It is a typical example of latter-day Socialism, and it is a mistake that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) would never make. Only three EEC states, including the United Kingdom, have flat-rate pensions. The hon. Gentleman seems to want earnings-related pensions, but most poor people in the Community do not have as good pensions as those in the United Kingdom. If that is what the hon. Gentleman wants, it is a new kind of Socialism.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, but does he not think it ridiculous and downright unfair that higher-rate taxpayers should pocket £1·1 billion of taxpayers' money through child benefit? When does he intend to withdraw this privilege, because we then could target the many mothers who rely on child benefit as a lifeline but who are just above the level for family credit?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend shared an election platform with me and fought the election on the manifesto, which made our position clear. I shall stick to that manifesto commitment. We shall not go the way that my hon. Friend would like, because we are committed to the manifesto for this Parliament. I welcome my hon. Friend's support, and he will know that I have been successful, within that manifesto commitment, in achieving targeting.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Does the Secretary of State accept that the major problem with the benefit system is that he has made thousands of people ineligible for benefit? For those who receive benefits, the amounts that have been announced will not begin to meet their increased housing, heating and food costs. Surely child benefit is no more indiscriminate than giving tax cuts to those on top rates, who can hardly be said to be in need.

Mr. Moore: I genuinely cannot equate the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question, to which I listened carefully, with the first part of it. If he believes what he said in the first half of his question, he should welcome with open arms all that I have said today.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Does my right hon. Friend recall the inflation rates that prevailed under the last Labour Government, and that benefits, whether they were theoretically indexed or not, were losing 10 or 12 per cent. of their real value every six months? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that casts an interesting light on the meaning of "increasing benefits", as used by the Opposition?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right and I can give him an exact illustration. Pensioners with savings during that last unlamented period of Labour Government saw a decrease in the value of their income from savings of 3·4 per cent. per year—a fall each year and an overall fall of 16 per cent. over the period—compared with an average increase over the past nine years of 7 per cent. per year. That is the reality of controlling inflation and helping pensioners with their savings.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Is the Secretary of State aware that, in the real world of the family, income is often not shared fairly? The Government's claim to be taking women's issues and the unfair treatment of women seriously will be viewed cynically because, for two years running, the right hon. Gentleman has taken away the only income that many women in a family have as of right?

Mr. Moore: I again remind the hon. Lady of the reality of family credit, which enables the mother to receive the income. I hope that the hon. Lady will encourage people, especially those with low earnings, to benefit from that. In this uprating statement I have been able to add more than those people would have received if we had simply increased child benefit.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): If payments on family credit are running at about the original provision, does that not show what an excellent scheme this is, targeted towards and paid to those mothers most in need?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): With regard to the right hon. Gentleman's remarks about income support assistance to meet the poll tax and rates charges, I remind him that no deduction can be made from a social security payment without the claimant's consent.

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that that rule will not be changed? Given the lower take-up of community care grants under the social fund, will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance than in areas such as the one that I represent, where there is still a lamentably high level of poverty, he will encourage a take-up campaign? I ask the right hon. Gentleman for a fairer-minded answer than the sterkit response that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson).

Mr. Moore: I never intend to be rude across the Floor of the Chamber and, if I was, I unreservedly apologise. I am always interested in arguing rationally and logically. I genuinely meant that if all of us looked at the relative position of the benefit structure, and looked a little more carefully at family credit, we might be able to help much more of the low-paid employees in our constituencies.

I have listened carefully to the points that have been made. Rather than make a commitment, I should like to consider the hon. Gentleman's first point. I take entirely his second point about community care grants. Over the past six weeks I have visited benefit offices extensively. I have been trying to promote precisely that point. I shall look more carefully at that matter from the hon. Gentleman's point of view.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West) *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has not been standing.

Mr. Battle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It is not a point of order; and I am on my feet. I shall try to call those hon. Members who have been standing. I hope that they will not put questions that have already been put or make debating points which could properly be made in the debates that are certain to follow.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): I, too, congratulate my right hon. Friend, not only on the contents of his statement, but on his robust delivery. Bearing in mind that the Labour party is supposed to believe in the principle "from each according to his means, to each according to his needs", should not my right hon. Friend expect overwhelming support from the Labour Benches for something that does just that?

Mr. Moore: In looking at these issues, I am genuinely bewildered by the inability of the Opposition—other than one or two thoughtful Members—to realise that they seem to be drifting a long way from what I always regarded as the Beveridge base and some parts of Socialism.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that recent winters have been much more severe in London and the south of England than in Scotland and other parts of the nation and that, as a matter of interest, the Scots did not experience the hurricane last year? Will my right hon. Friend say specifically by how much the heating allowance will increase? I warmly welcome his improved arrangements. Will my right hon. Friend undertake to simplify the difficult form which pensioners must complete to obtain their allowance?

Mr. Moore: I shall certainly look at the form. I cannot be precise about the amounts of money, because this is not cash limited. We have enormously increased the number of those potentially eligible for it, and theoretically we will double the approximate amount of money available per year. Because of the extension of eligibility and entitlement —which I think everyone welcomes—if we had a severe winter, we would obviously spend considerably more money than I had allocated to the budget.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Would my right hon. Friend care to reflect and give the House a little more information on the levels of support for the community charge? Will he be careful when listening to the Opposition's complaints, because it is the Opposition who go around the country encouraging Labour councils to spend more? My right hon. Friend's allocation will not go as far as we would like, mainly because Labour-controlled county councils are spending at high levels, which means that they get high levels of community charge. The one way in which the Labour party could help is by starting to encourage their councils to act more responsibly.

Mr. Moore: I take the points that my hon. Friend has made and will draw them to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. The factors that he has mentioned were taken into account in our estimates.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that there is a warm welcome from Conservative Members for him personally as well as for his statement? Does he recognise also that there is a growing understanding of the perversity of child benefit, which maximises the benefit for the rich and gives no benefit to the poor, and that there is growing demand among Conservative Members to reconsider the need for this benefit? Where does my right hon. Friend put the behaviour of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) in the scale of contemptibleness, in acting as an accessory to theft and breach of confidence during the past few days? Does my right hon. Friend regard it as better——

Mr. Dobson *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. That sort of comment does not help. One question is enough to ask. Hon. Members should not make debating points.

Mr. Hamilton: The propriety of such actions is immensely important for our political system, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. There should be consideration for others in the Chamber. Time is getting on.

Mr. Moore: On the specific point about child benefit, my hon. Friend was right to say that there are some perverse features. That, I imagine, is one reason why, when Barbara Castle and the former Labour Government established it, they were anxious not to secure annual indexation.

Mr. James Cousbman (Gillingham): Did my right hon. Friend have in mind when he made his decision the fact that the 1985 review found that the greatest poverty occurred among families on low incomes, whether earned or benefit? Is it not therefore nonsense that the product of

4p in the pound of income tax should be devoted to a universal benefit which does not differentiate between the duchess and the wife of a dustman?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend makes his point, but I remind him that my assessment is entirely on the basis of the existing system and I make judgments, as I must in a statutory sense, only for this particular year.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Will my right hon. Friend ensure that there is a full inquiry into the leaked letter, even though the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), has discovered that what he thought would be a useful offensive weapon was a boomerang, which has done him great damage?

Mr. Moore: I went as far as I was going to go on this subject earlier in the exchange.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Will my right hon. Friend comment on the justice of a single taxpayer earning £6,000 a year contributing in his taxes to the income of a married couple with a joint income of £50,000 a year, who have two teenage children and live in Ealing? If that is unfair, does my right hon. Friend not think that, when the Conservative Government are re-elected for a fourth term, we should consider taxing child benefit, or at least ensure that those paying the 40 per cent. tax rate are subject to a taper so that that money is taken back?

Mr. Moore: I look forward to the detail of my hon. Friend's ideas in advance of our next election victory.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Can my right hon. Friend say which makes it more difficult to have an objective assessment of this very important issue—the grubby little sneak who smuggles information out of Government Departments, or the weasly little rat who abuses and misconstrues it?

Mr. Dobson rose——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Perhaps I may be allowed to deal with this. If an aspersion was cast in that question on a Member of the Front Bench, will the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) please withdraw it.

Mr. Marlow: In the words of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, I respect your judgment greatly, and on that basis I withdraw the word "sneak"—I mean "rat".

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated on negotiating an excellent package in recent negotiations with the Treasury. I am sure that he has done better than many other Departments will do. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the tax cuts of which the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) complains are the driving force behind his ability to deliver this package to the House today in terms of the increase in revenue? On Tuesday the Opposition complained about inflation going up to 5·9 per cent., but today they ask for an increase in spending on a universal benefit which is not directed at those in need and which not only goes to the less well off but is also a millionaire's meal ticket. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is utter hypocrisy?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I cannot make a judgment without taking into account the major changes that have occurred in the past year both in our tax system and in the pattern of earnings. I am very mindful of the fact that 80 per cent. of families with children are taxpayers.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): When the statement on pensions is put together in people's personal budgets with the statement on housing benefit, pensioners in this country will lose yet again. Are not the Government's manifesto statements and pledges proving to be deliberately placed ambiguities of language calculated to deceive the British people?

Mr. Moore: I have no doubt that the British people will continue, as they have in the past, to elect—*[Interruption.]* The contempt of some people, including the shadow Leader of the House, for the electorate is almost beyond belief. The British people will recognise the reality of what the Government have achieved in terms of basic improvement in their welfare. In the past eight-plus years pensioners' average income has improved by an average of 3 per cent. per year, compared with an increase of only 0·6 per cent. per year in the five tragic years of Socialism.

Following is the schedule of main proposed social security benefit rates from April 1989:

Weekly rates unless otherwise shown	*Old rates 1988* £	*New rates 1989* £
Attendance Allowance		
higher rate	32·95	34·90
lower rate	22·00	23·30
Child Benefit—each child	7·25	7·25
Child's Special Allowance	8·40	8·95
Dependency Increases		
Adult Dependency Increases		
For spouse or person looking after children, with:—		
retirement pension on own insurance, invalidity pension, unemployability supplement and, if beneficiary over pension age, unemployment benefit	24·75	26·20
non-contributory retirement pension, invalid care allowance and severe disablement allowance	14·80	15·65
sickness benefit if beneficiary over pension age	23·65	25·10
unemployment benefit	20·20	21·40
maternity allowance/sickness benefit	19·40	20·55
Child Dependency Increases		
For each child with:—		
retirement pension, widows benefit, invalidity benefit, invalid care allowance, severe disablement allowance, higher rate industrial death benefit, unemployability supplement and sickness/unemployment benefit if beneficiary over pension age	8·40	8·95
Earnings rules		
Retirement pension	75·00	75·00
Invalid care allowance	12·00	12·00
Unemployment benefit (daily rate)	2·00	2·00
Therapeutic earnings limit	27·00	28·50
Industrial injuries unemployability supplement permitted earnings level (annual amount)	1,404·00	1,482·00

[Mr. Moore]

Weekly rates unless otherwise shown	Old rates 1988 £	New rates 1989 £
War pensioners' unemployability supplement permitted earnings level (annual amount)	1,404·00	1,482·00
Adult dependency increases with sickness benefit where claimant is		
(a) under pension age	19·40	20·55
(b) over pension age	23·65	25·10
maternity allowance	19·40	20·55
unemployment benefit where claimant is		
(a) under pension age	20·20	21·40
(b) over pension age	24·75	26·20
retirement pension, invalidity pension, severe disablement allowance, unemployability supplement where dependant		
(a) is living with claimant	32·75	34·70
(b) still qualifies for the tapered earnings rule	45·09	45·09
retirement pension, invalidity pension, pension and unemployability supplement where dependant not living with claimant	24·75	26·20
severe disablement allowance where dependant not living with claimant	14·80	15·65
invalid care allowance	14·80	15·65
Child dependency increases		
level at which CDIs payable with long-term benefits are affected by earnings of claimant's spouse or partner		
for first child	90·00	95·00
for each subsequent child	11·00	12·00
Guardian's Allowance—each child	8·40	8·95
Hospital Downrating		
20 per cent. rate	8·25	8·70
40 per cent. rate	16·50	17·40
Industrial Death Benefit		
Widow's pension		
higher rate	41·15	43·60
lower rate	12·35	13·08
Industrial Disablement Pension		
18 and over, or under 18 with dependants		
100 per cent.	67·20	71·20
90 per cent.	60·48	64·08
80 per cent.	53·76	56·96
70 per cent.	47·04	49·84
60 per cent.	40·32	42·72
50 per cent.	33·60	35·60
40 per cent.	26·88	28·48
30 per cent.	20·16	21·36
20 per cent.	13·44	14·24
Under 18		
100 per cent.	41·15	43·60
90 per cent.	37·04	39·24
80 per cent.	32·92	34·88
70 per cent.	28·81	30·52
60 per cent.	24·69	26·16
50 per cent.	20·58	21·80
40 per cent.	16·46	17·44
30 per cent.	12·35	13·08
20 per cent.	8·23	8·72
Maximum life gratuity (lump sum)	4,470·00	4,730·00
Unemployability Supplement	41·15	43·60
plus where appropriate an increase for early incapacity		
higher rate	8·65	9·20
middle rate	5·50	5·80
lower rate	2·75	2·90
Maximum special hardship allowance/ reduced earnings allowance	26·88	28·48
Constant attendance allowance		
exceptional rate	53·80	57·00
intermediate rate	40·35	42·75
normal maximum rate	26·90	28·50
part-time rate	13·45	14·25
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	26·90	28·50
Invalid Care Allowance	24·75	26·20
Invalidity Benefit		
Invalidity pension	41·15	43·60
Invalidity allowance		
higher rate	8·65	9·20
middle rate	5·50	5·80
lower rate	2·75	2·90
Maternity Allowance	31·30	33·20
Maternity Payment	85·00	85·00
Mobility Allowance	23·05	24·40
One Parent Benefit	4·90	5·20
Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis, Workmen's Compensation (Supplementation) and other schemes		
Total disablement allowance and major incapacity allowance (maximum)	67·20	71·20
Partial disablement allowance	24·75	26·20
Unemployability supplement	41·15	43·60
plus where appropriate increases for early incapacity		
higher rate	8·65	9·20
middle rate	5·50	5·80
lower rate	2·75	2·90
Constant attendance allowance		
exceptional rate	53·80	57·00
intermediate rate	40·35	42·75
normal maximum rate	26·90	28·50
part-time rate	13·45	14·25
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	26·90	28·50
Lesser incapacity allowance		
maximum rate of allowance	24·75	26·20
based on loss of earnings over	32·95	34·90
Retirement pension		
Category A or B	41·15	43·60
Category B (lower)—husband's insurance	24·75	26·20
Category C or D—non-contributory	24·75	26·20
Category C (lower)—non-contributory	14·80	15·65
Additional pension, guaranteed minimum pension and graduated retirement benefit	increased by 5·9 per cent.	
Increments to basic and additional pension, guaranteed minimum pension and graduated retirement benefit	increased by 5·9 per cent.	
Graduated retirement benefit (unit) (pence)	5·39	5·71

Weekly rates unless otherwise shown	*Old rates 1988* £	*New rates 1989* £
Prescribed maximum amount of additional pension (also applies to widow's and invalidity benefits) (from 6 April)	34·75	41·71
Additional at age 80	·25	·25
Severe disablement allowance	24·75	26·20
Sickness benefit		
Over pension age	39·43	41·80
Under pension age	31·30	33·20
Statutory maternity pay		
Earnings threshold	41·00	43·00
Lower rate	34·25	36·25
Statutory sick pay		
Earnings threshold	41·00	43·00
Standard rate threshold	79·50	84·00
Lower rate	34·25	36·25
Standard rate	49·20	52·10
Unemployment Benefit		
Over pension age	41·15	43·60
Under pension age	32·75	34·70
Occupational pension abatement	35·00	35·00
War Pensions		
Disablement pension (100 per cent. rates)		
private or equivalent	67·20	71·20
officer (£ per annum)	3,504·00	3,712·00
Age allowances		
40 per cent.—50 per cent.	4·70	5·00
over 50 per cent. but not over 70 per cent.	7·30	7·75
over 70 per cent. but not over 90 per cent.	10·45	11·10
over 90 per cent.	14·60	15·50
Disablement gratuity (base figures for calc purposes only)		
specified minor injury	4,470·00	4,730·00
unspecified minor injury	2,458·00	2,601·50
Unemployability allowance		
personal	43·70	46·30
adult dependency increase	24·75	26·20
increase for each child	8·40	8·95
Invalidity allowance		
higher rate	8·65	9·20
middle rate	5·50	5·80
lower rate	2·75	2·90
Constant attendance allowance		
exceptional rate	53·80	57·00
intermediate rate	40·35	42·75
normal maximum rate	26·90	28·50
part-time rate	13·45	14·25
Comforts allowance		
higher rate	11·60	12·30
lower rate	5·80	6·15
Mobility supplement	25·60	27·10
Allowance for lowered standard of occupation (maximum)	26·68	28·48
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	26·90	28·50
Severe disablement occupational allowance	13·45	14·25
Clothing allowance (£ per annum)		
higher rate	92·00	97·00
lower rate	58·00	61·00
Education allowance (£ per annum) (max)	120·00	120·00
War widow's pension (private)		
widow	53·50	56·63
childless widow under 40	12·35	13·08
age allowance		
(a) age 65 to 69	5·75	6·10
(b) age 70 to 79	11·50	12·20
(c) age 80 and over	14·45	15·30
child addition	12·00	12·60
Orphan's pension	13·15	13·80
Unmarried dependant living as spouse (maximum)	51·45	54·60
Rent allowance (maximum)	20·35	21·55
Adult orphan's pension (maximum)	41·15	43·60
Widower's pension (maximum)	53·50	54·65
Widow's benefit		
Widow's payment (lump sum)	1,000·00	1,000·00
Widowed mother's allowance	41·15	43·60
Widow's pension		
standard rate	41·15	43·60
age-related		
age 54 (49)	38·27	40·55
53 (48)	35·39	37·50
52 (47)	32·51	34·44
51 (46)	29·63	31·39
50 (45)	26·75	29·34
49 (44)	23·87	25·29
48 (43)	20·99	22·24
47 (42)	18·11	19·18
46 (41)	15·23	16·13
45 (40)	12·35	13·08
Note: For deaths occurring before 11 April 1988 refer to age-points shown in brackets.		
Income Related Benefits		
Capital		
Housing Benefit upper limit	8,000·00	8,000·00
Income Support and Family Credit upper limit	6,000·00	6,000·00
Amount disregarded (common provision)	3,000·00	3,000·00
Child's limit (common provision)	3,000·00	3,000·00
Tariff Income		
£1 for each complete £250 or part thereof between amount of capital disregarded and capital upper limit		
Income Support and Housing Benefit—Common Provisions		
Personal allowances		
Single		
under age 18	19·40	20·80
age 18-24	26·05	27·40
age 25 or over	33·40	34·90
Lone parent		
under age 18	19·40	20·80
age 18 or over	33·40	34·90
Couple		
both under age 18	39·90	41·60
at least one age 18 or over	51·45	54·80
Dependant children		
under age 11	10·75	11·75
age 11-15	16·10	17·33
age 16-17	19·40	20·80
age 18	26·05	27·40
Premiums		
Family	6·15	6·50

[Mr. Moore]

Weekly rates unless otherwise shown	*Old rates 1988* £	*New rates 1989* £
Lone parent (Income Support)	3·70	3·90
Lone parent (Housing Benefit)	8·60	8·60
Pensioner		
single	10·65	11·20
couple	16·25	17·05
Pensioner (higher)		
single	13·05	13·70
couple	18·60	19·50
Disability		
single	13·05	13·70
couple	18·60	19·50
Severe disability		
single	24·75	26·20
couple (one disabled)	24·75	26·20
couple (both disabled)	49·50	52·40
Disabled child	6·15	6·50
Income support		
Maximum amounts for accommodation and meals in		
(a) Hostels	70·00	70·00
Maximum special increase	17·50	17·50
(b) Residential care homes		
old age	130·00	140·00
very dependent elderly	155·00	155·00
mental disorder (not handicap)	130·00	140·00
drug/alcohol dependence	130·00	140·00
mental handicap	160·00	165·00
physical disablement		
(under pension age)	190·00	200·00
(over pension age)	130·00	140·00
others	130·00	140·00
maximum Greater London increase	17·50	23·00
(c) Nursing homes		
mental disorder (not handicap)	185·00	195·00
drug/alcohol dependence	185·00	190·00
mental handicap	200·00	205·00
terminal illness	230·00	235·00
physical disablement		
(under pension age)	200·00	225·00
(over pension age)	185·00	190·00
others (including elderly)	185·00	190·00
maximum Greater London increase	17·50	23·00
Allowances for personal expenses for claimants in hostels		
Lower		
single	10·20	11·05
couple	20·40	23·90
Higher		
single	11·50	13·25
couple	23·00	26·50
Dependent children		
under age 11	3·45	4·10
age 11-15	5·30	6·05
age 16-17	6·20	7·00
age 18	10·30	11·95
Private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes	9·55	10·05
Dependent children allowances above apply except—age 18	9·55	10·05
Hospital and local authority (Part III) accommodation	8·25	8·70
The Polish Home Ilford Park Housing costs	11·50	13·25
Deduction for non-dependants aged 18 or over and in remunerative work	8·20	9·15
others, age 18 or over or on income support and over 25	3·45	3·85
Low earnings threshold	49·20	52·10
Deductions for direct payment of fuel debt		
5 per cent. rate	1·70	1·75
10 per cent. rate	3·35	3·50
Amount of housing costs	1·70	1·75
Reduction in benefit for strikers	17·70	18·50
Disregards		
Standard earnings	5·00	5·00
Higher earnings	15·00	15·00
War pensions	5·00	5·00
Voluntary and charitable payments	5·00	5·00
Students covenanted income	5·00	5·00
Income from boarders	35·00	35·00
Expenses for subtenants		
Furnished or unfurnished	4·00	4·00
Where heating is included, additional	6·70	7·00
Housing Benefit		
Amenity deductions for		
heating	6·70	7·00
hot water	0·80	0·85
lighting	0·50	0·55
cooking	0·90	0·95
all fuel	8·80	9·25
Non-dependant deductions		
Rent rebates and allowances aged 18 and over and in remunerative work	8·20	9·15
others aged 18 or over or on income support and over 25	3·45	3·85
Rate rebates, aged 18 or over	3·00	3·35
Low earnings threshold	49·20	52·10
Expenses for subtenants		
Furnished or unfurnished	4·00	4·00
Where heating is included, additional	6·70	7·00
Earnings disregards where disability premium awarded	15·00	15·00
various specified employments	15·00	15·00
lone parent	15·00	15·00
one of a couple in employment	10·00	10·00
single claimant	5·00	5·00
Other income disregards		
charitable or voluntary payments	5·00	5·00
war pensions	5·00	5·00
students covenanted income	5·00	5·00
Family Credit		
Adult Credit	32·10	33·60
Child Credit		
under age 11	6·85	7·50
age 11-15	11·40	12·90
age 16-17	14·70	16·35
age 18	21·35	23·30
Disregards		
war pensions	5·00	5·00
voluntary and charitable payments	5·00	5·00
students covenanted income	5·00	5·00
Expenses for subtenants		
furnished or unfurnished	4·00	4·00
where heating is included, additional	6·70	7·00
Applicable amount (a taper threshold level)	51·45	54·80
Maternity Payment	33·00	33·00

Business of the House

5.2 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week:

MONDAY 31 OCTOBER—Second Reading of the Rate Support Grants Bill.

Remaining stages of the Foreign Marriage (Amendment) Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion on the Penalty Points (Alteration) Order.

TUESDAY 1 NOVEMBER—Consideration of Lords Amendments to the Health and Medicines Bill.

Motion to take note of EC documents on air pollution from motor vehicles. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

WEDNESDAY 2 NOVEMBER—Until about seven o'clock, supplemental timetable motion on and consideration of Lords Amendments to the Firearms (Amendment) Bill.

Afterwards there will be a debate on a Government motion on broadcasting and terrorism.

THURSDAY 3 NOVEMBER—Debate on a motion to take note of the outstanding reports of the Public Accounts Committee to which the Government have replied.

FRIDAY 4 NOVEMBER—Debate on the control of pollution of rivers and estuaries and the condition of seas adjacent to Britain on a motion for the Adjournment of the House. Details of relevant Environment Committee reports will be given in the *Official Report*.

MONDAY 7 NOVEMBER—Committee and remaining stages of the Rate Support Grants Bill.

Consideration of Lords Amendments to the Copyright Design and Patents Bill *[Lords]*.

[Tuesday 1 November 1988

Relevant European Community Document

4637/88 Small cars: gaseous emissions

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee

HC 43-xx (1987-88) para 9, HC 43-xxxi (1987-88) para 2 & HC 43-xxxiii (1987-88) para 1

Debate on Friday 4 November:

Environment Committee's Third Report Session 1986-87 (HC 183)

Environment Committee's Third Special Report Session 1987-88 (HC 543)

Environment Committee's First Report Session 1985-86 (HC 191)

The Government's Second Stage Response to the Environment Committee's Report on Radioactive Waste (Cmnd. 9852).]

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I thank the Lord President for his statement. As I understand it, we are in a somewhat ironic position in that, if child benefit had been uprated, we could have debated the uprating; but, as it is not being uprated, there is no automatic opportunity to debate the failure to uprate it. In view of the concern throughout the House and the country, will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the House will have an early opportunity specifically to debate the failure to uprate child benefit, with a Division in which Members will be able to vote for or against uprating?

The Leader of the House suggested last week that the provision of some extra Opposition days should be discussed through the usual channels. Can he tell us the outcome? Does he realise that he owes the Opposition at least four more extra days? This parliamentary year began in June 1987 and is heading for a total of 217 days. That exceeds the length of an average parliamentary year by about 45 days, or more than 25 per cent. As we were allocated only the usual 20 days for an average parliamentary year, a pro rata increase in Opposition days should entitle us to five extra days, of which we have been given only one. I should be grateful if the Leader of the House would confirm that the other four will be forthcoming before the Queen's Speech.

Will the right hon. Gentleman also tell the House when we can expect a debate on his failure to set up the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs? Better still, will he agree to set it up? Hitherto, we understand that English Conservative Members were unwilling to take part in the activities of a Scottish Select Committee. In yesterday's debate on the poll tax and housing in Scotland, however, the hon. Members for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick), for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) and for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) took part. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman could approach those Conservative Members with a view to recruiting them to the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

Finally, last week the right hon. Gentleman advised us all to read the report on the Barlow Clowes scandal over the weekend before deciding when it would be debated. Many hon. Members on both sides have taken the right hon. Gentleman at his word and read the report. It is up to the right hon. Gentleman now to find time soon for a debate on the Barlow Clowes scandal.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman asked four questions about the business for next week.

First, I believe that his comment about a debate on child benefit is not factually correct. I understand that a whole series of orders, including one on child benefit, will be laid in the usual way. I believe that benefits which remain the same will be included and will have to be debated. I very much hope that we shall be able to arrange a debate before Christmas.

With regard to Opposition days, I thought that the hon. Gentleman, like me, was a member of the usual channels and thus should have some idea of what goes on. As he knows, the business that I have announced for next week does not provide for Opposition time. It is a full programme of essential business. I therefore cannot agree to his request. I must also tell him that although I will do my best, I certainly do not believe in his rather partial interpretation of the Standing Orders of the House, which are fairly clear. Nevertheless, I will do my best.

With regard to the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, I am committed to having a debate, and I have sought to discuss this through the usual channels. I think that that is the best way to deal with the matter.

With regard to Barlow Clowes, I have nothing to add to my statement last week or to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry. I realise that this is a matter to which the House will want to come, but there is a great deal of essential business with which we must deal next week.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): May I make a request from the Conservative Benches for a debate on

[Mr. Nicholas Winterton]

Barlow Clowes? I hope that my right hon. Friend will be a little more forthcoming in his response than he was in his answer to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). My right hon. Friend will be aware that 18,000 people are intimately and deeply involved. Bearing in mind last week's statement, I believe that the House should have an opportunity to debate this issue in view of its importance.

Mr. Wakeham: If there were a significant development that required my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to make a statement, of course he would make one. I recognise that my hon. Friend has been active in this matter. I know that he and a number of other hon. Members would like a debate. We have much essential business to get through. I shall do what I can, but I cannot promise a debate at the moment.

Mr. Speaker: May I say to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) that I am sorry that I incorrectly called him earlier this afternoon? I was talking to someone by the Chair. But I now correctly I call Mr. Kirkwood.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): My hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) is the good-looking one.

Reverting to child benefit, I do not think that the reply that the Leader of the House gave the official Opposition was entirely satisfactory. He knows that a debate on an order or a prayer is an unsatisfactory vehicle. It is restricted to an hour and a half and the voting is confused. Will the right hon. Gentleman actively consider giving more time to this subject, perhaps on a motion for the Adjournment? In that way we could have a positive vote after a full day's debate.

Secondly, the House will be aware that there is one remaining Opposition day for minority parties in this Session. The right hon. Gentleman knows, too, that there are some questions about its present allocation. To allow these discussions to be concluded, would he agree to abandoning the remaining day in the balance of this Session and, with the leave of the House, allowing an additional day some time in the next?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that a debate on an order on child benefit does not meet every requirement of every part of the House, but at the moment I can add nothing to what I have already said.

The hon. Gentleman is correct that one Opposition day is still due to the minor parties in this session. If his suggestion is that the day that is not taken this year could in some unofficial way be carried over to the next, I think that it is helpful, and I shall certainly discuss it with the other parties to discover whether it is acceptable.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): In order to improve the House's scrutiny of EC affairs, will my right hon. Friend re-examine the vexed question of the regrettable failure by him, by the usual channels and by the Services Committee to provide proper access to the parliamentary buildings for the British groups of European Members of Parliament? Is not this long overdue? More and more national parliaments provide this access. Admittedly, we have a problem with the Labour party, but will my right hon. Friend use his good offices to persuade the more sensible members of the usual Opposition channels—if there are any—that this would be a good idea which would help the House to oversee European Community affairs much more effectively?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend knows more about this than he lets on. He knows perfectly well that it is not reasonable to level charges at me for failing to do anything about it. I can make progress only if there is general agreement in the House that this is the right way to proceed. Some Opposition Members, and some Conservative Members, are not as enlightened about these matters, perhaps, as my hon. Friend and I.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the hon. Minister give time, after that severe attack on the Prime Minister and her views, for a debate next week on the University Grants Committee's report, in which it is suggested than science and physics departments which are smaller than the criteria laid down by the UGC will have to close? That will mean the closure of 20 out of 47 establishments, including the university of Bradford. Does the right hon. Member accept that Bradford has had too many reverses in the past week, the lord mayor having left an indelible stain of political corruption behind by voting with the Tories for cuts and sackings, without the university being forced to close its physics and science department on criteria laid down by the UGC? It is important and urgent that the report should be rebuffed so that universities such as Bradford can progress, even if the rest of the city is now under the hammer heel of the Tories.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not think that some of the goings on in Bradford are a great credit to the Labour party, but I shall not get involved in that. I cannot promise the hon. Gentleman a debate on this matter immediately, but occasions are coming up in the not-too-distant future when these matters can be properly raised in the course of debate, and no doubt he will seek one of those.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Although it is welcome that next Friday we are to have a debate on the pollution of our seas, should we not, in the light of the Prime Minister's excellent speech during the recess, have a more wide-ranging and fundamental debate on the environment as soon as possible?

Mr. Wakeham: The debate next week is about the control of the pollution of rivers and estuaries, and it is important that we should discuss what can be done. I agree with my hon. Friend that a more wide-ranging debate would enable other matters to be raised. I have no doubt that we shall find opportunities to return to these important matters from time to time. I cannot promise a debate immediately.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): Bearing in mind that today the Public Accounts Committee published its report on the privatisation of the Royal Ordnance factories, a report which is highly critical of the way in which that was carried out, and that the Prime Minister, when trying to answer a question about this today, quoted not from that report but from the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, which preceded the PAC report and was issued at a time when the potential land development values of the Royal Ordnance factories were not known, does the right hon.

Gentleman agree that it is high time that he gave a whole day in which to debate this appalling scandal, which is now receiving a great deal of public attention?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Lady will have to contain herself. The Government will respond to the PAC by means of a Treasury Minute, in the normal way and in due course. We shall co-operate fully in any investigations that the Comptroller and Auditor General then wishes to undertake. As the hon. Lady knows, the matter was well ventilated in the defence debate not many days ago.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 1513 on rural housing, which is supported by a substantial number of hon. Members who represent rural constituencies?

[That this House welcomes the recent statement on rural housing by the Rural Development Commission; and calls upon the Government to take vigorous and urgent action to facilitate the provision of low cost housing in rural areas.]

Will my right hon. Friend consider making time available for a debate on rural housing?

Mr. Wakeham: As my hon. Friend knows, the Government have announced a package of measures to facilitate the provision of low-cost housing in rural areas. It includes a fourfold increase in the number of housing association homes to be funded by the Housing Corporation in small villages by 1990-91. The Government urge rural communities to take advantage of the opportunities that will be provided by the Housing Bill to work with housing associations and private developers so as to ensure that their housing needs are met.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will there be an opportunity in the near future to discuss the Prime Minister's statement that no one in the Cabinet is capable of doing her job? What satisfaction does she get from humiliating her Cabinet colleagues at every opportunity?

Mr. Wakeham: I know that the hon. Gentleman is seeking to be helpful. However, I suggest that if he wants to quote the Prime Minister, he had better start by being reasonably accurate.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my right hon. Friend tell us whether we shall have one or more debates on child benefit?

Mr. Wakeham: I can add nothing to what I have already said about that.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): The Leader of the House will be aware that during the past three years there has not been a single debate specifically about agriculture in the north of Ireland. That is a tremendous defect, in that it has unique problems that do not obtain elsewhere in Britain. Agriculture is the biggest employer in the north of Ireland. In conjunction with his colleagues in the Northern Ireland Office, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange to have such a debate early in the next Session?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that the way in which we discuss Northern Ireland business in the House is not entirely satisfactory. I know that a number of hon. Members find that subjects that should be debated are not. However, there are debates on the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund, and so on, during which these matters could be raised. I should like to promise the hon. Gentleman an early debate on agriculture. I shall consider the matter, but I am not too hopeful.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): I appreciate the great pressure for time on my right hon. Friend, but will he consider organising a full debate on the recently published report by the Select Committee on Private Bill Procedure as early as possible, as it concerns many people?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that a debate on procedure is outstanding. I have had a number of discussions through the usual channels and with interested parties and Back Benchers on both sides of the House about how best to proceed. I believe that the maximum amount of agreement about the way in which we conduct ourselves in the House is desirable. I cannot promise an early debate, but I recognise that there must be one ere long.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am disappointed that the Leader of the House cannot promise us an early debate on the excellent report on the private Bill procedure, because it is a good read. It is a snip at £15·90. Some of us struggled for many months on that report and it would get us out of a lot of difficulty if we could have an early debate. If we cannot have an early debate on the private Bill procedure, may we have a debate about London before the Session ends, as that would allow us to discuss the activities of Westminster borough council and its relationship with the Conservative party, among other London issues?

Mr. Wakeham: London is an appropriate subject for a debate and I hope that we shall be able to have such a debate before too long, but at the moment I cannot promise the hon. Gentleman a debate.

On the private Bill procedure, the House will be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson), for chairing the Committee that considered that matter and to those hon. Members who laboured hard on what is not the most exciting subject in our parliamentary life. As I said, I cannot promise to find time for a debate before the House prorogues, but if the hon. Gentleman is fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, he will be able to raise these matters during the debate on the Loyal Address, which will start on 22 November.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend consider carefully to the request made by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) for a debate on Barlow Clowes? Many Conservative Members would like to express their support for the line taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on Sir Godfray le Quesne's report. Many Conservative Members believe that the City has a substantial responsibility for policing the matter and that the Bank of England and the Securities and Investments Board should consider organising a lifeboat. I have been approached by well over 100 Conservative Members of Parliament in the last week who would support a move for such a lifeboat.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my hon. Friend's concern in these matters and I shall take note of what he said. However, I cannot add anything to what I have already said to the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Can the Leader of the House give us some guidance on whether the most titanic threat to the environment will be considered in the two debates on the subject next week? Is he aware that already 27 tonnes of PCBs have been transported by air to a spot near my constituency and that, given the danger of transporting dangerous goods by air, a further threat is posed by the insane plan to export 45 tonnes of plutonium from Prestwick airport? Is that not one of the greatest threats of pollution? Should not the regulations under which those two transportations are legal be overhauled swiftly and speedily in line with early-day motion 1596?

[That this House calls for a thorough review of the regulations controlling the transport of dangerous goods by air, especially plutonium, PCBs and other materials that cannot be fully safeguarded against catastrophic accidental damage.]

Mr. Wakeham: As the hon. Gentleman went on he went wider and wider of next week's business. I recognise his interest in that important matter, but whether it is in order for next week's debate is a matter not for me but for you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): In line with my right hon. Friend's responsibilities for the House in general, may I ask whether he is aware that every secretary in the House of Commons has received a letter from the publishers, Mills and Boon, inviting them to nominate the most romantic politician in the country? Can my right hon. Friend offer the House and those who work here any advice and guidance on their reply?

Mr. Wakeham: I have no doubt that it is a publicity stunt for the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I suppose that that is why I was moved out of the chair yesterday.

The Leader of the House will have heard several comments about the way in which the private Bill procedure is being used. He may also be aware that, as I said in a point of order last Thursday, a Conservative Member, whom I informed before I raised the matter, had been placed in the predicament of chairing the Committee on the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill, despite his being parliamentary adviser to the British Chemical Engineering Contractors Association, one of the members of which is a sponsor of that Bill.

As I pointed out last week, a Member sponsored by the National Union of Mineworkers would not be expected to serve on that Bill and there seems to be a decreasing number of Members of Parliament who could be called upon to serve on such a Bill, the content of which is so political and in which many people have interests on one side or the other. I respectfully suggest that something should be done about the matter as soon as possible so that representation does not appear to be other than even-handed.

Mr. Wakeham: I agree that the report on the private Bill procedure is important. The issues raised are complex and require careful consideration. I am sure that the House will want to consider it carefully before we have a debate, which I promise in due course. The membership of the private Bill Committee on the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill is a matter not for me but for my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox), the Chairman of the Committee of Selection. I understand that he has been consulted and is satisfied that there is no difficulty about the appointment to that Committee of my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark).

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the great concern of many hon. Members on the subject of human embryo research, as evidenced by early-day motion 1460 in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves)?

[That this House welcomes the commitment given by the Prime Minister, the Leader of the House and the Secretary of State that legislation on the subject of human embryo research will be brought forward as soon as practical; and hopes that progress in this vital area can be made in the very near future.]

The Government have given a commitment to legislate on that matter, but can my right hon. Friend say when that might be brought forward?

Mr. Wakeham: As my hon. Friend will be aware, I cannot anticipate the business for the next Session, which will be announced in the proper way. As my hon. Friend rightly says, the Government's commitment is to legislate in this Parliament, and I can assure him that we shall stick to our commitment.

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): When we next consider the issues arising from the Widdicombe report, will the Leader of the House ensure that that includes the conduct of lord mayors in local authorities? In the city of Bradford, where the lord mayor has two votes with a casting vote, the local authority is carrying through draconian redundancies and cuts in services. Will the right hon. Gentleman consider that issue, which is inflaming passions in our city and in many other areas?

Mr. Wakeham: I have no doubt that such matters can be raised, but, as I read the situation, the lord mayor of Bradford has conducted himself in a most correct and proper fashion in accordance with the law, despite considerable provocation from the hon. Gentleman's friends, and he is to be congratulated on what he has done.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): As the Leader of the House revealed last week that he has prepared statements in support of early-day motions, would he care to read out his prepared statement on early-day motion 1526?

[That this House notes that the hon. Member for Shipley is the Chairman of the Committee of Selection and that, according to his entry in the Register of Members' Interests of 8th December 1987, he is a director of eight companies: Westminster (Communications) Ltd., the Care Services Group, Rigidized Metals Ltd., Ceema Group and Companies, Tele-Stage Associates Ltd., McCarthy & Stone Ltd., Malibu Estates Ltd., and Grantham O'Donnell Estates Ltd.; further notes the hon. Member for Shipley is also a parliamentary consultant to four companies: 3M (UK) Ltd., Shepherd (Construction) Ltd., Alcrafield Ltd., and Sherwood Homes (Southern) Ltd.; believes that the holding of such interests by the Chairman of the Committee of Selection, which appoints right hon. and hon. Members to parliamentary committees, represents a potential conflict of interest; and calls upon the hon. Member for Shipley to consider his position immediately.]

In view of his earlier reply and the extensive commercial interests held by the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M.

Fox), does the Leader of the House think that the hon. Member for Shipley is best placed to judge who is the most appropriate Member to serve on a particular Committee?

Mr. Wakeham: I am quite sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) is fully equipped to make such judgments and is aware of his responsibilities to the House. If the hon. Gentleman has any complaints, he should take the matter up with the Select Committee on Members' Interests.

Official Report

5.28 pm

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am concerned about the way in which changes are made in the *Official Report* which are damaging to Back-Bench Members.

On Tuesday the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) responded to an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on the subject of the Labour party's £38 million spending measures by saying:

"there are no such commitments."

In using those words the hon. Gentleman was effectively repudiating every pledge that we have had from the Labour party during the 16 months since the general election. Therefore, not surprisingly, the hon. Gentleman then went to the *Official Report* and requested that the words be changed. He was then reported as saying:

"there is no such commitment."—[*Official Report*, 25 October 1988; Vol. 139, c. 174.]

Those words convey a completely different meaning from the words used in the debate.

I do not attach any blame to the Editor of the *Official Report* or its Reporters, who may not entirely have appreciated the significance of the change. Nevertheless, it is of the greatest importance that hon. Members who were not present at 3.45 on Tuesday afternoon should immediately be made aware of the fact that the Labour party is now reneging on every pledge that it has made on——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman raised a point of order with me about a change in the *Official Report*. I have to tell him that he is correct and that the original words were:

"there are no such commitments"

and that these were changed to:

"there is no such commitment.".

On reflection, the *Official Report* accepts that this change should not have been made and has expressed its regret.

Mr. Yeo: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I very much welcome the fact that that regret has been expressed, but I am sure you will agree with me that many Members rely exclusively on the daily issue of *Hansard* to learn what has been said in a debate. How, therefore, can you help us to ensure that all those Members who are not present are immediately informed of this very important change in the wording?

Mr. Speaker: They should read today's *Hansard* and they will be so informed.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you give some guidance as to which is the true record? If there is a difference between the electronic *Hansard* and the written *Hansard*, which should be regarded as the true record? There is a time limit of 24 hours in which to point out such matters. If that is not done, the written record presumably remains as it is.

Mr. Speaker: The published *Hansard* is the official report.

Members' Correspondence

5.30 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it be appropriate for you to consider what action you should take in respect of the stealing and leaking of a letter from one Member to another, which was mentioned earlier?

Mr. Speaker: I do not think there is any action that I can take. We have heard all about that today.

Child Benefit

5.31 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the impact of the announcement that there is to be no uprating of child benefit."

I shall submit full reasons why I seek this debate, all of which are relevant to the considerations set out in the Standing Order which specifies that the matter must be urgent, specific and important.

First, the matter is urgent. Work on the new books will start immediately and, if the House wishes to vary the decision to freeze child benefit, it must express its will now if the change is to take effect in time.

Secondly, the matter is specific and there is no other opportunity for the House to condescend on the specific matter of child benefit. Today's statement will eventually be presented to the House in a portmanteau order not open to amendment, and on which the House will be able to express its will to increase child benefit only by the perverse device of voting against the increase in a dozen other social security benefits. At present, we are not aware whether the Opposition will have a further Supply day this Session on which they might raise the matter.

Thirdly, the matter is important. It affects the weekly budgets of 7 million mothers who may find it strange that the Government can cut the value of their benefit without specific debate on it in Parliament. During the lifetime of this Government the number of children living below the poverty line has increased to one in five. For them, the value of child support is a matter of the greatest importance.

Finally, the importance of this matter goes beyond the immediate impact on the value of child benefit. Today's freeze and the exchanges in the House are clear signals that the Government are not committed to child benefit, whatever they said before the last election. They are now seeking the abolition of child benefit by stealth. It is essential that they are not permitted to do it in stealth, but are obliged to come openly to the House and establish whether they have a majority in Parliament for cutting child benefit.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the impact of the announcement that there is to be no uprating of child benefit."

I listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's submission and to what was said during the answers following the statement. As he knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 20 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business set down for this evening or on Monday. I regret that I cannot find that the matter meets all the criteria laid down in the Standing Order and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the Farm Diversification Grant (Variation) Scheme 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1398) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Finance) Bill

Mr. Speaker: I have to announce that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

5.35 pm

The Paymaster General (Mr. Peter Brooke): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The background and purpose of the Bill have already been described and discussed at some length, both on Second Reading and earlier this week in Committee. I shall not go over all the same points in detail again today. Instead, I should like to set the scene briefly and then respond to some of the main concerns expressed by the House in our recent debate.

The general point that I should like to make about the Bill at the outset is that the measures for which it seeks parliamentary approval—the own resources decision and payments under the intergovernmental agreement—are part of a larger package. The package was agreed in principle in February and in detail in June, after long and hard negotiations.

The Commission's original proposals were something of a curate's egg. Some parts were welcome and other parts less so. On the one hand, they included practical measures to reform the common agricultural policy and improve spending controls, both measures for which we had ourselves been pressing. On the other hand, they involved an increase approaching 50 per cent. in the potential size of the Community budget, a substantial cut in our abatement negotiated at Fontainebleau in 1984 and a tax on consumption of oils and fats. Other elements in the plans included a restructuring of the own resources system and a large increase in the structural funds.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, as we were always told in the past, our rebate mechanism was totally safe and therefore, despite what happened earlier this year, it was not at risk and was not an issue? Why therefore, has my right hon. Friend brought it to the debate?

Mr. Brooke: I referred to the matter only because it is part of the history. The Commission put forward a proposal that would have involved a reduction, and that was the background against which we entered into the negotiations. My hon. Friend is correct in saying that it would have required a unanimous vote of the Council of Ministers to change it.

Our response was that any further increase in Community resources must be accompanied by effective and legally binding controls on spending, that agriculture surpluses must be reduced, that the Fontainebleau abatement must not be diluted and that there should be no tax on oils and fats. We made it clear that we would not agree to individual elements without a satisfactory agreement on the entire package.

These objectives were by no means shared by all other member states. Some of them were distinctly lukewarm about reform of the CAP and bringing spending under stricter legal controls. Some argued that the Fontainebleau

[Mr. Brooke]

abatement should be ended or phased out. However, our objectives were achieved. I believe, therefore, that it is in the interest of the United Kingdom to preserve the package that was agreed in February by giving parliamentary approval to the own resources decision and the IGA payments, which form an integral part of the package.

I recognise that concerns have been expressed about aspects of the Bill in our recent debates. I attempted to reply to detailed questions in the course of the debates, but perhaps it would be helpful if I were to draw together some of the main themes and respond to them rather more generally now.

First, I shall refer to the place of the agreement on the future financing of the Community budget in the context of our overall approach to the European Community. On Monday, some of my hon. Friends and some Opposition Members suggested that the Bill is no longer necessary because the future financing agreement is inconsistent with the vision of Europe that was set out in the Bruges speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. In fact, the opposite is the case.

It may be that some hon. Members have not read what my right hon. Friend said, or have not read it in extenso. I shall quote some of my right hon. Friend's remarks. She said:

"If we cannot reform those Community policies which are patently wrong or ineffective . . . then we shall not get the public support for the Community's future development and that is why the achievements of the European Council in Brussels last February are so important. It was not right that half the total Community budget was being spent on the storing and disposal of surplus food. Now, those stocks are being sharply reduced. It was absolutely right to decide that agriculture's share of the budget should be cut in order to free resources for other policies such as helping the less well-off regions and helping training for jobs. It was right, too, to introduce tighter budgetary discipline . . . to bring the Community's spending under better control."

Thus, far from there being any inconsistency between what my right hon. Friend said in Bruges and the changes agreed at Brussels, at Bruges my right hon. Friend went out of her way to commend the main elements of the Brussels package. I urge strongly those who support the views set out in my right hon. Friend's speech to follow through the logic of their position and to vote in favour of the Bill this evening.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I listened carefully to the Minister and followed the quotation from the Prime Minister's speech, which was presumably as delivered. It is slightly different from the text that was issued by the British embassy in Belgium on one specific and important point that is relevant to the debate. I refer to the sentence which begins:

"It was right, too, to introduce tighter budgetary discipline".

In the original text, the passage continued:

"to enforce these decisions and to bring total EC spending under better control."

That is not what the Minister read out. Why was a change made?

Mr. Brooke: That is a textual matter, and I shall make some inquiries during the debate. As neither the hon. Gentleman nor I were present at Bruges on the day in question, neither of us can be certain at this moment which were the words actually uttered.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Before we make up our minds on the important issue that my right hon. Friend has put before us, will he amplify what he said in Committee about a possible breach of the strict financial guidelines? My right hon. Friend will be aware that the last strict budgetary controls broke down because the EEC asked for advance moneys and created the 10-month year of 1987. On Monday my right hon. Friend appeared to say that the same thing could happen all over again because the EEC could again ask for advance moneys and thereby overspend like mad. Will he explain whether there has been a change and whether there will be a stop, by means of these proposals, to the Common Market asking for advance moneys and thereby overspending by breaching its strict budgetary control?

Mr. Brooke: As my hon. Friend said, he raised the matter during the debate on Monday. I shall deal with his question at various levels. First, I said that there was nothing in the new arrangements which precluded the Commission from coming forward with a proposal, such as it made during 1987, for reimbursements. How the Council reacts to it is a matter for the Council when the occasion arises. I said that there were strong reasons on the previous occasion why, in the Government's view, it was in the interest of controlling expenditure to carry out the change that was made.

Mr. Marlow: We, as keen students and supporters of the Government, have been told over the years that regional policy is something that should be run down slightly, if not dismantled. This has happened in the United Kingdom and it has had the right results. We have appreciated and supported it. Are we now to believe that the Government feel that regional policy is a panacea for the Community? If that is the case, how much further do we intend to extend it?

Mr. Brooke: Although I yield to no one in my admiration for the loyalty with which my hon. Friend supports the Government, to describe him as a keen and enthusiastic supporter of the Government's proposals in this area would be slight exaggeration.

During the negotiations on structural funds, a powerful case was made about the work that needed to be done in southern Europe and the expenditure that would have to take place. The Government accepted the proposals as part of the overall negotiations.

Some related matters were discussed on Second Reading and in Committee. First, will the new budget discipline arrangements, especially for spending on agriculture, work?

Mr. Teddy Taylor: No.

Mr. Brooke: If so, how will they differ from the arrangements which were agreed in 1984? I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), who uttered an observation in response to my rhetorical question, that the question is a fair one, and I believe that we have a good answer.

The February European package includes five major improvements. First, the guideline limit for spending on agriculture is legally binding. On Monday, my right hon.

Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) asked where that legal enforceability is reflected. The answer is that it is in a Council decision on budgetary discipline, which has been deposited in Parliament. The decision is not included in the Bill, because, unlike the own resources decision, under the terms of the treaty it does not require the approval of national Parliaments to come into force. Nevertheless, the budget discipline decision is legally binding in Community law. The guideline will grow at no more than 74 per cent. of the rate of growth of Community gross national product, which is likely to mean a real growth of about 2 per cent. a year compared with real growth of 10 per cent. a year between 1984 and 1987.

Secondly, the general provision to exceed the guideline in "exceptional circumstances" has been abolished. In its place there is a monetary reserve of up to 1 billion ecu to cover unforeseen expenditure resulting from substantial movements in the dollar. That money will be called up only if needed. The reserve will work both ways, so that provision for agriculture will be reduced if the dollar appreciates. The reserve is not expected to be activated in 1988, and on current estimates we would expect reduced spending in 1989.

Thirdly, a new early warning system monitors spending on a monthly basis for each main commodity regime. When there is a risk of overspending, the Commission, and, when appropriate, the Council, will take the necessary action.

Fourthly, automatic stabilisers have been introduced for all the main CAP products. These mostly take the form of automatic price cuts if production exceeds maximum quantities set by the Council.

Finally, new stocks from now on are being depreciated systematically in the year in which they are purchased, and special funds have been set aside to pay for the disposal of existing stocks. These provisions should produce a normal stock situation by 1992.

Nor are the new arrangements limited to agriculture. We also have a series of legally binding sub-ceilings which will constrain all expenditure, and an inter-institutional agreement under which all three institutions bind themselves to respect ceilings on each major area of Community spending.

I suggest that these arrangements are a significant improvement on the arrangements for budgetary discipline that were agreed after Fontainebleau. It was only because the new arrangements were secured that we were prepared to agree to the new own resources decision for which the Bill seeks approval.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: The stabiliser mechanism is an important new factor. Can my right hon. Friend give an assurance that there is no legal or other mechanism that will result in the stabiliser being undermined? A change in price or a widespread change in the green pound would effectively undermine the effect of the stabiliser. Can he give us any assurance that the impact of the stabiliser will not be undermined by other decisions of the Council? Are there any legal requirements?

Mr. Brooke: I have no grounds for supposing that there are. If I need to gloss my statement in answer to my hon. Friend, I shall do so at the end of the debate, if I am given leave to speak a second time.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am grateful to the Minister for his explanation of discipline. Will he now address the question that I put to him on Monday? No one would disagree that the arithmetic mechanism that he has outlined will have legal substance and can be applied. Does he agree that neither the Commission nor even the magnificent and mighty European Court can control the weather or the rate of the dollar? If those two combine in such a way that they make those arithmetical matters nonsense, the rain, the wind, the climate and the dollar rate will overcome the discipline. In such circumstances, how can there be financial discipline?

Mr. Brooke: I say to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), as I stated earlier, that what has been eliminated from the Community arrangements is the appeal to exceptional circumstances. When that phrase was composed at Fontainebleau, no doubt it was thought to represent exceptionality, but it was one to which frequent recourse was made—notably in terms of the exchange rate.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Minister accept that one cannot stop changes in the dollar or in the climate?

Mr. Brooke: I shall expand on my remarks to the hon. Member for Newham, South concerning the arrangements in relation to the reserve. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well how it operates. It is triggered after there has been a 5 per cent. movement in the dollar-ecu exchange rate and 400 million ecu of appropriate expenditure. There is then a reserve of 1 billion ecu. If that reserve is exhausted, it is the responsibility of the Commission to return to the Council with proposals as to how that overspending is to be curbed, and it is the Council's responsibility to act on those recommendations within two months.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): I am sure that the Treasury is well aware that many independent commentators anticipate that, whoever becomes the next President of the United States, interest rates there are likely to rise, which will strengthen the dollar. What calculations has the Treasury made, apart from anything that it may have urged upon the Commission, to take into account the strengthening of the dollar against the kind of sums that we have before us for consideration?

Mr. Brooke: As the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) knows, the arrangements in relation to the monetary reserve are symmetrical. If the dollar strengthens, money is taken out of the agriculture budget and transferred to the reserve. Again, that is done with exactly the same kind of trigger mechanism, with a 5 per cent. adjustment and 400 million ecu. There is then the transfer of up to 1 billion ecu into the reserve, which remains there during the course of that year.

In that respect, one of the differences that obtains, which in this sense is asymmetrical, is that if the monetary reserve is required because of a depreciation of the dollar, the resources are called up from the member states. If the dollar appreciates, the money is taken out of the agriculture budget and moved into the reserve, and at the end of the year it is not returned to the member states but is transferred into the following year as revenue under the own resources decision.

I turn to the intergovernmental agreement. The February agreement covered the Community's revenue expenditure policies and budgetary controls for the years 1988 to 1992. The 1988 budget needed to be settled

[Mr. Brooke]

consistent with that agreement, but it was known that the various national procedures for approving the new own resources decision could take some time to complete. Therefore, the IGA was needed to balance this year's budget, pending entry into force of the new own resources decision. Nevertheless, we made it clear that we could not make any payments under the IGA until parliamentary approval had been obtained.

In our recent debates, the need for the IGA has been questioned on two counts in particular. First, it was suggested that the IGA is financing past overspends. Presumably that is what the Opposition have in mind in the reference in their motion for today's debate to an

"ex gratia payment to cover past Community financial excesses".

I make it clear that the 1988 IGA is needed to finance the 1988 budget—not any other. It is true that there were budgetary problems in 1987, to which I alluded when responding to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East. The measures taken to resolve them included switching from advances to reimbursement of agricultural guarantee payments and the deferment to 1988 of certain refunds to member states. However, those refunds totalled less than 700 million ecu for the Community as a whole, compared with an IGA for 1988 of 6 billion ecu, excluding the monetary reserve.

The main element of the 1987 solution—the switch in agricultural guarantee payments—was something that we wanted in any case, because it allows better budgetary control by basing payments on actual rather than estimated needs. I referred to that point in my response to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East. That switch did not have any significant effect on the 1988 budget. It did not mean that in 1988 there would be more than 12 months' agricultural guarantee payments. There was simply a one-off saving to the Community budget in 1987.

Secondly, my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and other hon. Members picked up the good news that there will be a budget surplus in 1988. To go on to say that the IGA is no longer needed is to be a little hasty in one's arithmetic.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Can the Minister tell the House why?

Mr. Brooke: I shall expand on that remark. The 1988 surplus anticipated by the Commission is in the region of 2 billion ecu. It arises from higher than expected customs duties and levies and lower spending, particularly on agriculture. The IGA—even excluding the monetary reserve, which is unlikely to be used this year—is three times that amount. So it is not correct to say that the two can simply cancel each other out. I may add that the 1988 surplus will not be used to fuel overspending. A budget surplus must be treated as revenue in the following year's budget, and the Commission has introduced an amending budget for next year to cut member states' contributions accordingly. In those circumstances, I hope that right hon. and hon. Members anticipate no problems in agreeing that payments should be made under this year's IGA.

Mr. Marlow: Ever eager to come to the common ground, would not the sensible thing be to amend the Bill, such that the IGA is only as much as is required, rather than to leave it open as it is at the moment?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North will recall an exchange between myself and my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing in Monday's debate, in which reference was made to a very precise figure. However, there were also qualifying words in that regard. The Commission will only apply for the resources that it actually requires for the monetary reserve.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is both a fascinating and an ironical development? The diminishing number of anti-Marketeers on both sides of the House last year were gloating with tremendous joy at the idea of the Community being financially bankrupt. Of course it was not, and those right hon. and hon. Members were using a technically erroneous description of the phrase. Now that, as a result of the Commission's successful management, we have a surplus that will allow a more modest budget requirement next year, is my right hon. Friend planning to send the Commission a message of congratulation from the whole House on its excellent financial husbandry?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) is correct in saying that a number of right hon. and hon. Members rushed in to comment on the very favourable way in which the resources are going. However, it is my perennial experience in these affairs that no news is ever as good or as bad as it first appears.

Before concluding, I shall comment on another allegation in the Opposition motion—namely, that the Bill contains

"automatic provisions for future financing which bypass parliamentary approval".

I am a little puzzled by that, but no doubt all will be revealed later when the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) moves his amendment. I place on record the fact that the Bill does not bypass parliamentary approval. On the contrary, the treaty requires that the basic decision on own resources should not only be agreed unanimously by member states but be adopted by them in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements. Hence the inclusion of the own resources decision in the Bill. The provisions of that decision cannot be changed or disregarded without a further process of unanimous agreement and parliamentary approval.

It is true that implementing regulations, such as that numbered 2891/77, on which we touched briefly in Monday's debate, can be agreed by the Council without needing further domestic legislation, and so can the annual Community budget. However, such regulations and budgets must be consistent with the terms of the own resources decision that has been approved by Parliament. The position under the new own resources decision will be no different in that respect from the position under the decision agreed in 1985.

Mr. Spearing: I thought it best to intervene at this point to explain what I think is the wording in the amendment, which I support, but to which the Minister takes exception.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. It might be a good idea if we wait until the amendment is moved, and then we can have explanations.

Mr. Spearing: In that case, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall make my point as though the amendment were not there. Does the Minister agree that, once this goes through, both a normal annual approval of taxation and a formal approval of expenditure by Parliament are unnecessary? We give this until 1992 if we vote in favour of Third Reading tonight, and surely that is the point. The Minister makes his plea, having turned down, last Monday, an amendment that asked at least for a report. That does not sound to me even like accountability, let alone a decision-making power.

Mr. Brooke: Although I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, it is not particularly new in the context of our 16-year membership of the Community. The famous regulation 2891/77, to which we devoted a fair amount of time on Monday, appeared in our affairs during the lifetime of the last Labour Government, and the Scrutiny Committee of that era appears not even to have recommended it for debate in the Chamber.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It was chaired by a Tory.

Mr. Brooke: The Committee will have had a bipartisan membership, and I have every confidence that there was at least one Labour Member on it taking a vigilant interest in these affairs.

Moreover, the arrangements for parliamentary scrutiny ensure that the Committee that the hon. Member for Newham, South so ably chairs has opportunities to consider proposals for European legislation and can recommend them for debate if it sees fit. I assure the House that in giving approval to the Bill, it will not be giving up any of the control that it currently has over the European budgetary arrangements.

I have tried to focus on some of the main concerns aired during the passage of the Bill rather than go once more into each point in the Bill and the own resources decision and the IGA for which the Bill seeks approval. If hon. Members wish to raise other matters, provided that I catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and with the leave of the House, I shall be happy to try to answer such points later.

I commend to the House a Bill that seeks approval on three points. The first is an own resources decision that preserves intact our Fontainebleau arrangement that has been worth more than £4·5 billion over the past years and that brings the structure of own resources more into line with member states' ability to pay as measured by shares in Community GNP. The second is an IGA that ends the uncertainty over the 1988 budget and enables the reforms agreed in February to be put into effect this year. The third, by implication, is a package of measures including legally binding budget discipline and the reform of the CAP, which should ensure that the Community budget is based on a sound financial footing until 1992 at least. It is always easy to say that one or two elements in a package as wide ranging as this could have been improved, but the important thing is whether the package as a whole is welcome. I trust that hon. Members will recognise that it is and will accordingly give the Bill a Third Reading.

6.3 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House declines to give a Third Reading to a Bill which provides for a wholly unjustified ex gratia payment to cover past Community financial excesses, which makes automatic provisions for future financing which bypass parliamentary approval, and whose provisions for the Regional Development and Social Funds risk leading to wider disparities in income and wealth in Britain as well as throughout the Community."

It is a pity that the Minister who launched this ship is not here as it sails through rocky waters. The Foreign Secretary graced us with his appearance on 11 July, paying only a brief visit to the House of Commons en route to the Terry Wogan show. One might have thought that, out of a sense of decency or fraternity, he would grace us again with his presence tonight. I had thought that his plenipotentiary and deputy, who listened to the earlier part of the debate, might have stayed, as I have a special word of warm welcome for her later in my speech. As it is, we shall have to remain comforted by the presence of the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), the Under-Secretary of State who is here representing the greatness of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

On 11 July the Foreign Secretary came to the House, then departed, and later told the viewers of the Terry Wogan show that Members of Parliament would be wondering where he had got to. Most of us wonder that when he is actually at the Dispatch Box, never mind when he is on television. The rocketing that the right hon. and learned Gentleman got from my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), when the House learned where he was, was as nothing to the revenge from No. 10 when it eventually came in Bruges. There, the empress struck back, and now we are told in newspapers that the Foreign Secretary has been sent to all parts of Europe to try to sort out the mess that the Prime Minister caused first by her speech in Bruges and then by the comments that followed it.

The Guardian headline said:

"Howe launches diplomatic drive to heal rift on EEC unity".

The article continued:

"The British government is to make an all-out diplomatic effort to heal the breach that has opened up with its European Community partners before the EEC heads of government summit in Rhodes in December."

The Times, not given to sensational headlines, said:

"Howe moves to head off EC split. Sir Geoffrey Howe is spearheading a diplomatic effort inside the European Community to head off the potentially disastrous row between Margaret Thatcher and her counterparts at the EC".

That should be the ultimate lesson for the Foreign Secretary that he should stay for debates and avoid the enticing limelight offered by Mr. Terry Wogan.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): In view of what the hon. Gentleman has said about Bruges, will he tell us the Labour party's view on this subject? To what extent do he and his colleagues on the Front Bench agree, or disagree, with that speech?

Mr. Robertson: I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman, being fairly long in the tooth here, would expect me to go back to the Bruges speech. No Opposition politician could avoid such fertile ground. He can be sure that the points on which he seeks clarification will be

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coming up. Just watch this space. Should he catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) will also comment on that significant speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that both sides of the House will not lose sight of the normal conventions that govern the scope of Third Reading debates.

Mr. Robertson: I shall bear that caveat in mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This Third Reading marks a watershed in what has been a truly remarkable year for the Government's EEC policy. In February of this year the Prime Minister went, as the Paymaster General told us, to Brussels for the summit meeting. In advance of it she was saying that doubling the original social fund of the European Community would be "lacking in any rational justification." She said before the summit that cereal production targets of higher than 160 million tonnes would be "an attack on the taxpayer and the housewife." She said that if farm spending were to rise at more than 60 per cent. it would be "extravagant and indefensible". However, she came back from Brussels in February with structural funds agreed at a level rising to 100 per cent. of the previous level, with cereal limits, not at 150 million tonnes, but at 160 million tonnes, and with the growth in farm spending fixed at more than 74 per cent. Although that calculation has been given temporary relief by the one-off circumstance of this year, to quote Mr. Christoffersen, we know that it will rise more rapidly.

Mr. Brooke: So that the hon. Gentleman does not have to go through the exercise of having to speak to the *Official Report* afterwards to revise what he said, I should draw his attention to what he did say. He said that the proposal was to increase agricultural spending by 74 per cent. I think that he wants to qualify that phrase.

Mr. Robertson: The 74 per cent. is 74 per cent. of GNP. I have used that in this complicated debate to show that the Prime Minister was outdone on that as well. She was conned, and she had to accept something much higher than she originally intended as a limit.

The Bill is the account rendered for that summit—£738 million in an intergovernmental agreement. I hope the House will appreciate that I try not to use those dreadful acronyms that confuse the outside world and behind which Ministers hide. The most dazzling one of those is the invention of "mecu", which disguises the fact that expenditure goes up. I remind the Paymaster General that we are talking about millions of ecu. I commend and congratulate his Department on its new practice of putting the sterling equivalent of mecu into parliamentary answers. That is something that should come through in parliamentary debates too, because I do not believe that the British public are aware of the significance of European Community expenditure when that foreign form of currency measurement is used. This intergovernmental agreement means that £738 million is being used to pay off yesterday's debts, and that £300 million a year on top of our already annual contribution of £1·38 million is to be used to pay off what the right hon. Lady conceded in the middle of that humiliating Saturday night in February.

In July, the Foreign Secretary, in paying his flying visit to the House before his television appearance, came to sell us the Brussels package and to tell us that the final news was really good news, that the cash increase was a saving, that financial promises were legal commitments and that it was all an integral part of the grand design for the new Cockfield-type big business market.

Mr. Brooke: The habit of intervening in these debates becomes infectious, but that is the spirit in which the debate is conducted. As the hon. Gentleman, when referring to yesterday's debts, is referring back to the wording of his amendment, perhaps he will itemise the figure of £738 million and tell us how yesterday's debts are constituted.

Mr. Robertson: Yesterday's debts are constituted inasmuch as yesterday's budget happens to be the 1988 Budget. Today's budget is the 1989 budget in the bizarre world of EEC finance. Yesterday's hole that we are having to fill with an extra £738 million of taxpayers' money is therefore yesterday's debt to fill the hole in the 1988 budget. We have just had an afternoon of high drama in the House, where a Minister's reputation has perhaps disappeared for ever—if it existed at all—over £200 million. We were talking about the amount of money required to uprate child benefit to the inflation rate, which was £200 million. Yet this intergovernmental agreement *—[Interruption.]*

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): That is completely irrelevant.

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Lady has just appeared in the Chamber.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I have been here.

Mr. Robertson: I apologise to the hon. Lady on that one account. She probably has been here, but clearly was not listening to my argument.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I was listening. I was taking notes.

Mr. Robertson: If the hon. Lady had been listening, she would not have made the mistake that she has made. I am contrasting the quite proper indignation on both sides of the House today about a sum of £200 million for child benefit with the absence of any feeling at all about a payment of £738 million to the European Community for previous debts. That is the true scandal.

In September the Prime Minister blew the Foreign Secretary—and, indeed, herself—well out of the water. The right hon. Lady, who had signed the Single European Act, suddenly had a blinding flash of inspiration about what she had actually done. She had railroaded through the House the Single European Act by means of guillotine, which was, of course, introduced by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who is well-known as a passionate European. I note from Monday's *Hansard* that the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North voted with his right hon. Friend, which I think he should count as a bit of a record.

In September the Prime Minister woke up, and did not like what she had woken up to. Now, in October, the Foreign Secretary is being sent out again, like some tired old jazz singer, to repair the damage that was done at Bruges. However, even as he sets out on that ambulance trip—one must assume that that is where he is this afternoon—the Prime Minister is still causing damage for

him to clear up by denouncing the likes of Chancellor Kohl and Prime Minister De Mita in Wednesday's *Times* as "socialists and standardisers". The right hon. Lady's vitriolic comments about all foreigners is breathtaking. This is the very right hon. Lady who, just three weeks ago, embraced the Single European Act which says in its preamble:

"Moved by the will to continue the work undertaken on the basis of the Treaties establishing the European Communities, and to transform relations as a whole among their States into a European Union."

That is the right hon. Lady who, in Bruges violently attacked

"people trying to suppress nationhood and concentrate power at the centre of a European conglomerate."

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: Let me just finish this contrast, on which I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree with me.

The very same right hon. Lady signed the Single European Act, which amends article 100A of the treaty of Rome, thus:

"The Commission, in its proposals envisaged in paragraph 1 concerning health, safety, environmental protection and consumer protection,"—

note the words that follow—

"will take as a base a high level of protection."

This is the same right hon. Lady who last week hit out at "a lot of countries in Europe who think in a socialist way."

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: Who is the right hon. Lady thinking of? Is it Italy, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Portugal or Ireland? Which of those are the covert Marxists under the bed of the European Community who were singled out for that vitriolic attack?

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman referred to what the Prime Minister said with regard to European union, but, as he well knows, the expression "European union" means many things to many people. What is clear beyond all doubt is that the Prime Minister is rejecting a united states of Europe of a federal kind. Does he accept that there is a great distinction between that and a lot of the verbiage and woolliness that is associated with the expression "European union"?

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that "European union" means as much as anybody cares to make it mean. The preamble to the Single European Act refers to a precise form of wording adopted in Stuttgart. I advise the hon. Gentleman to look at that.

We know some of the things that the Prime Minister is against—Socialist standardisers, and the harmonisation of workers' rights—but no improvement is made to the way in which people are looked after by way of improved child benefit and social welfare in general. What we would like to know—as would other Conservative leaders in Europe—is what the Prime Minister is in favour of. The Prime Minister's incoherence is matched only by her inconsistency. She has created a ruin of European policy and has left her hapless Foreign Secretary to travel the capitals of Europe trying to rescue his country's reputation.

If the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) looks at the shambles among the Members of the European Parliament representing the Conservative party, he will see that great divide taking place there, too. I believe that one group of them are called the blue circle group. Before I heard that expression relating to Members of the European Parliament, I thought that the blue circle was something to do with cement—but perhaps the density of both have something in common.

The Bill is about real cash. It is about lots and lots of cash. It is about so much cash that it makes the child benefit uprating look like small change indeed. The Secretary of State for Social Security died a political death this afternoon over £200 million, but the Paymaster General was made chairman of the Tory party for losing £1 billion to the Brussels bureaucracy. Where is the justice in that?

The Bill legitimises a contribution of £765 million for past overspending by the Community. The bulk of it was spent on producing and destroying food that nobody ate or wanted. The Bill provides for an automatic cash transfusion to Brussels, thus ending the embarrassing democratic necessity of coming to the elected Parliament of the United Kingdom to gain authority to pay ever larger subventions to the EC. The Paymaster General is disingenuous, to say the least, when he suggests that there is no change. The scale of the increased contribution and the increase in own resources will preclude further debates such as this. That may come as a relief to him. It may come as a relief to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but our democratic process has hitherto provided us with many opportunities to discuss the implications of added expenditure on the EC.

The Prime Minister gave us an idea of her view about a united Europe when, at Bruges, she said:

"Certainly we want to see Europe more united and with a greater sense of common purpose. But it must be in a way which preserves the different traditions, Parliamentary powers and sense of national pride in one's own country; for these have been the source of Europe's vitality through the centuries."

That is what we have said in every debate on the Single European Act. It is what we have said in every debate on European Community finance. I am glad that the Prime Minister has been converted. One assumes, therefore, that she will tonight vote for our reasoned amendment.

Mr. Dykes: If the hon. Gentleman compares this extra money with that required for the child benefit uprating again, it will be the fifth time that he has done it, so presumably it would be unnecessary repetition. We thank him, however, for drawing our attention to that point. Will he now get on to the more important argument and tell us why the Labour party is now enthusiastic about membership of the EC, whereas it was not before? Why the change?

Mr. Robertson *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Such a response would be a bit wide of the matter before the House.

Mr. Robertson: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has underlined the importance of the contrast between the Government's parsimonious attitude towards the welfare of small children and their profligacy with regard to the European Community. The hon. Gentleman and I share some views about the future direction of Europe. Perhaps we can discuss them at another time and at another venue. As he says, the Labour party's policy is evolving, just as

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the Community's policy is evolving. The Prime Minister's policy, however, is revolving and nobody knows from one minute to the next where she will point.

The same lady has lauded parliamentary power, but we are to be denied the fundamental and elemental power to decide what we should pay to the EC. The Bill rubber-stamps a huge and unprecedented increase of more than 25 per cent. in our contribution to the EC. Some £300 million a year is to go—in addition to the present £1·3 billion contribution.

One of the House's most assiduous attenders of these debates is absent today. I noticed that he paid a fleeting visit to the Bar of the House and then shot off as quickly as he could. We all miss the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), who accepted the Queen's shilling. His criticism of the Government in these matters will now be completely muted and I am sure that, at 10 pm, he will vote loyally with the Government so that they can make the payments to which he has previously spent so much time objecting.

Despite all the savings in the Community during the summer and the freak "one-off" conditions that led to a 2 billion ecu ceiling in the 1989 budget, cereal surpluses are still set to rise again next year and the cost of the farmers will continue to cripple us all. Like the 1985 Fontainebleau miracle cure, this package is wrapped up in so-called legally binding financial disciplines. We are told to trust these promises, just as pensioners were told by the same Government to trust their savings to the promises of Barlow Clowes. As the Brussels promises go sour like those of Barlow Clowes, the Government will exonerate themselves, just as they have in the City of London.

The Bill represents another tragedy. It is the manifestation of the iron lady who melted—the empress with no clothes left on her, or the warrior winning battles but forever losing wars. Her petulance certainly gets attention, but in the bargaining about Europe's future it loses us the case. As she abuses Right-wing leaders of Germany and Italy as if they were London borough Labour leaders, their technical standards are chosen for the European norm and their qualifications get common endorsement throughout the Community. She gets the headlines—they get the goods. As she resiles on everything that she has signed, they are making the rules for the future and we have to follow. It is a dangerous and unproductive tactic for our country, and the right hon. Lady is being exposed every day.

Nowhere is the Government's failure more marked than in the help provided for Britain's hard-pressed regions. In her Bruges speech, the Prime Minister said:

> "It was absolutely right to decide that agriculture's share of the budget should be cut in order to free resources for other policies, such as helping the less well off regions and training for jobs."

The Paymaster General had the nerve and brass neck to quote that sentence to us from the great Bruges speech.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): The hon. Gentleman has delivered us a very amusing, destructive speech, which we have all enjoyed. His party seems to be against the intergovernmental agreement and against the own resources decision. What would a Labour Government have attempted to negotiate as an alternative? What is the Labour party's policy on European funding?

Mr. Robertson *rose*——

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the House will have regard to the fact that we are debating the Third Reading of the European Communities (Finance) Bill.

Mr. Robertson: If the hon. and learned Gentleman will wait, he will hear, in the context of this Third Reading debate, our vision of what Europe should be doing. It is in stark contrast to the remarkable vision that we are being offered in Bruges and in the columns of *The Times*. It is nice to welcome the hon. and learned Gentleman, who is a rarely seen face, to these debates. We always like to add to the small club of Members who have been to many such debates. I believe that the general secretary of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has joined the pocket commando who leads the hon. and learned Gentleman's party today. It will be interesting to see what his party's European policy, never mind its defence policy, will be.

We all say, "Too true," in response to what the Prime Minister has said about regional aid. We all agree that helping the less well-off regions is a commendable objective. That is especially true for those of us who come from Scotland, where we have 20 per cent. unemployment, where manufacturing industry has been devastated and where poverty and deprivation are at historically high levels. The Prime Minister promised aid for hard-pressed regions, but there are several in her own country. I refer not only to Scotland, but to Wales, the north of England, Merseyside, the west midlands and the north-west, which have also fallen into that category. They all look forward to hugely increased Community funding.

The lamentable truth is that the Government agreed to a doubling of the EC's structural funds to help the regions —the European regional development fund, the European social fund and the guidance component of the common agricultural policy. They agreed to a doubling to £8·5 billion a year by 1992. The Bill would make that agreement legal, six months and £700 million later, but Britain's regions will be worse off.

Mr. Brooke: It will be 1993.

Mr. Robertson: It will be the end of 1992 or the beginning of 1993, but I stand corrected if that is of any symbolic importance. By the end of 1992, the figure will be £8·5 million. The question that the House needs to ask this evening, even if there is no expectation of a reply, is, how much of that will Britain get?

I believe that Britain will be worse off as a direct result of Conservative Government policy and incompetence on a monumental scale. The Government have so downgraded Britain's own regional aid, as the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) had the nerve to proclaim earlier, that they have as a consequence disqualified virtually the whole nation from a new source of cash, because 80 per cent. of all the newly inflated funds will go to objective 1 designated areas, which will not be reviewed until 1992 or 1993, as the Paymaster General reminds us.

In the whole of the United Kingdom, only Northern Ireland falls into that category. All the rest of Britain's hard-pressed regions will have to fight it out for what remains—20 per cent. of the cake. To get even what we get at the moment—last year we got £848 million in structural funding—Britain will have to collar three quarters of all

that is left of the funds after objective 1. In anyone's language that is simply not on, as we have to compete with all the deprived and poorer areas of the other 11 nations.

In February, the Prime Minister boasted to the House that we could expect to get £1,000 million from the structural funds by 1992. Not for the first time, she is living in a fantasy. Reliable estimates suggest that Britain's take from the newly doubled funds will probably not be more than £200 million next year—a cut of 75 per cent.—when tonight we are endorsing a 100 per cent. increase in the total available for dispersal. Is that what the Prime Minister means by value for money?

The dismal story does not end there. This week the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) who regrettably cannot be present, and who I had warned about such a view, spent her time at the Foreign Affairs Council mounting a bid to prevent the European Community from insisting that payments from the Community must finance new job-creating projects and not just subsidise those that had already been planned by the Government.

Britain alone of all the European Community countries wants all the cash to go into the Treasury black hole, thus depriving the regions of even the little that will be salvaged from the structural funds next year. Rather than match the Community's spending in Britain's poorest, hardest-hit and most deprived areas, it is clear that Ministers will be prepared to sacrifice the lot. That is only one illustration of the parsimonious way in which the Government are treating the regions and the structural funds. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) who has been pursuing the matter with Ministers, has more than adequate case law to suggest that the Government are penalising local authority schemes in favour of the schemes dreamed up by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Holland: That is really scandalous.

Mr. Robertson: It takes special, almost unique incompetence—as the Bill does today—to be forced into upping Britain's payments by 25 per cent. and doubling the structural funds, only simultaneously to see Britain's revenue from them drop from £800 million to £200 million. It takes real malicious, malign incompetence then to demand that we do not even spend on the new programmes for which the funds were designed. The Government stand indicted.

There is a real vision of Europe that the Prime Minister very often seems to forget. We share the vision of economic expansion in the European Community, but economic expansion that lives side by side with balance in the Community, with fairness and with a sense of community. We seek, not bureaucracy, but proper curbs on unrestrained free movement of capital and business; not centralisation, but joint action to deal with the problems that we face in Europe; not the paranoid nationalism that we seem to be hearing from the Prime Minister, but a genuine awareness of what can be done and what needs to be done for the people of Europe.

The very wise commentator in the *International Herald Tribune*, Mr. William Pfaff, who by no stretch of the imagination can be described as a Marxist—even by the Prime Minister, who believes that Chancellor Kohl is a covert Marxist—talks about the useful, constructive and valuable project that the Community is embracing in research, artificial intelligence, advanced electronics and space. He writes:

"These are providing Europe with basic research and technological applications crucial to European industrial competitivity, but come at a time when Britain, once Europe's leader in science, has abandoned or drastically reduced public funding for basic research, cutting itself off from research which private business is unwilling or unable to pay for."

He concludes by referring to

"the political impulse to put shallow thoughts into gross slogans."

That sums up Her Majesty's Government's view of the European future more properly than anything that the Prime Minister said in Bruges.

The Bill represents the Prime Minister's failure and her reckless submission on financial common sense, but Europe is now moving ahead. Our amendment reflects the Bill's defects and the wasted chances, but it is now time that we learned from these defects and these problems what represents our collective future. I urge all hon. Members to support the amendment.

6.37 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I wish to intervene at this early stage to make just three or four points, as I know that quite a large number of hon. Members wish to speak in this Third Reading debate.

It was pleasurable, fascinating and interesting to hear from the spokesman for the Labour party, the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), perhaps the strongest words in favour of the Community that we have heard from the Labour party. We were urging him to reveal some aspects of Labour policy directly related to the Bill on Third Reading so that we can know what transformation has been achieved, apparently, since the conference season—the TUC conference and the Labour party conference, where the Labour party seemed as usual to respond to the urging of its TUC paymasters and TUC directors of studies—so that it should now become more enthusiastic about membership of the EC.

Unfortunately, the hon. Gentleman said only that the House, Parliament and hon. Members must wait. He said, "Labour policy is evolving; give us a chance to make sure that we know how to construct it and what it is." We recall that Labour's response to the Brussels summit was uniformly hostile. Now, grudgingly at least, the Labour party is taking the first step in the right direction and saying that the Community and our membership of it are a good thing. All the nit-picking about the excellent Bill so ably promoted by my right hon. Friend on Monday and today is just so much smoke-screening, as the House will fully recognise in the hon. Gentleman's remarks and, presumably, those of his colleague who winds up the debate.

Mr. Robertson: I intervene at this stage to allow the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) to get on to more constructive things. I shall not delay the House. The decisions of the Labour party conference are published and available to the hon. Gentleman and to the public in general. I quote simply one sentence from the report of the policy review group "Britain in the World", which states:

"Labour will work within the Community to achieve our democratic socialist objectives in Britain and construct a new agenda for Europe."

[Mr. Robertson]

I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can make much more heavy weather of making fun of the Labour party. The policy is there and I advise him to read it before he makes his next speech.

Mr Dykes: I am still puzzled by the fact that the hon. Gentleman, who is usually properly thick-skinned, was so touchy that he felt he had to intervene to make that point. It shows how brittle things are in the Labour party.

I am not saying that simply as an irritating point but because, by direct inference and linkage, the hon. Gentleman was saying that there had been a "revolving" of the policy stance of the two major parties. The hon. Gentleman used the word "revolving" in a different context, but it fits in here. He was saying that Labour is, magically, and at long last, what constructive Europeans and honest patriots—I hope that I am both—have been waiting for. He said that the first sign of enthusiasm by the Labour party about the details as well as the general aspects of our membership of the Community is at last here to be testified.

That was also interesting for the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), who is to speak for the Democrats. The hon. Member for Hamilton sought to imply that there had been a change of attitude among Conservative Members about our membership of the Community, as well as a change in our response to the Bill. I can assure him that he need not worry about that, because that is not the case.

I wish to develop the notion, which is entirely credible, not least when one examines the Bruges speech, that the Conservative party is still quintessentially the enthusiastic European party and that nothing has changed fundamentally or in certain important details. That is why the Bill will be overwhelmingly passed by Conservative Members.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend has noticed the way in which the Labour party is embracing Europeanism. My hon. Friend, as we all know, is a fanatical European, and that is surpassed only by his fanatical Conservatism. Does it not give him cause for concern that the visit of Mr. Delors to the TUC and the change in Labour party policy has come about because it sees that we now have a Europe fit for Socialism?

Mr. Dykes: My hon. Friend is famous for his simplistic explanations. I wish that such a simplistic explanation were the case. However, it is not as simple as that. The Labour party is obstruse, complicated and incomprehensible to its members in the House and outside, and Mr. Delors has been misquoted and misrepresented. In response to the urging of Members of the European Parliament, he was partly giving some of his personal views.

However, he also said—I do not have the exact quotation, but I remember it vividly—that it is essential for the national parliamentary systems and the governmental responses of all member states to be thorough, adequate, robust and vigilant to ensure that they respond to the possibility of the centre of gravity moving to Brussels. In our constitutional description, we would, of course, talk of the centre of gravity moving to the Council of Ministers.

As a result of that, scrutiny exercises such as those pursued by the House would be even more important in the future, as would the welcome development of the European Parliament—*[Interruption.]* It is a pity that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) does not approve of that. Such scrutiny exercises would provide an extra democratic layer of supervision and control of the developing Community. Mr. Delors was urging Community states to proceed along those lines. I am sure that I am not misrepresenting him.

My next point involves major areas of constitutional supervision by the House. The Chairman of the Select Committee on European Legislation, the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is in his place. I pay tribute to him for the quality of his contributions in debates as well as his amazingly assiduous attendance. I hope that I have not embarrassed him by that genuine tribute.

On Monday, we saw nit-picking about the Bill by a few hon. Members. There are a diminishing number of anti-marketeers still in the House. Some of those anti-marketeers are members of the Conservative party, although not many. They are not of tremendous significance in the total contribution, although they are all as individuals distinguished Members who make distinguished contributions. They know that they are on a losing wicket and are fighting a losing battle.

The Bill is a major constitutional matter as well as a financial measure, and I contrast the nit-picking on such measures with the deserted character of the Chamber when we are carrying out late-night scrutiny of individual instruments. I say that, not in respect of the hon. Members present today, but in respect of others who attend only on occasions such as this or during the height of our principal deliberations, but do not become involved in the individual late night scrutiny of items that is needed on many measures. That is a pity. They pay lip service to scrutiny, pretend that it is important, but do not take the slightest interest themselves.

I link to that the amazing double standard that is illustrated by the fact that they do not pay the slightest attention also to the billions of pounds of national public spending on which we often vote late at night and about which we read in the newspapers the following day and their nit-picking, hysterical reaction to the smallest amounts of Community money voted in collective decisions between member states or agreed in Community budgets.

I welcome the Bill and I congratulate heartily the Government, the Prime Minister and the Treasury team on their achievements. This is pleasurable for those of us who are impatient about the slow development of the Community. We do not wish to see anything like the terrible "federalism", which is a word now replacing the phrase "Reds under the bed" as the scare story of the late 1980s and early 1990s. As far as I am aware, no one is suggesting that we should move towards federalism, and certainly no one supports the United States concept of one federal Government. The Bill represents sovereign countries co-operating more and more with collective benefit and genuine reciprocal enthusiasm because they observe greater benefits for the greater good.

Mr. Cash: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dykes: I would like to, but time is moving on.

Developing the Community is directly to be compared with history. There is the old argument about getting one

single nation together for the common good. We see the same thing now increasingly accepted as a matter of little controversy in member states. Unfortunately, it is controversial in this Parliament, but it should not be. In Denmark there is an eccentric attitude from some Members of Parliament, but not many. The other member states take a calm stance and it is not a controversial matter.

When the scare story of federalism was raised again, the reaction from French politicians, the French Government and French official spokesmen was just as sharp. They said that it was an absurd idea and that things would not develop in that way. In many ways, France is as nationalistic as Britain.

Mr. Cash: Will my hon. Friend give way on that point?

Mr. Dykes: I will not give way, because my hon. Friend has intervened several times.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Dykes: I do not intend to give way.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. It has been made clear that the hon. Gentleman does not intend to give way.

Mr. Dykes: If my hon. Friend travelled to European countries more often, he would see the way in which politicians operate a restrained political system rather than a hysterical one, which is what we see so often here.

Mr. Cryer: Dull, like a graveyard.

Mr. Dykes: That is a matter of opinion. It is more mature in many ways, unlike the hon. Member for Bradford, South.

The reaction to the canard that federalism was on the way was just as sharp from France as from Britain. No one has suggested that, least of all Mr. Delors.

In practical ways, through the own resources decision and the intergovernmental agreement, the Bill takes our practical, financial, political and operational membership of the Community a vital and useful stage further. The Treasury Ministers have led the way by negotiating the decisions and putting them into the Bill. As the Bill is passed, which I hope it will be, it will become part of the treaty and part of the constitutional background of the Community. Because of the surplus of resources that appears to be developing, and which may continue into 1990-91, I hope that the Community will be spared the superficial attacks that it has received in recent years.

There have been phoney arguments about extravagance and overspending. I agree that agricultural spending needed to be curbed and controlled more effectively, and that now appears to have happened. When compared with the way in which the Governments of member states, including ourselves, were spending public money, the arguments were phoney, as we are realising more and more.

If, as I assume the Bill is passed tonight, we can proceed, armed with it, to the next, more mature stage of our membership of the European Community. We shall get rid of silly debates in which we are extremely offensive about foreigners. We should be very offended if we read of references in the National Assembly or the Bundestag to foreigners who cannot be trusted or worked with because they do not have a sense of fair play, yet we hear such nonsense again and again in the House. We should welcome and accept membership of the European Community, which fortunately, as I acknowledge with pleasure, the Government do. As was shown in the Bruges speech, the Government remain in all fundamental details an enthusiastic member of the European Community.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has reiterated her profound commitment to it. That is the reality of our political, financial and economic position of the future. I therefore welcome the Bill.

6.51 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes). He and I have disagreed on these matters over the years, but in more recent times we have understood our differences better. I shall follow him with what I hope will be a measured speech which takes an entirely different point of view from his.

The Bill provides a further tranche of money—which does not have to be voted on in the House for the next five years—to a Community that is now a different legislative machine from the one that it was 18 months ago. The Community is not only spending money on various programmes—familiar to those of us who attend late-night debates—but it has new legislative powers. The money on which we are voting is to fuel that legislative machine—modest though our portion may be—and to provide for money services, which we habitually debate.

I am grateful for the tribute paid by the hon. Member for Harrow, East for some of the work that we do in the Select Committee on European Legislation. He is a regular attender and he contributes most usefully to its procedural work. But even he will agree that, however perfect any scrutiny is—and it is by no means perfect at the moment—what is decided in debates on European legislation in the House, which are thinly attended, as the hon. Gentleman knows, is only advisory. I suggest to him and to other hon. Members that some late-night debates are poorly attended, partly because of the technicalities involved and partly because their outcome may have no decisive effect, as the Government themselves have to make decisions.

In Committee on Monday, I made comments about media gaps. In the past few weeks, we have read a great deal about the Community. I made the extraordinary allegation that most of the comments that I read, heard or saw on television avoided the centralities. I have not been challenged by the media since then and, as I am the Chairman of the Select Committee to which the hon. Member for Harrow, East referred, I must put on record five gaps that I espied, not as Chairman of that Committee but as an individual, although I have knowledge that arises from membership of that Committee.

The first relates to the Government's publicity campaign about 1992, "Open for Business", for which the Bill provides money. The campaign speaks of barriers coming down, of great opportunities and a great leap forward. However, in 1973 it was said that that would happen by 1979, at the end of the years of transition. We now have a manufacturing debt to the EEC of £10 billion a year, although we began in 1972 with a modest surplus. If that has happened since 1973, when tariff barriers began gradually to disappear, what will happen between now and 1992? On common-sense grounds, one would assume that

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

the position would get worse. Nothing in the Government's £1 million advertising campaign and nothing that has been said by the hon. Member for Harrow, East leads me to believe otherwise.

Apparently, the media have accepted that the opportunities will be of net benefit rather than net disbenefit, forgetting that the White Paper produced by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) in 1972 said that the benefits of entering the Community would be positive and substantial, and they turned out to be substantial and negative. What is to prevent the same thing from happening between now and—I am tempted to say—1992, which brings me to my second point? There is a further lacuna in the media coverage—a major fault even at the BBC. The date is not 1992; the change is taking place now. The period finishes formally on 31 December 1992 when article 100B takes effect, but legislation is coming forward now. There is to be no big bang at any time, let alone in 1992.

My third point relates to M. Delors's "social dimension". It is not part of the Cockfield package, and article 100A specifically omits rights of employed persons. Their interests are still protected—some would say advanced—by unanimity. They are not part of the package specifically singled out for legislation. The proposition is therefore of a different order from that to which we are already committed.

Fourthly, majority voting, with a requirement of 54 votes and a blocking section of 23 votes, means that legislation opposed by the Government and the House can still become law in the United Kingdom.

My fifth point is perhaps the most important of all. We are told that the frontiers are coming down. We see pictures of lorries and there is talk about tariffs, customs posts and all the rest of it. That may be true, but the fundamentals are very much more important. Article 8A refers to an area of a single market "without internal frontiers". If we took a ship from London to Lisbon, we should not pass a geographical frontier. In terms of trade and in other ways, however, we should be passing a frontier because Portugal has different laws, regulations and habits from ours.

It is clear that the frontiers are not geographical frontiers, which we pass with luggage or lorries; they are differences of law. Any statute capable of amendment under the treaty of Rome that affects competition or could be said to create different conditions—any commercial or industrial regulations, for example—will thus constitute a frontier. Therefore, we do not know which areas will be susceptible to the application of articles 100A and 8A. Any difference of law either side of the industrial, or paper, frontier thus becomes potentially susceptible to the application of article 100A. At that point, the central power takes over and national legislation is potentially subject to legislation from the centre.

The potential area for legislation is great indeed. We are used to talking about scope in the House. The competence of the emerging European union to impose pre-emptive legislation on its member states is colossal and as yet undefined. I can say that clearly because the Select Committee on European Legislation is examining an aspect of that subject in one of its inquiries. Before suggesting possible legislation, any member of any legislature—any official in Whitehall—will have to ascertain whether it is covered by the treaty powers that the House voted to give to the emerging central European union.

We shall have to think whether we can put anything in place that might clash with what the Commission might propose. The Commission has enormous powers of proposition. It may appear to be a small civil service—it has been compared to Scotland's—but the Council of Ministers cannot propose legislation or regulations because the proposal must come from the Commission. The actual and potential powers of the Commission precede, pre-empt and prevent wide sectors of national legislation. By treaty, the Commission alone has the prerogative of initiative.

We are living under a written constitution for a European union. I stress to Conservative Members—even to the hon. Member for Harrow, East, who knows much about these matters—that talk of federalism is not accurate because it immediately conjures up something that is not in the treaty of Rome. The Prime Minister either knows that very well when she talks about a united states of Europe, or she does not understand the point.

Nation states may be federal or unitary in structure. The nature of the European union is unitary and does not need any new legislation to create a federation such as the United States of America or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The constitutions of those countries are remarkably alike. All that is required is competence ceded to a central law-making authority, which by treaty or constitution automatically takes precedence over anything else.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman and I are on the Select Committee on European Legislation. It strikes me as odd that he is saying that there is no federalism in the structure of the European Community. He is attempting to say that, effectively, it is a unitary state in embryo. I refer him to any work of standing on the subject, especially a book published by Professor Rasmussen, in which he says:

"Do the fundamental characteristics of the European Community's governmental structures and its division of powers exhibit the essential features of federalism? The reply is in the affirmative."

Mr. Spearing: I have not read the chapter to which the hon. Gentleman alludes, but I should be pleased to enter into correspondence with the author of the book or anyone else, because I fail to detect any element of federalism, to which the book refers.

Britain is a party to the Struttgart declaration, which was quoted in Committee last Monday,

"to transform the whole complex of relations between their States into a European Union."

When the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs was asked about this by a Select Committee, he said that it was done by a variety of legal bases, including the treaty of Rome, the Single European Act and a number of other unspecified treaties. I believe that that is the reality because it is a written constitution.

Mr. Spinelli and Mr. Tindemans have produced constitutions that were widely discussed at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. They may have contained elements of what the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) referred to or what was hoped for by people who are generally called European federalists.

Mr. Dykes: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we are not discussing a federal proposition or structure either now or in the future, but is he not wrong in saying that it is unitary because it is a unique new creation of sovereign member Governments increasingly working together and, we hope, with majority rule? We can call it by a new designation, say it is a confederation, a community or what it is—a treaty, like the Atlantic treaty or the NATO arrangements, albeit with more institutional effort and substance. To say that it is like a unitary state is manifestly absurd.

Mr. Spearing: These are vital matters. The structure is not like NATO because the EEC is not a taxing or law-making body. It is true that it is a new sort of unitary machine, but it is, nevertheless, unitary, and that is a distinction that the hon. Gentleman should make. There is no place in the treaty of Rome for participation by national bodies other than by their customary constitutional requirements, as the Paymaster General said earlier. There is no formal giving or division of powers as one finds in a federation or confederation.

Article 236 of the treaty requires common accord and, despite the opposition of the Prime Minister at Milan, a conference was called to bring forward the proposals regarding the Single European Act. That whittled down many of the aspirations of Mr. Spinelli and his friends. I have no doubt that the Foreign Office thought that they had been whittled down so much that their "federalist aspects and tendencies" had disappeared.

There was much disappointment in Strasbourg when the Single European Act appeared. I have no doubt that the Government were not enthusiastic about it and said, as we often say ourselves, "It was the best we could do." What was not understood—I am not sure whether the Prime Minister, the Foreign Office or anyone else understood this—was that the Single European Act, especially article 8A, contained the magical words "without internal frontiers." That is the fulcrum of an enormous edifice of legislative prerogative, which we are only just beginning to understand.

If the House or any listener or professor who writes books on the subject disagrees with me, I should say that this insight came only through listening to the exposition of Lord Cockfield, who before the Treasury Select Committee emphasised this very point. The whole edifice of the CAP is founded on the magic words "stabilisation of markets", which are found in the treaty. The three words "without internal frontiers" create a new legislative machine, of the boundaries of which we are unaware.

A few hours ago we were discussing a subject of tremendous public concern—social benefits. Under a unitary European state, if there is to be perfect competition, social benefits and taxation will surely have to be harmonised. I was reading some Conservative literature from about 15 years ago in which that was foreseen.

Powers that we think lie with Whitehall are moving. We have recently heard much talk about mergers. Does the House realise that the powers to determine whether mergers should take place will move from Whitehall to Brussels? In an answer to me on 25 October, the Attorney-General said that six courts in this country have referred cases on Sunday trading to the European Court, and 100 laws have been passed under the Cockfield package on majority. What next?

In the referendum we were told that the position of the Queen would not be affected. I suspect that people who said that did not understand what the position of the Queen meant, because all the legislation from Brussels does not come before the House, receive Royal Assent or go to the Privy Council; it bypasses the sovereign and therefore bypasses sovereignty. It represents a new European imperium whose prerogatives of legislation are so wide that they are indefinable.

Realisation of that fact, as well as other factors, caused the Prime Minister to make her Bruges speech. She now realises that Government and Parliament may be facing some very nasty medicine, which has been brought upon us by the Single European Act. If the Prime Minister realised that, why did she espouse it and not bring the information to the House? I have a charitable solution to that conundrum. I do not necessarily think that the Foreign Office or the Prime Minister knew of its implications; or if they did, they did not tell us. It is one or the other—either they did know and did not tell, or they did not know, and we are now finding out. I suggest that this is a major constitutional matter.

If the Foreign Office and the Prime Minister knew and did not tell us, that is a major political and constitutional issue. If they did not know, we have been conned as a nation, both while going into the European Community and while staying in it on the terms so far negotiated. We are now just waking up—even those of us who try to follow these matters—to the details of the constitutional mechanism by which we have been made subject people in respect of majority decisions on Brussels laws.

Because what we read in the press is not always accurate, I should like to get on the record exactly what Mr. Delors said when he spoke, not to the TUC, but to the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 6 July this year. He said:

> "In ten years time 80 per cent. of economic legislation and perhaps even fiscal and social legislation will be of community origin."

That was a forecast. He did not say, "of all legislation"; he said:

> "of economic and perhaps even fiscal and social legislation".

He implied that, of the totality of legislation, less than 80 per cent. would be from the Community. *The Sunday Times* was aghast at that. In its leading article on 25 September 1988, it said:

> "No serious person, bar Mr. Delors, really believes that 80 per cent. of Europe's social and economic legislation will be decided in Brussels within 10 years; or that, in Mr. Delors' phrase, it is time to create 'an embryo European Government'."

I have news for Mr. Delors, and perhaps for the Prime Minister and hon. Members. What proportion of the laws to which we are now subject have originated in the United Kingdom, in this Chamber, and what proportion in Brussels? I had a look the other day and found that there is about 65 ft of library space of combined United Kingdom and Brussels legislation to which we are all subject and which has been passed since 1958. One may say, "Why 1958? I thought that we had joined in 1972." But when we joined in 1972, we took aboard everything which the EEC had legislated for since it started and which had not been repealed. I hasten to add that some of that EEC legislation would have been repealed since that time.

What is the proportion? Between 10 and 11 ft is United Kingdom legislation and about 54 ft EEC legislation. One

[Mr. Spearing]

may say, "But the EEC legislation is much more detailed." It is, and we must remember that our legislation is on smaller paper with larger print.

All that legislation is not from a proto-federal EEC, but a European union that now exists. The volume of legislation can be measured, but measurement is not necessarily the critical indicator. What is important is the nature of the legislation and the scope of the legislative superiority already ceded by treaty to EEC legislation. The Bill provides the political petrol for that emerging European Union. It does so automaticaly, without vote, for funds of between £4 billion and £5 billion a year, not just to pursue policies on which we can at best only comment and advise, but to support a legislative apparatus which, if it wishes, can dominate the executive and legislative arms of the United Kingdom—in common parlance, No. 10 and Parliament. It reverses in constitutional terms the events of 1688.

The power of this new European union has increased, it is increasing and, to modify the old phrase, has now to be contained. The question to which Parliament must now turn its attention and to which the Prime Minister has already directed our attention is, bearing in mind our treaty commitments, how can that be achieved?

7.16 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Because many hon. Members wish to speak, I shall curtail my points and limit them largely to the speech of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson). I should like to make passing references to the speech of the hon. Member for Harrow, Central——

Mr. Dykes: I am an hon. Friend.

Mr. Cash: —who referred to what he regarded as my hysterical outburst on the question whether the French had any federalist tendencies. If he had been kind enough to give way, I would merely have mentioned gently what Mr. Rocard, the Prime Minister of France, is reported as saying in the *Financial Times* on 24 October:

"I am clearly a European federalist".

I thought that it would be in accordance with the conventions of the House politely to correct the hon. Member on a matter of some importance.

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Mr. Cash: The hon. Member would obviously like me to give way to him. I shall be delighted to do so, although he was not prepared to do the same for me.

Mr. Dykes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, but then I have not intervened as often as he has. By the way, I am an hon. Friend and the constituency of Harrow, Central has been abolished. It is Harrow, East.

The expression of personal opinions by various politicians in various member states does not constitute a graphology of Community policy. Why does my hon. Friend misrepresent Mr. Rocard's comments? French politicians, including members of Mr. Rocard's party, have been equally severe in saying, "No, we believe in a Europe of nation states." I do not think that my hon. Friend's point adds up to much in this debate.

Mr. Cash: We know that President de Gaulle believed in Europe des patries. I do not think that Mr. Rocard does.

The hon. Member for Hamilton made an interesting speech, turning his withering fire power on my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. In doing so, he revealed the deficiencies in the Labour party's policy on Europe. The Labour party's policy on Europe is that it does not have a policy; in this matter I agree with remarks made over the past few weeks by some of my colleagues.

What do the Opposition make of the statements by their Socialist colleagues elsewhere in Europe? I have questions to put to them. On budgetary policy, the issue is whether we would want to move to a central bank. Without one, we cannot have the kind of policies proposed by Mr. Rocard. Recently, Mr. Rocard was reported as saying:

"The French Government would continue to call for the constitution of a European central bank and would make the required concessions to German sensibility to get it. 'It is an absolute necessity,' said Mr. Rocard".

Am I right in thinking that that policy would be pursued by the hon. Member for Hamilton and the Labour party? Do they want a central bank in Europe? Is that Socialist policy? Do they want a situation in which this country no longer has any control over economic policy? That is the corollary to the position that they have adopted. The hon. Member for Hamilton might also ask himself whether he would favour a joint Franco-German brigade in Europe as the embryo of a European army. The budgetary matters with which the Bill deals are directly related to those questions because it is the money that comes to the European Community, through the mixture of own resources and VAT, which enables such things to be paid for.

That brings me to the next question—the very important debate in the European Parliament today in relation to the Prime Minister's statement in Bruges about the future of Europe.

Mr. Robertson: That was yesterday.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman says that it was yesterday, but the important point is this. One of the main points of a report produced by the Communist Mr. Graziani, with a large number of Socialist colleagues, concerned the attainment of European union. It suggested that the European Parliament

"Notes that, even if the full potential of the Single Act is exploited to the maximum, it falls short of the Community's requirements, particularly as regards"—

these are things that we would be expected to pay for out of the budgetary arrangements, which the hon. Member for Hamilton and his Socialist colleagues in Europe presumbly wish to support—

"the competence of the Community which is still deprived of adequate means of action in the areas of"—

wait for it—

"common foreign policy, security, a common currency with a central bank, energy, development aid, cultural co-operation, eduation, and European citizenship".

That is just a sprinkling of the functions to be conferred on the European Government proposed by Socialists such as Mr. Rocard, Vice-President Siegbert Alber of the European Parliament, and so on.

The Labour party is in an impossible situation. On the one hand, Labour Members say that they intend to change the whole policy towards the European Community that they have developed in the past 20 years. On the other hand, they seek to repudiate the very sound position

adopted by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. They are making complete nonsense of the policies that they have pursued in Europe for the past 15 to 20 years.

Mr. Robertson: I am not sure what that has to do with this debate, Madam Deputy Speaker, but the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) seems to be winding himself up. He did not know that the debate in the European Parliament took place yesterday. Had he realised that, he could have read in today's papers that the fate of the report to which he so lovingly refers was to be shelved for the time being. There is a diversity of view about the future of Europe among the various Socialist parties in Europe just as there is among the component parts of the European democratic group, in which the Conservative party remains. Conservative Members of the European Parliament provide a diversity of view ranging from ultra-federalist to ultra-nationalist, which might be a better subject to exercise the hon. Gentleman's mind today.

Mr. Cash: My main point is that the Labour party has in no way explained its policy on Europe. Labour Members' criticism of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Bruges speech has no validity, because my right hon. Friend's statement was entirely consistent with Conservative party policy. She explained in very clear terms that we will not have a united states of Europe, but that our policy will be for a Europe essentially directed towards the peace and security of the people in this country and in Europe as a whole. The Labour party has totally failed to explain what its policies are and on that it stands condemned.

7.24 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): In the past, I have been accustomed to speaking in home affairs debates, so I am suffering something of a culture shock today. It has been an interesting experience to read the earlier debates on the Bill, which seem to have thrown up three schools of thought in the House in relation to Europe.

The first might loosely be called the school of European development. I believe that the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) belongs to that school, as do I. It consists of those who believe that the Community is not just a beneficial economic organisation but has important political implications for the future. We in that school believe that our prosperity and the essence of our sovereignty are strengthened by joining in the genuine unification of purpose and institutions in Europe. We are the people who have actually read the Single European Act, have understood what it means and have some belief in its aspirations.

The second might be called the school of European nihilism. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) spoke from almost the same position in the Chamber as that from which Mr. Enoch Powell used to speak. Apart from the voice—and, if the hon. Gentleman will forgive my saying so, the structure of his sentences, which were Rover rather than Rolls-Royce—it was very much the same speech. It harboured the quaint view that prosperity corresponds with insularity. Members of that school seem to see no value whatever in internationalism and no security in a safe exchange rate mechanism, and to regard Mr. Delors as a nasty foreigner.

Mr. Spearing: I hesitate to intervene, as I had a good slice of time, but I cannot let the hon. and learned Gentleman's comments pass, although I am grateful for his compliments. Is he not aware that I am a very strong internationalist and against the organisation in question because it is not international but supranational? Secondly, does the hon. Gentleman agree that my constitutional points have some validity. Does he also agree that our prosperity is not built just on market philosophies and megamarkets, which may not produce the universal prosperity that the EEC promises?

Mr. Carlile: I will answer the second of the hon. Gentleman's three questions, as it is the most important. The hon. Gentleman's constitutional theories are nonsense. He suggests that the European Community is a unitary state when that is demonstrably not so. I need only repeat what the hon. Member for Harrow, East had to say about that.

The third school of European thought in the House might be called the school of European grudgingness. The Prime Minister seems to belong to that school. She charges from one speech to the next proclaiming, in effect, that we have little interest in political developments in the Community but that we shall continue to take whatever economic advantage there is for as long as it is available. It is not surprising that her approach causes such nervousness and anger even among her conservative colleagues in the Federal Republic of Germany, in Italy and elsewhere, because what she says has diluted confidence in the Community's durability now that the United Kingdom is such an essential member.

It is a matter of regret to me that the Prime Minister is so grudging in her membership of the European Community. However, when the hon. Member for Hamilton quoted a sentence from the Labour party's policy review and gave us the Labour party's so-called vision, the thought crossed my mind that if that was Labour Members' vision they had better get their eyes tested before the Government introduced charges for eye tests. It was an extraordinarily general sentence that could be interpreted by by-election candidates in Govan, Epping or Richmond according to the needs of those respectively inner-city, broadly urban and agricultural constituencies.

The Bill deals with two important issues, the second of which does not merit most of the critical attention given it in the House. The provision for payments to be made under the 1988 intergovernmental agreement is a piece of good housekeeping to ensure that the Community can meet its commitments for the remainder of this year. Opposition to that is opposition to membership—a refusal to pay current debts. Every business organisation, society with members or club keeps accounts at least one year in arrears. This part of the Bill deals merely with reasonable accounting practice.

The first issue, which is much more important, is the approval of the new own resources decision. It is consistent with what my hon. Friends and I have been saying for many years: there should continue to be steady economic and financial integration of the Community.

The concept of structural funds is based on an integrated Community. That does not mean a single nation state; it means an integrated community of a new type and of which the hon. Member for Harrow, East spoke. Parts of our country have benefited greatly from these structural funds.

[Mr. Carlile]

The concept of 1992 is based on an integrated Community, and there will be great benefit to our citizens —scientists, engineers, business men and professional people—who will be unshackled in the development of British enterprise in the much larger market of the Community. Our financial services sector, especially the big banks, can view 1992 with great enthusiasm, as their greatest opportunity since the heydays of the British empire—provided that we enter fully into the spirit of deregulation and reform. The banks are nervous because they believe that the reluctance of the British Government to deregulate may produce reciprocal action from the French and other Governments.

The Commission's publication, "European Economy No. 35", published in March 1988, shows, without undue optimism, the potential benefits of 1992 for six of our great industries—food processing, pharmaceuticals, motor vehicles, textiles and clothing, building products and telecommunications. Those are only examples of the benefits of 1992.

Of course, the own resources decision has at its core the need to control expenditure, so that national sovereign Parliaments can be persuaded of its propriety. We retain ultimate sovereignty over what is decided; 1992 depends on our retention of that sovereignty, although momentous political changes thereafter may well be the consequence of successful economic integration.

It was with this parliamentary sovereignty in mind that the Twelve arrived at the inevitable decision that there should be stronger limits on Community expenditure, as shown most clearly by the controls provided in the new decision of 24 June this year.

The Government seem to have convinced themselves that they alone, with little contribution from other member states in terms of argument and insistence, have been responsible for the changes now incorporated in the Bill and for new financial discipline in the Community. That is far too smug a claim to be worthy of credence. However, I am happy to see the Government confidently claiming their negotiating successes in the Community and having confidence in their position in it, provided that they are prepared to take that confidence fully into the progress towards 1992.

A confident Government would be prepared at least to examine and discuss the creation of some form of European central bank. They would be prepared to dismantle unnecessary currency barriers which are more appropriate to the politics of Napoleonic Europe than to those of today. They would be confident enough to allow electoral arrangements for the European Parliament to be standardised throughout the Community on the fair basis of proportional representation. I urge the Government to have the courage to show that confidence.

7.35 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Like the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), I have taken care to study some of the debates in the House on these matters, particularly the speeches made by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). He is obviously an enthusiast for these debates, if not for Europe. Like many enthusiasts for a cause, he shows the attention to detail and the speed, verve and vim of a Geoffrey Boycott innings.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery, in his interesting analysis of these debates, was right to say that there has in the past been a dreary stand-off between committed anti-marketeers and the peddlers of European dreams. But he was absolutely wrong to describe the Prime Minister's as a grudging way. What she was trying to say and what the Bill should be striving towards is a truly free-trade Europe, not a harmonised Europe, and a market-oriented Europe, not a profligate one.

As we consider the Bill, we must ask ourselves whether the nations of Europe will be encouraged, as they should be, to retain their national identity and their cultural and linguistic differences. There are other great differences, too —for example, trading and commercial practices. Will the Bill preserve the multi-patterned European heritage? We should not see it as a signpost on a dreary slide to a harmonised, homogenised, sterilised, socialised, federalised, bureaucratised and extravagant pale reflection of the United States.

Will the Bill and our debates on these issues create something entirely new, exciting and beneficial? Will it help to create a new drive towards a deregulated trading consortium of equal sovereign partners, in which goods and services from one country compete freely with different goods and services—unharmonised, if necessary —from other countries across national boundaries, under a system in which the best product at the best price is allowed to win, to the benefit of all consumers? Or does the Bill enhance a process in which harmonisation stifles, rather than boosts, trade? Is the Bill, as it should be, part of a process to give greater, not smaller, powers to the markets, as well as fewer, not more, powers to the Brussels Commission?

The benefits of a single market are enormous, but does the Bill encompass the philosophy that gain in a single market invariably entails pain? The so-called regional or social policy must not be allowed to interrupt the necessity of siting production where it is most beneficial to the consumer, rather than where politicians believe it to be beneficial to their future. Does the Bill encapsulate the essential philosophy of the Government—that a single European economy must respond to the myriad spending decisions of 240 million citizens on the European continent —or will that be stifled by what is politically expedient for a few thousand politicians and officials? Will old-style syndicalism and interventionism of the type that still abound in Europe slow down the process from Brussels, just at the time when these things have lost influence in London?

Will the Bill give more chances for markets to grow unhindered to the benefit of all, or will it enable short-sighted politicians and officials to preserve this or that part of inefficient farming practice or local industry on the altar of national pride and paternalistic regional and social policy?

Does the Bill help to transfer decisions from Westminster and this House, not to Brussels, which would be wholly retrograde, but to a wider and freer market? Will the Bill allow national identities and differences, the very stuff of our history, to compete and flourish while power is decentralised to the individual consumer, not centralised to the European Commission?

The destruction of tariff barriers or tolls that catapulted this country into 19th century pre-eminence, is an essential part of European history. In time, trade barriers between nations will seem as outdated as the old customs barriers that used to divide France into six parts before the revolution, or the 1,000 different customs territories that divided Germany before 1815.

That realisation will bring the greatest leap forward in prosperity in Europe's history. That is the true challenge that faces the House, and the question to which we must address ourselves is whether the Bill meets that challenge.

7.40 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Even as a relatively new Member, I have come to realise that in debates such as this one tends to see the same old familiar faces, none of them more familiar—I shall not say old—than that of the Paymaster General, who once again this year has been asked to bear the burden and carry the cross of the Market while the twin Pontius Pilates, the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister, again manage to wash their hands of the consequences of their statements.

Once again we are looking at fairly familiar ground in so far as we are discussing the latest in a long series of mechanisms for financing the European Community. What, unfortunately, casts a shadow over this debate, and no doubt any other future debate on the EC, is the Prime Minister's neo-Gaullist romp round Europe. It was not so much the grand Charles of European politics as the petite Maggie who was romping around Europe with her views on the future development of the continent. That is primarily because she has found the erstwhile Churchillian rhetoric to be useless. In Churchill's own phrase, she has been "resolute in her equivocation" for too long. Every time that she has skirmished in her Churchillian mode, we have ended up paying more.

In the course of the proceedings on the Bill and the statements surrounding it, the Prime Minister is trying a different tack. She has now attempted the old warlike Churchillian tactic of the smokescreen. Let us get the facts straight at the beginning. No Opposition Member is suggesting a united states of Europe. Contrary to what the tabloid press has told us, no thinking European, no thinking Briton, is impressed or misled by that charade. It only diverts us from the real issue.

European finance and integration, the open market and 1992 are serious issues. But they exist not to massage the egos of the Prime Minister, Amstrad's Alan Sugar, Sir John Harvey-Jones, William Egan, or any other entrepreneur who wants to parade in the Department of Trade and Industry's £7·9 million advertising circus; 1992 should be about opportunities for people such as my constituents who stand in the shadow of steel privatisation and the economic neglect that the Opposition hammered home to the Government on Tuesday.

We must ask whether the Government are confident that their advertising campaign—their propaganda—is really reaching the parts that it should be reaching. Let me digress for one second to give an example not from my constituency but from another in Scotland. I was recently discussing with a number of managers the prospects for 1992. I said to one, "What about 1992?" He looked at me rather blankly and said, "Well, what about it?" I said, "How do you think we will do?" After thinking for a while, he said, "Well, John, I think that we will qualify again." He obviously thought that 1992 related to Scotland re-entering the World Cup—[*Interruption.*] Yes, we will qualify. However, more important for that year is whether we will qualify for the challenge of the opening up of the European markets.

All the work on Europe is being hampered by the heavy old ghosts which are being given new life by the Government. In the past few months, the Prime Minister has been busy lampooning some European politicians. I was reminded tonight that if we have learnt one thing during the months of speeches by the Prime Minister, it is that her favourite negro spiritual is not "Hear the word of Delors." It is not that Jacques Delors wants a united states of Europe that so unnerves the Prime Minister; it is the idea that Jacques Delors and those of us who are building a real vision of Europe want to see a liberalised internal market, complemented by a social market. That is clearly not on the Prime Minister's agenda.

It is worth dwelling for a moment on the astonishing rhetoric of a Prime Minister who builds up a bogus issue, primarily to hide the true picture of how little Britain has been able to win from the EC. We have heard tonight in considerable detail from hon. Members with much more experience than I of the negotiations on EC financing over recent years. Let me ask a few simple questions, less detailed but more pertinent.

How is it that, despite the Prime Minister's years of rhetoric, we are still on the receiving end of a CAP budget? How is it that that budget is still out of control? Why is it that the social and regional fund is still merely papering over the cracks of industrial decline and inner-city decay in Britain? We have heard those questions so often before, but every time that they have been asked they have been answered with a deafening silence.

We are now reaching a point where we are becoming desensitised to the obscene level of spending on the CAP, but one fact above all others remains clear. The commitments made at Fontainebleau have not been realised and we have not reduced spending on the CAP.

When the Prime Minister banged her fist on the table in Dublin and talked about "our money" in relation to the EC budget, when she huffed about Fontainebleau, when she puffed about the victorious rebate, we could have been forgiven for thinking, even after so many false starts, that at last we had taken the first steps on the long road to economic sanity. But no such thing. The bitter fact is that next year we face a 25 per cent. increase in our contributions to the EC budget. That the Bill should permit a dramatic increase of 25 per cent. in the budget, after nine years of prime ministerial Churchillian skirmishes in Europe, is a sign of the right hon. Lady's abject failure.

I know that Conservative Members do not wish to be reminded of the comparable value of their contribution to the European budget, but it is worth remembering that last year Britain's net contribution to the EC was £1,649 million. That is more than the Government spent on the National Health Service's capital investment programme last year; it is more than this year's overseas aid budget of £1,247 million; it is more than last year's estimated unemployment benefit of £1,543 million; it is five times more than the Government's capital expenditure of £310 million on education; and it is eight times more than the £200 million of which the Government have, without shame, deprived Britain's mothers and children today.

[Dr. John Reid]

The Prime Minister's victories in Europe are as empty as her European speeches when it is clear that the figure is expected to increase by about £200 million to £300 million in additional contributions in coming years. It is no wonder that there has been little talk of victories from the Paymaster-General today. It is little wonder that the Prime Minister desperately needs to manufacture the spectre of the united states of Europe to divert us from what is really happening to Britain in Europe.

We are in a European Community where new, relatively poorer entrants will be competing for what little money there is in the social and regional fund. The Government do not have a decent social and regional fund for Britain. Indeed, as the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) pointed out earlier, we have a Prime Minister who does not believe that society exists, and a Cabinet which does not believe in the principle of regional aid. Therefore, the notion of them struggling for European social and regional aid is alien to the Government. When it comes to the Government and European regional assistance, it is a case of the incredulous in pursuit of the inadequate.

Nevertheless, the debate is timely, coming at a time when we hear that the Government may be forced by new Community rules to increase public spending in the poorer regions and the inner cities by as much as £6 billion more than they had planned over the next four years. Even the Treasury has been shocked into having to face the fact that it is completely out of line with the new rules of the Council of Ministers, who will force the British Government to match EC spending in the regions pound for pound.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), earlier this week in Luxembourg, refused to agree to that scheme, but the idea of spending £6 billion on areas devastated by the Government's economic policies must have seemed like a bad dream to the Minister and the prospect of communicating that news to her mistress in Downing street must have seemed like a nightmare. I can scarcely imagine the scene when the Minister had to brief the Prime Minister on the fact that the Single European Act means that Britain can disagree with but cannot veto the new rules which will potentially boost the resources of many local and regional authorities hitherto starved of resources by the Government's cost-cutting exercises.

The tragedy is that, despite the doubling of Common Market social and regional funds, forced through against the Prime Minister's violent opposition, up to a total of £8·5 billion a year by 1992, Britain will be worse off because the downgrading of Britain's regional assistance areas has virtually disqualified the whole nation from the new EC cash.

Lest it be thought that Opposition Members are always critical of and pessimistic about Europe, it must be said that, on this occasion, Europe is moving in the right direction as regards the future of regional finance after 1992. It is leaving the Government behind in terms of imagination, foresight and practical plans to alleviate the worst effects of industrial recession. The Government are now out of tune with the reality of what is happening not only in our regions, but in European politics, even among their erstwhile cronies on the Right of European politics.

At the Brussels summit in February, the right decision was taken to double spending on regional and social development as we move towards 1992, but all of us in this country must be on our guard to ensure that EC assistance is not undermined by the withdrawal of United Kingdom Government funds. We can no longer allow the Government to cheat—a word much in vogue this week—on their fiscal obligations by allowing Brussels to fund regional programmes which would have to be met, and should have been met, by the Government in any case.

That is not an unfounded fear, because the doctrine of robbing poor Peter to line the pocket of privileged Paul finds no place among the carefully selected biblical quotations employed by the Prime Minister when she gave us the famous sermon on the mount in Edinburgh earlier this year. That doctrine has characterised the Government's philosophy and actions over the past 10 years. At long last, that doctrine has been isolated, even within the Conservative quarters of European thought. The Government and their doctrine are now isolated, even within the hidden recesses of Right-wing European thought.

Time is running out for a Government who can dodge their obligations to invest in our country's future by leaving it to Brussels, in order to reduce their public sector borrowing requirement. Time is running out for a Government who have allowed regions such as Scotland and Northern Ireland to have their flow of resources halved compared with what they should have been under EC law. Time is running out for a Government who have no regional policy and no apparent commitment to investing in regional policy in the coming years.

The new rules point exactly to the difference between the Prime Minister and the rest of Europe, not because they outline any grandiose or misleading concepts of federalism or even because they represent the Prime Minister's European bete noire of creeping Euro-Socialism, but because of the common-sense intent of revitalising the regions of Europe with carefully targeted investment.

The tragedy is that the Prime Minister and her Government could be giving a lead in Europe. They could sponsor a Community where co-operation between sovereign nations stands as an alternative, not a concession, to the integration of sovereign states. They could be fostering a European framework where economic co-ordination and major issues take precedence over enforced harmonisation of industrial bagatelles. They could be promoting a Europe where real competition is promoted by anti-trust legislation, where real individual involvement is enhanced by worker participation and where substantial progress is made in health, safety and security for the vast majority of citizens living within the borders of the Community.

Conservative Members laughed at the word "vision". The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) demanded details. A vision is not a blueprint, but it is nevertheless powerful. The Prime Minister is incapable of a vision of Europe because she is haunted, in the words of the Communist manifesto of 140 years ago, by the spectre that she thinks haunts Europe. She is living in the past with her political fears, as she is living in the past with her economic policies.

A recent semi-royal tour of an understandably confused Europe confirmed our worst fears. There is no vision of a Europe where all corners of the continent can

say that Europe means we can help our unemployed and under-privileged people. There is no vision which says that Europe stands for investment in the inner cities and the poverty-stricken regions. The only real vision that the Prime Minister has, like that of the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), is of a deregulated Europe thrown open to the powers of the multinational companies which can make a quick buck.

That is why I maintain that regional policy means more than just money and funds. It is an expression of political will that is now coming from Europe—the will to take compensatory measures so that Scotland, Northern Ireland, the north of England, Wales and the inner cities are not bypassed by the pro-Market orientation of 1992.

That sort of vision takes courage. The Prime Minister revels in her reputation as a courageous politician. She need not fear that a concession in that direction would be jeered or sneered at by Opposition Members. I understand the fears that an admission that we want a Community that will allow us a decent share of regional assistance and compensation for the regions might be seen as an admission that Britain is not doing well, but it is already patently obvious in my part of the country, as it is in many regions of a wealthy Europe, that Britain is not doing well.

Resistance to European assistance in the solution will not disguise the problem, nor will it avoid it; it will only prolong it. That would be bad for the regions, the Government and, ultimately, the future of the European Community. In the long run, the Government will be judged on their actions and on the Prime Minister's statements and attitude towards Europe. Their actions will be judged by the House and by history as a political tragedy of the first order.

7.57 pm

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): I hope that, before the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) makes another speech on this subject, he will do a little arithmetic and add up the hundreds of millions of pounds for which the Government have been responsible in enabling the regions to benefit from such sums of money.

When the hon. Member for Motherwell, North admonishes us for not facing reality, I suggest that he studies the speech of his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who warned us that we were moving towards a unitary state and that it would not be a federal union. The essence of a unitary state is, as I am sure the hon. Member for Motherwell, North will agree, that a legislative body makes laws that apply immediately throughout that state. That is exactly what the Council of Ministers is now doing.

That is also the case in a federal union, but the difference is that, in a federal union, there is a constitution which lays down a clear dividing line between the legislative powers of the federal assembly and those of the state assembly. That is now lacking in the European Community. That is why the hon. Member for Newham, South is right when he says that European union will evolve into a unitary state unless we do something about it rapidly.

I am against the Bill because I think that it will cause us to miss an opportunity, and this we shall come to regret. The Bill is about giving a great deal more money to the European Community for the purpose of promoting further common policies. I have often said in debates of this sort that I am all in favour of common policies for the various parts of Europe, but my Europe consists of 38 countries, not 12. The lesson of Chernobyl, acid rain and many other environmental casualties of the century is that we must work together. As the hon. Member for Newham, South would say, we must work internationally, not supranationally. It will be necessary to spend a great deal of money to save certain parts of Europe.

My constituency borders the North sea, which is highly polluted. Hundreds of millions of pounds will be needed to cleanse the North sea to make it fit for fishing and many other purposes. Other countries border the North sea but are outside the European Community. It is impractical to think that the Community, as it is now constituted, will be capable of formulating a common policy for that purpose. Why should it? Why should countries such as Greece and Spain contribute a penny towards solving the North sea problem?

I am glad that the European Community has been making some noises about the destruction of the Alps. We must understand, however, that the Alps cross the frontiers of seven countries, only three of which are members of the European Community. Those of us who have taken an interest in the matter have seen the Alps deteriorate over the past 20 years. We realise that they are heading towards a major environmental crisis, but we cannot expect the European Community to embark upon a scheme to save them.

Europe, be it 12, 38 or whatever number of states, is not some homogeneous entity. It is enormously diverse in its interests and we need an institutional mechanism that will enable the circles of interest to be identified. The countries that come within the various circles must co-operate internationally to overcome the problems that they share. It will be futile and disastrous for the future of Europe if we assert that Europe is so homogeneous that we can impose common policies even when interests do not converge. I have in mind the new common policies that have been envisaged in our debates and those that we have read about that are being discussed in Brussels, Strasbourg and elsewhere. Common policies will lead only to friction and disenchantment, the very things which the Community is against.

We must realise sooner or later that there is a great diversity of interest. Equally, there are numerous convergences of interest. We need an institutional mechanism—I should like it to be the European Community—that can help to co-ordinate common policies. At the same time, it should act internationally with a view to ensuring that the countries that are in the different circles of interest raise the necessary revenue and enable the common policies to be implemented successfully.

I believe that sooner or later we shall have such a European Community, but the Bill does nothing to advance that ideal. It is an ideal that I believe I share with the hon. Member for Newham, South. Indeed, it is one that is shared by most of us in this place. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) will insist that we are little Englanders, but those who believe that Europe consists of only 12 countries—I do not wish to be harsh—are in danger of becoming little Europeans.

Europe consists of many more states than 12, and must do many things together to ensure that our continent is

[Sir Richard Body]

habitable and safe for the next century. The Bill will do nothing towards that end, and that is why I regret that it has reached this stage.

8.5 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I declare a financial interest. I am a Member of the Common Market Assembly. Anyone who reads the "Members' Register of Interests" will learn that my parliamentary salary is divided between the Labour movements in Sheffield and Bradford. I mention that because when I last spoke of these matters the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), who subsequently took the Queen's shilling, as they say, to count Members through the Government Lobby—it is not the most exacting task in Parliament, but the hon. Gentleman decided to take it on instead of remaining on the Back Benches and contributing to our debates from that position—suggested that I was spending a good deal of time junketing. That is not correct.

Junketing takes place in the Common Market, but I do not participate in it. I am not a member of any of the numerous delegations that travel round the world complete with interpreters, interpretation boxes, wissiers and the lot at enormous expense. I condemn it and I do not participate in it. Similarly, I do not participate in the political party groupings that cost £200,000, £300,000 or £400,000.

I am a member of the Common Market Assembly, but that does not mean that I shall stop talking about the Common Market. I shall not be stopped by those who say that I am prejudiced. My prejudice has been reinforced by membership of the Common Market Assembly. I believe that the Common Market is a mess and that it is getting messier.

Labour party policy on these matters was established by a two-thirds majority in 1981, which stated that we should withdraw on a political basis. That was clarified subsequently in a document entitled "Campaigning for a Fairer Britain", which maintained the right of withdrawal. That policy still stands. It is true that it is being reviewed, but the review has yet to be presented to conference for a two-thirds majority with a view to changing our policy.

The Bill commits us to expenditure to 1992 without any adequate right of veto by Parliament. Incidentally, it involves retrospective legislation for the convenience of the Common Market. I can remember when a measure was introduced that contained retrospective legislation for the Clay Cross councillors. We wished to give them the right to undertake civic duties and the then Labour Government produced the Housing Finance (Special Provisions) Act. The Tory view was that retrospective legislation was at the top of the slippery slope towards Fascism. They have demonstrated that they have significant double standards. Retrospection was not appropriate for 11 ordinary workers who had had the effrontery to keep down rents for council houses and provide decent standards of repair, but it is all right for the Common Market to lash out billions of pounds on the storage and distribution, or destruction, of food. That is the double standard that the Government are perpetuating in the Bill.

The only success that Delors has enjoyed in the Common Market is the diverting of attention from the Common Market's failures. The intergovernmental agreement—when dealing with it, the Minister did not talk about 1990, 1991 and 1992—will increase expenditure on agriculture, which is compulsory under the treaty of Rome. There are those who say that the social fund increases will provide significant benefits, but that is the non-compulsory section of expenditure. If there are any expenditure adjustments, they are always in favour of agriculture and always against the social fund and other similar areas of expenditure which we on the Opposition Benches would support.

It is claimed that there has been a reduction of food surpluses, but I remind the House of what is being undertaken. Food surpluses will be destroyed. They are currently valued at £7·7 billion. The cost of that destruction, or distribution, will be £2·45 billion, with £630 million spent immediately and an annual expenditure of £980 million for each year until 1991, in order to subsidise the food which is being sold off outside the EEC and which United Kingdom citizens have little chance of obtaining.

The European Court of Auditors, an EEC institution, had this to say about the checking of food stocks in its own press release on its recent audit:

"The report shows that the safeguards for the Community's interests in the value of stocks are in practice inadequate. Only three Member States . . . make any serious attempt at full annual stocktaking and only for certain products. The Court's inspection visits produced some alarming results."

The press release concludes:

"In these circumstances the Court concludes that it is technically impossible to arrive at any audit opinion whatever on the view presented by the EAGGF budget accounts of public storage expenditure."

Money from this Bill will be spent on disposing of stocks that the EEC says are not being accounted for and about which no account can be given to the EEC. The House is being asked to hand over hundreds of millions of pounds to an organisation that cannot and does not, according to its own audit body, check the amount of food that it has in stock.

Use will also be made of that money to create a united states of Europe. I have with me the *Strasbourg Notebook* for Wednesday 26 October—the midday edition. It states:

"The Single Act and European Union. European Democratic Group Leader Christopher Prout (Shropshire and Stafford), speaking for his British colleagues, underlined his commitment to a strong and united Europe which, he said, had never been as important as now."

Sir Ian Lloyd: Hear, hear.

Mr. Cryer: I hear that there is some support for that view from the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd). The Prime Minister will be going through the green Government Benches as well as weeding out some of the federalists inside the Common Market. She has quite a task ahead of her.

I take it that, when Christopher Prout refers to Europe, he does so with the usual arrogance of those who talk about the Common Market, and who ignore 22 or 23 European states and assume that only 12 have the right to the title of "Europe". What outrageous effrontery that is to the rest of the continent.

Mr. Alex Carlile: What misrepresentation that is.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. and learned Member says that I am guilty of a misrepresentation. Europe is a continent, not a collection of 12 states with a trading relationship.

The other document that I wish to bring to the attention of the House is the Graziani report, which is being presented to the European Parliament this week and will be voted for overwhelmingly.

Mr. Dykes: He must be an Italian.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) comments that Mr. Graziani is Italian. Earlier, the hon. Member said something that was completely untrue, in a false attempt to present critics of the Common Market as being little Englanders and against foreigners. The hon. Gentleman said that the debate had been peppered with criticisms of foreigners. That is not true. Neither Front Bench has referred to foreigners in derogatory terms; they have not even used the word "foreigners". In his blind obsession with the Common Market, the hon. Member for Harrow, East attempts to put words into right hon. and hon. Members' mouths. He can read the report of our debate to find out that that is so.

The Graziani report, which is being debated this week, and which will be passed overwhelmingly, notes that,

"even if the full potential of the Single Act is exploited to the maximum, it falls short of the Community's requirements, particularly as regards:

—the competences of the Community, which is still deprived of adequate means of action in the areas of the common foreign policy, security, a common currency with a central bank, energy, development aid, cultural cooperation, education and European citizenship, -

—efficient decision-making where the Commission does still not enjoy appropriate executive power and the Council still remains subject to the unanimity rule in areas that are vital to the Community,

—democracy, since the competences which are being transferred to the Community by the national Parliaments are not subject to adequate powers on the part of the European Parliament."

The report concludes, in paragraph 20:

"Believes that Parliament will have to prepare a new draft proposal for European Union before the 1992 deadline and that it will be for the Parliament elected in 1989 to accomplish this task."

The House should be under no illusion that some of the money will be used for the development of European union, whereas sovereign states meeting together do so far more effectively than if they are compulsorily harmonised on every issue. *[Interruption.]* I am trying to finish, and I may point out to the Whips, who seem to be twirling their fingers round their wristwatch dials, that I keep being interrupted by the Euro-fanatics, who try to misrepresent the position taken by people such as myself who criticise the Common Market.

The Bill will throw good money after bad, and I shall vote against it. I shall be voting not just for the amendment but against the Bill itself.

Mr. Alex Carlile: How surprising of the hon. Gentleman!

Mr. Cryer: The hon. and learned Member may like to bear in mind that in Bradford the Tories are putting 9,000 people on the dole because they do not have enough money—that is what they claim.

I say that there are higher priorities on which to spend the £7·4 billion that the Government have spent on the Common Market since 1984, in providing decent social services, a decent livelihood for pensioners and single parent families, adequate housing, and other adequate facilities in Bradford and the rest of the country. If the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery, who has paid lickspittle subservience to the Common Market, listened more carefully, he would realise that people in all parts of the country are suffering under the Tory Government, whose supporters will be going into the Lobby tonight to vote for this Bill.

Mr. Carlile: Will the hon. Member for Bradford, South accept from me, as the Member representing a large rural constituency, that the workers there, who include members of trade unions—which I thought the hon. Member supported—have benefited enormously from our membership of the European Community? We would not have a farming industry left in Mid Wales, in the hills, were it not for the Community.

Mr. Cryer: If one is to define the benefits, the hon. and learned Member must explain how it is that we have a trade deficit of £10 billion and why we have paid £7·4 billion into the Common Market since 1984. He will have to explain also why we are pouring out money under this legislation that could go instead to benefit rural communities and industrial manufacturing in this country.

Those who support the Common Market have yet to produce a shred of evidence to back their arguments. It is a terrible organisation. It has lost us millions of jobs, and I shall vote against it tonight.

8.18 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): This debate has apparently been divided between Europhobes and Europhiles, but my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) pointed out, in my view quite rightly, that the term "Europe" is too liberally or freely applied to matters that are more strictly concerned with the Community rather than being genuinely European.

This week the House has had plenty of opportunity to address the issues that are the subject of the Bill, and I for one do not seek to detain the House by reiterating some of the arguments adduced from the Dispatch Box earlier. Instead, I shall focus on two or three points.

One must ask what is the nature of the Government's policy in relation to the Bruges speech. Frankly, the Prime Minister's position, at least in one respect, is consistent and logical. She can ideologically support the case for the creation of a genuine free trade area inside the European Community. This is what the single market proposals are all about. My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) pointed out that she may have more difficulty with the declaration of the intention of member countries to proceed with political co-operation with a view to economic union. But in the other respect the Prime Minister may be able to claim that she is being consistent —she believes in a level playing field for the competitive process here at home and abroad.

What does that mean? It is consistent with the Prime Minister's attitude towards intervention, where she believes that the role of the state should be negative—to prevent frictions to the market mechanism by Government policies. In the Community, she believes in negative integration. She believes in breaking down what is already there rather than positive co-operation to build up what is not there. These are the reasons why she has no readiness to co-operate with other Governments on industrial, regional and social policies.

However, there is a contradiction. If 1992 is only about levelling the playing field, big firms will win over the small

[Mr. Stuart Holland]

and medium firms that the Government and the Prime Minister seek to defend. Certainly strong regions will dominate weaker regions, the rich will get richer and the poor will get poorer. It may be a common market, but it certainly will not be a community.

These are the differences between the approach of the Government and the Prime Minister and our approach, because we want to put community into the common market. We want to see joint social, industrial and regional policies adopted in the Community, not on the federalist basis, not as a denial of nation states or national Governments, but as the extension of joint co-operative policies whereby Governments can do together what they cannot best do for themselves and can do by themselves what they can best do alone.

These are the differences between the Government and the Opposition on the Community and what it should do until 1992. The Government are negative in their philosophy on the internal market. They favour a breaking down of what impedes trade rather than being positive about intergovernmental joint action to recover spending and trade. The Government are negative towards the social market proposals not only made by Jacques Delors but backed by other Governments in the Community. They alone in the Community believe that one can strengthen competitiveness by weakening labour and its institutions, and that one can gain by confronting rather than working with the trades unions.

Sir Ian Lloyd: This is most important. The hon. Gentleman has said that a future Labour Government would favour co-operation on this basis and that they would favour co-operation based entirely on supervision by national Governments and national Parliaments. Is he aware—I am sure he must be—of the research document produced by the European Parliament analysing the position of some 60 of the 76 political parties in Europe? It is clear that those 60 parties collectively are insisting that the democratic deficits in Europe can be solved only by adding to the powers of the European Parliament. Does the Labour party agree with that?

Mr. Holland: I do not need lectures from the hon. Gentleman on what parties in Europe are doing on this matter. We are in constant dialogue and I have represented my party in that dialogue with, for example, the Confederation of Socialist Parties of the European Community, which is by far the largest single federation. That grouping of parties outweighs the sister parties of the Tories and causes some embarrassment to the Liberals, who do not know whether they are sitting left, right or centre when they join Liberals abroad.

We need to ensure that there is effective accountability over what the Community does, but that does not mean that the European Assembly should be a Parliament with powers above national Parliaments. Many members of the European Parliament may want that, but it does not mean that they should have it. Nor does it mean that there is no role for the European Assembly in assessing what the Community is doing, nor even proposing what the Community should do.

But such proposals, which at the moment can be made only on a limited basis to the Council of Ministers, and its power to amend Community legislation, do not of themselves mean a supranational assembly over national Governments. That is one of the reasons why we need more co-operation between what the Assembly of the Community is doing and what national Governments are doing. It is one of the reasons why we tabled our amendment on Monday, which suggested that the House should have the power of scrutiny, and our amendments this evening and in the debate on 11 July proposing that there should be more co-operation on that basis.

The Government are negative in their attitude towards the social market and industrial and regional policies. They do not want joint ventures with other Governments in Europe. Nor do they have a positive policy of industrial co-operation between British and other companies. They leave that entirely to the market, despite the fact that the Japanese, for example, are making joint ventures with everybody under their rising sun. The Government refuse Community offers for a framework of joint ventures within Europe, as they did the proposal made last year for a networking of regional enterprise agencies and local and regional governments in the Community.

The Prime Minister probably likes the Gaullist comparison made by commentators and cartoonists following her Bruges speech, but her policies are not Gaullist and nor is she Charles de Gaulle. Charles de Gaulle was against federalism, but he was strongly in favour of international joint action by Community Governments. I give two illustrations of that. First, in 1967, the Gaullist Government proposed joint ventures between European companies to strengthen Europe's industrial base. That was a positive policy made on the supply side of the European Community that is not matched by anything coming from the Government.

Secondly, on the demand management side, de Gaulle supported the medium-term economic policy committee of the Community, which was chaired by Robert Marjolin, then the vice-president of the Commission, a former head of the OEEC, and a former deputy head of the French plan. They gave their active support to this policy so that Europe could project its mutual spending and trade and have some coherence in its economic policy. The Government are doing nothing of that kind. They are not proposing that Governments at the European level should take joint action on spending and trade, despite the severe risks that could be faced following the forthcoming election in the United States of a slowdown in the world economy if the United States budget deficit is cut and United States imports are cut.

Further, on international policy, de Gaulle wanted and worked for real European co-operation from the Atlantic to the Urals, not half-hearted, small-minded co-operation on harmonising a free trade area while retaining one foot in Europe and the other in Washington. He was opposed to such a stance, castigating it as the Trojan horse approach to Europe. In that respect, again, the Prime Minister is not Gaullist. De Gaulle had a vision of Europe, but the Prime Minister has not. He had international stature of a kind that, precisely because she has no vision for Europe, the Prime Minister has not.

It is this failure to work within a non-federal framework for European co-operation that has meant that the real political leadership in Europe has passed from the Prime Minister. It is not Charles de Gaulle but another Frenchman who has proved more prescient about the leadership of the British nation, 150 years after his death. The Prime Minister is the daughter of a shopkeeper, with

the attitudes of a shopkeeper, anxious to project a nation of shopkeepers in her own image. It is a stunted image for a stunted European policy. It does no credit to the Government, nor to this House, nor to the British people.

8.30 pm

Mr. Brooke: As I remarked earlier in the debates on this Bill, I am approaching my third anniversary as the relevant Minister. I am approaching my 17th Budget Council, and it is my experience that the Budget Council shares with these debates the fact that they are conducted by a small number of people with whom one becomes very friendly and familiar.

The right hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) is a newcomer to our debates, so I hope that I am not committing a Euro-offence in describing my familiarity with the dramatis personae in both places. I welcome him and, in the characteristic and familiar words that one uses about maiden speeches, we look forward to his future contributions. However, in his description of the flexibility of the Labour vision, he was rejecting the view that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. The description that he gave of a speech which could be used in by-elections up and down the country seemed to be in line with standard Liberal practice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) intervened in my earlier speech, and I said that I would come back if I had anything further to add on agriculture. The crucial point is that, according to the legally binding decision on budget discipline, the agricultural guideline limit must be respected. On the one hand, that decision requires the Commission to make its price proposals consistent with the guideline. On the other hand, the Commission must monitor spending to ensure that it is kept within the guideline and must use the stabilisers about which my hon. Friend asked me, where necessary, to achieve that aim. Although the operation of stabilisers is independent of the Commission's proposals for changes in prices or in the agri-monetary system in the annual price fixing, the overall aim of keeping spending within the guideline is assured by the budget discipline decision, which was agreed by the February European Council.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: My right hon. Friend has been most kind and courteous, but my question did not concern the most helpful information that he has just given. I was simply asking whether the automatic stabiliser could be overcome by an increase in price at the same time as an alteration of the green pound, as happened this year. Is there not a danger that, like all wonderful Euro-plans and dreams, it will, in fact, be undermined and there will be no lawful method of stopping it in any way?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend's advice to us is so consistent that I am quite certain that we shall mount vigilance against the line that he has suggested. I was seeking to suggest that the stabilisers cannot be used in that way because that would take us outside the overall policy.

The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) went on a bit. I apologise for the fact that, in seeking to abbreviate my speech, I omitted three or four words from the Prime Minister's speech. I acknowledge that those words were uttered. I am delighted that he has produced the equivalent of a manuscript amendment, because it unquestionably strengthens the thought that underlies the Prime Minister's observation.

I appreciate that the hon. Member for Hamilton is the spokesman for foreign affairs on the Labour Front Bench, but he has never really understood the technicalities of this legislation. The negative reserve is something that he never mastered. I am glad to say that we have corralled and curtailed it. Tonight, he went on and on about £738 million. I say encouragingly to him, because it demonstrated a certain distance from the detail, that the figure is in fact £620 million, as there is, of course, a substantial amount that was earmarked for the monetary reserve.

To be fair, the hon. Gentleman did acknowledge that, because our net receipts would be going up by £300 million, a lot of that money will be coming back to us. However, where he took off was in introducing £200 million as the amount that we were likely to get back from the structural funds annually in the future. If I may say so, his hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) was simultaneously quoting an article in *The Guardian* which said that the British Government would have to find £6 billion over the next four years in extra expenditure in exactly the same areas of endeavour.

The difference between the £200 million of the hon. Member for Hamilton and the £6 billion of the hon. Member for Motherwell, North is considerable. It is true that they are different sums and the distance between them shows an error in both directions. The hon. Member for Hamilton always strays a little from the detail, and he suggested that 80 per cent. of the structural funds had to go into objective 1 regions. However, it was in fact 80 per cent. of the regional funds which had to go into objective 1 regions. If he had read the speech of his hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) and her exchange with me on Second Reading, he would have seen that there is a substantial emphasis in the Social Fund on youth training and the long-term unemployed in both areas, for which the United Kingdom will continue to receive substantial resources.

The hon. Member for Hamilton also raised the question of structural funds receipts. It is not true that such receipts simply finance projects that would have taken place anyway. Ministers take account of their respective level of receipts when reaching their expenditure decisions each year. The receipts enable spending programmes to be set at a higher level than otherwise would be possible.

The hon. Member for Hamilton then quoted from a clause in the preamble to the Single European Act and talked about the Stuttgart declaration on European union. We discussed this on Monday, when I made it clear that neither the Single European Act nor the treaty of Rome imposes an obligation upon the Community to introduce European monetary union. Under article 102A of the treaty, any institutional changes in economic and monetary policy require the calling of an intergovernmental conference, the unanimous agreement of all member states and approval by national Parliaments. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) congratulated the Government on the Bill and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on her Bruges speech. He introduced—possibly unconsciously—a transfer from reds under the bed to feds under the bed.

[Mr. Brooke]

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is an old friend in these debates. I do not share all his views, but I was wounded by the scathing comment by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery about the hon. Gentleman's contribution to the debate. The hon. Gentleman's chairmanship of the Scrutiny Committee means that he must make very informed speeches in these debates. I think we are all grateful to him for the quotation from Mr. Delors's speech on 6 July, which otherwise has some danger of passing into legend, as have other remarks like "Tory vermin" and "Exporting is fun", none of which was actually uttered by the people to whom they were attributed.

The hon. Member for Newham, South asked about the balance of trade. Whether or not our balance of trade in manufacturing will worsen depends on how British industry reponds. There is no predetermined conclusion on that. The year 1992 represents both an opportunity and a challenge, and the Government's approach is that industry and services should be aware of that oportunity and challenge so that they can approach 1992 with readiness and confidence. The experience of improving competition and sweeping away red tape in the United Kingdom has been immensely beneficial and we trust that opening up the internal market throughout Europe will have a similar beneficial effect.

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. Brooke: I was asked to be brisk.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who was shut out of the debate on Monday by the informal deadline, gave an immensely worthwhile exposure of the Opposition's position. The hon. Member for Hamilton asked my hon. Friend why he was dwelling on it, but it was simply because that was the main arena in which the hon. Member for Hamilton had deployed himself.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh)—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Spearing: Will the right hon Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brooke: I will not give way, because I understand that there is a general pressure that we should bring these matters to a conclusion.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you indicate to the House the time at which this debate must finish unless the Government move a motion to suspend the rule?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The right hon. Gentleman is correct in what he says.

Mr. Brooke: Provided I am not going to be rebuked by the Opposition Whip. I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his courtesy. He was very courteous to me a moment ago. I am wondering whether, in using the scrutiny function of questions in speeches to which he referred, he could answer two questions. The right hon. Gentleman referred to the Stuttgart declaration, signed by this Government, as being in favour of and being committed to European Union—with a capital "E" and a capital "U". Will he confirm that there is a Government commitment to that, whatever it may be?

Secondly, in his kindly reference to my quotation from Mr. Delors, will he acknowledge that at the moment more than 80 per cent. of law that is applicable to the people and citizens of the United Kingdom in the courts of this country originated in Brussels 10 years before Mr. Delors's forecast?

Mr. Brooke: Of course I give the acknowledgement in connection with the declaration. As I said on Monday, there has been a series of political declarations about political union by both parties over the years. The hon. Gentleman's calculation about the balance between European and British legislation seems to me to be determined by the amount of paper on which the legislation is written, and I am not quite sure that that is the way in which one should establish the balance.

Mr. Spearing: How else?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Member for Motherwell, North again mentioned the treatment of grants from the structural funds. As I implied in terms of my reference to *The Guardian*, he should not believe everything that he reads in the newspapers. He suggested that, until now, we have not paid our share of the cost of structural projects financed by Community aid. That is not so. Projects simply cannot go ahead unless member states provide their share of the money. I shall not do an analysis of the £6 billion that he mentioned. For the reason that the hon. Member for Hamilton gave, it seems an exaggerated figure.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body), who is a veteran of these debates, emphasised the continuity of the dialogue. The title of his constituency serves as a bridge between continental Europe and the United States.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer)—I hope I am not doing him a disservice by saying that one of my great disappointments of this year was not to play cricket under his captaincy—like all great slow left-arm Yorkshire bowlers, bowls with a nagging length. In these debates he bowls with a nagging length only if provoked. I found him admirably brief and pertinent. Despite his disclaimer about his membership of what he described as "the assembly", the House gains from the dual mandate that he represents.

I have to protest about what the hon. Gentleman said late on Monday night about Euro-fanatics among Treasury officials. Treasury officials give very objective advice to Ministers. He referred to the Court of Auditors' report on public storage. I share his concern about financial irregularities and fraud against the Community budget. The Government of the United Kingdom have been at the forefront of attempts in the Council, and elsewhere, to tackle the problem of fraud and to improve financial management. Recently I had useful discussions in London with the head of the Commission's new anti-fraud unit.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) drew on the Prime Minister's Bruges speech, which provided the pabulum for many Opposition Members' speeches. He referred to the structural funds. In view of what has been done in regard to the structural funds, I am bound to say that there is no pleasing some people. He said that the

Prime Minister is not de Gaulle, which is self-evident, just as those who have made the pilgrimage to Colombey-les-deux-Églises know that there is only one church there.

The British people warmly approve of the Prime Minister's stand and position on Europe. She may be the daughter of a shopkeeper, but she is also the daughter of an alderman—that most Saxon of governing titles—and she speaks for the spirit of England. The office of Paymaster General goes back to being Treasurer of the Navy under Henry VIII, but its climax came when Lord North conducted an investigation in the 1780s which showed that, rather like the fraud investigation of the hon. Member for Bradford, South, there was £500,000 missing in 1780s sterling. The following year, the great Burke—appointed Mr. Clean—took through an Act which said that the penalty for forging the Paymaster General's signature should be death without benefit of clergy.

I am delighted, in my present role, to have responsibility for saving and constraint in the European budget. The negotiations that have given rise to the Bill were a remarkable negotiating achievement by my right hon. Friends, and they were conducted in the interests of Europe as a whole. I am merely a journeyman in the task of helping to put this historic legislation on the statute book, and I have no hesitation in commending the Third Reading of the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 79, Noes 252.

Division No. 498] **[8.44 pm**

AYES

Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cryer, Bob
Darling, Alistair
Dixon, Don
Eadie, Alexander
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Haynes, Frank
Holland, Stuart
Hood, Jimmy
Hoyle, Doug
Ilsley, Eric
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lamond, James
Leslor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Turner, Dennis
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Alan Michael.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boner, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'x)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hat'd)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fallon, Michael
Fanner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael

McCrindle, Robert
Maclarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Maline, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. David Maclean.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 247, Noes 34.

Division No. 466] **[8.57 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
Maclarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Maline, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter

Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

NOES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Janman, Tim
Lamond, James
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marlow, Tony
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Housing (Northern Ireland)

9.8 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): I beg to move,

That the draft Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 13th July 1988, be approved.

The main purpose of the order is to introduce provisions for homeless people in Northern Ireland which correspond to those that apply in England and Wales. Great Britain has had legislation dealing with homelessness which was first introduced during the life of the previous Government in 1977 with all-party support. The order also contains some important amendments to the present right-to-buy legislation and extends the Housing Executive's powers to control houses in multiple occupation. It also introduces a series of technical measures.

During the consultation period, I received a wide range of submissions. Most of the representations dealt with homelessness. I also met a number of voluntary groups to discuss the homeless. These groups generally welcomed the order, but felt that we should have broadened the proposed legislation. I considered their views carefully, but in the end I decided that what was appropriate for the rest of the United Kingdom was also right for Northern Ireland.

Homelessness is, of course, a serious problem, but despite reports that have recently been published, the problem is not as widespread or as intractable in Northern Ireland as in many other parts of the United Kingdom. Hon. Members will no doubt be aware of a recent report on homelessness published by Shelter and the Simon Community, which claims that between 6,000 and as many as 8,320 households are homeless each year in Northern Ireland. Those figures have little or no basis in fact.

Some indication of the real extent of the problem can be gained from the number of people awarded emergency status under the Housing Executive's selection scheme. During 1987, some 2,200 were awarded emergency status, and about 75 per cent. of those received an offer of rehousing within three months. In addition—this is the important point—the area health and social services boards provided temporary accommodation for 316 families and 271 single people during 1986. At 31 December 1987, 26 homeless families and 75 homeless single people were living in temporary accommodation arranged by the boards. Those are the figures which I intend to keep a close eye on.

I am sure that the House will be interested to know that, in the whole of Northern Ireland there are no more families living in temporary accommodation than there are in the New Forest, and that there are fewer such families than in Bristol, Ipswich, Reading or Lewisham. It is important not to exaggerate the problem in Northern Ireland, although that is not to belittle the impact of homelessness on those affected.

The area boards have used their discretionary powers under the Health and Personal Social Services Order 1972 to provide temporary accommodation for vulnerable homeless people. However, the division of responsibilities between the boards, which look after the temporarily homeless, and the executive, which has control over

[Mr. Richard Needham]

permanent housing, is no longer ideal, as some people fall between two stools. The order will enable assistance to be provided in a more planned and co-ordinated way.

The order also sets out the vulnerable groups that will have a right to immediate accommodation. Six categories are listed in article 5. The first four are the same as those listed in the Housing Act 1985, but I have added two more: first, people subjected to violence; and secondly, young people at risk of sexual or financial exploitation. I believe that those two additional classes will be welcomed by all.

The main debate that has taken place in the Province prior to the introduction of this order is whether the Government should have done more to help single homeless people. It would be impossible to cater for all those who, having had a row with their parents or a row with one another, suddenly decided on a whim to leave home and fall back on the Housing Executive for accommodation. Not only would it be impossible to deal with them all; it would be quite wrong, as such people would automatically jump the list above those who may well have waited many months in housing that was not particularly appropriate. A young married couple living with their parents would hardly be happy to find themselves pipped at the post by someone who had committed what they could well see as an act of irresponsibility or fecklessness. To write into law such a duty for single people would in my judgment be as irresponsible as it would be impossible to fulfil and would create considerable community antagonism.

The Housing Executive will continue to do all that it can to provide for the single homeless. At present, about one third of all lettings by the executive go to single people. The lettings are not made in an ill-planned and inappropriate way. I am well aware of the need to avoid ghettos of either single people from troubled backgrounds or single-parent families and it is very important to get as much of a social mix as possible. I am convinced that the Housing Executive will consider the points thoroughly in defining its future policy on single homeless people.

It is worth adding that single homeless people can also continue to be housed in the private sector and by housing associations, which have been a great support to them and have provided accommodation for more than 750 single people in the past five years. I see that as a continuing partnership.

The second concern was intentionality. Worry was expressed to me that the Housing Executive might try to avoid its responsibilities to homeless people by insisting on very tight intentionality provisions. I believe that those fears are unfounded.

The purpose of article 6 is to ensure that people do not deliberately make themselves homeless in order to jump the queue ahead of others who have been waiting patiently on the housing list, and the same principle must apply to them as it does to single people who may demand rehousing without reasonable cause. I think everyone will agree that the executive has a good record under its existing housing selection scheme in making similar decisions to the intentionality rules under the present guidelines, which deny housing to people who have deliberately worsened their circumstances. I have no reason to believe that it will not adopt a similar and sensible approach on intentionality, but I accept that this is something that we shall need to keep under review.

There were also some suggestions that it would be right to have an independent appeal system included in the order. When the Housing (Homeless Persons) Bill was debated in the House in 1977, both sides accepted that it would be illogical to include such a right of appeal when no such right existed against many other types of housing management decisions taken by local housing authorities every day. The Housing Executive operates an internal complaints procedure which deals with cases where people are not satisfied with its decisions or actions, and I am pleased that the executive has agreed to review its procedures to make sure that they are appropriate once its new homelessness responsibilities take effect.

Clearly the change in responsibility from area boards to the executive will require funds to be transferred to the housing authority. We have not yet finalised the amount, but it will be those sums which the boards are currently spending. The Housing Executive has made it clear to me that in addition it will require further funds to enable it to carry out these new duties fully. I will look closely at this bid by the executive in the context of the current public expenditure review.

The most important point to stress about the homelessness part of the order is that its effectiveness will depend on the way that the Housing Executive operates it. I am reassured—I hope that hon. Members will be—by the quality of those who serve on the Housing Executive as officers and board members. I am sure that the incoming chairman, Mr. McEvoy, ably assisted by all his board, who have wide experience of the problems of social deprivation, homelessness and morbidity, will ensure that the executive deals fairly and sensitively with applicants.

Success will depend on the executive maintaining close relationships with the area boards and the voluntary agencies. For example, I will wish to see the boards keep closely in touch with the problems that are associated with the health and social care of homeless families. I have asked the Housing Executive, in conjunction with these other agencies, to draw up a detailed code of practice and guidance which can set out the role of each in the operation of the new order. This code will be freely available so that everyone will know what the precise responsibilities of each statutory body are, and I will ensure that the code is made available to hon. Members.

To make certain that we have the code of practice and guidance right, I am arranging for a seminar to be held at the end of November, where all those involved in homelessness will be asked to participate. Using the draft code of practice and guidance, the seminar will discuss how each group or agency, both public and voluntary, can play its part under the umbrella of the legislation to provide the best possible service to those who are homeless. I hope that these initiatives will do much to dispel the doubts in the minds of some of the voluntary bodies and, more important, help to develop good working relationships and practices between everyone involved.

I turn briefly to the other provisions which, first, deal with right-to-buy amendments and increase the scale of discounts on the purchase of executive flats to a maximum of 70 per cent. The order reduces the period during which there is a liability to repay the discount from five to three

years. In addition, we are extending from two to three years the period during which a right-to-buy purchase can be deferred.

There is a continuing interest by the people of Northern Ireland in buying their homes, I am glad to say. Last year, over 2,800 executive tenants took this step, and this makes a total of over 36,000 houses sold to date. I am confident that these amendments, which have already been incorporated in the executive's voluntary sales scheme, will keep that interest going.

I am also introducing an amendment to the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 which gives the executive powers to enforce notices that it has served requiring execution of repair works in houses of multiple occupation. This will close a gap in its existing powers and should help the executive to develop its programme to improve conditions for those people currently in houses of multiple occupation where conditions are often far from perfect.

I shall do all that I can to answer hon. Members in my summing up. I should like to reiterate the point that we are building on a piece of legislation brought forward in the House by both sides and with the support of the last Labour Government which I believe treads carefully between what is impracticable and what is necessary. I commend the order to the House.

9.20 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): Those of us who participate in these debates on Northern Ireland usually are a small proportion of the House. We soon realise if one familiar face is no longer here. It is with sadness that I notice that Sir John Biggs-Davison is not in his place. He always participated in our debates and always had some thoughtful and often pungent comments to make. I rarely agreed with anything he said, but it was always a pleasure to see him participate in Northern Ireland business. I am sure that he will be sorely missed, not only by the people of Northern Ireland but by the House.

Ministers, especially Irish Ministers, always begin a good excuse by saying that they are copying a piece of legislation that has been operative in Great Britain for a number of years and therefore see no good reason why it should not automatically apply in the North of Ireland. The Under-Secretary of State adopted that technique. Despite the praise that he has heaped on the homeless legislation which has operated in Great Britain over the past few years, there is increasing evidence that that legislation is insufficient to deal with the problems.

I hoped that the Northern Ireland Office would take the opportunity to introduce legislation building upon existing legislation and taking into account many of the deficiencies which have been found over the past few years. Alas, that option has not been taken. Again, a Minister has said that what is good for Great Britain is good for the North of Ireland. I regret that the Minister did not take the opportunity to bring forward better legislation to deal with the homeless in Northern Ireland.

The Minister knows that we welcome the draft order because, for the first time, it imposes a statutory duty on the Housing Executive to deal with at least part of the homelessness problem. As the Minister will probably guess, we regret that the new law will offer protection to only a small number of those who find themselves homeless. The order defines those in priority need and specifically excludes single people and childless couples, despite the fact that statistics show that as many 80 per cent. of homeless people are in one of those two categories. The provisions of the draft order, especially article 5, fail to provide recognition for the largest group of homeless people in Northern Ireland.

I deprecate the cavalier way in which the Minister disregards the needs of young single homeless people. To pretend that the majority leave home and seek their own accommodation purely because they have had a tiff with a parent calls into question the Minister's understanding and casts aspersions on those young people which I find it difficult to accept. I hope that in his reply the Minister will offer more serious and thoughtful reasons for excluding single people from the scope of the draft order. To categorise all the young people now homeless as being in that position due to some whim or fancy reflects great discredit on the Minister and casts an aspersion on those young people which is both unnecessary and unwarranted.

The Labour party's view is that all homeless people are in priority need and should be recognised as such, and we regret that the Government have failed to extend article 5 to include single homeless people.

I recognise that the Housing Executive discharges responsibilities towards single people and I accept the Minister's figure that one third of Housing Executive lettings in 1987-88 were to single young people. If the information in his letter to me is correct, the total number of dwellings is 3,700. That is commendable, but if we are to solve the problem of single homeless people it is not sufficient to rest on the laurels of the past. We must ensure that more suitable accommodation is provided in the future. I urge the Minister to convey to the Housing Executive the need to make more small unit accommodation available for single homeless people.

The problems of homelessness cannot be treated in isolation. They are inextricably intertwined with housing policy. It is fairly obvious that if insufficient homes are coming forward the problem of homelessness will increase. In this context, I am concerned about the financial situation which the Housing Executive claims may face it in the coming years. I understand that in its latest annual report—I have not read the report, so I depend on press statements—the Housing Executive estimates that in the next two years there will be a shortfall of £38·5 million between the funding that the Government are prepared to provide and the amount needed by the Housing Executive to fund its work.

I understand that the Housing Executive also claims that, if the present situation continues, the shortfall may be £100 million by the end of the century. According to the chairman of the Housing Executive, the result could be "a drastic reduction in public sector housebuilding, full improvement schemes and renovation grants".
In my view, that would be disastrous for the Province and a disaster for the homeless. The Government must ensure that the Housing Executive programme is fully funded.

In the context of finance, I express today in the House a concern which I expressed in a letter to the Minister making representations on the draft order. I am concerned about the adequacy of the funds to be made available to the Housing Executive to administer the homelessness legislation. I accept that the Government have given a commitment that the resources that are now available through the Department of Health and Social Services and the area health and social services boards will transfer to

[Mr. Jim Marshall]

the Department of the Environment and the Housing Executive when the legislation comes into force. I also accept the assurance that that transfer of resources will be enough to cover current levels of activity.

However, I and, I am sure, most Opposition Members are concerned that there is no commitment about future expenditure. As the Government conceded in a reply that the Minister sent me, the legislation may result in an increase in the amount of resources needed to deal with homelessness. The Government also said:

"It will be up to the Housing Executive to seek such additional funds as it estimates will be required when submitting annual reviews of its housing strategy."

So the Government accept that there may well be an increase in the financial burden on the Housing Executive as a result of this legislation and that, to cope with it, the Housing Executive should include an estimate in its annual review estimates for the money to meet that increased expenditure. But it is not enough to include an estimate based on previous years' expenditure, only to find that the budget as a whole is reduced in public expenditure cuts which will, if this policy is operated, reduce the amount available to the Housing Executive to deal with the problems of homelessness.

I hope that the Minister will give a commitment on the Government's behalf that the Northern Ireland Office will fund in full any additional expenditure, not only next year but in the years to come. Unless such a commitment is given, the Housing Executive may have to cut other parts of its budget to meet its statutory obligations to the homeless. I hope that the Minister will not allow that to happen and will give an absolute guarantee that the Government will fully fund the exenditure involved in carrying out the Housing Executive's statutory duties.

We welcome the inclusion of articles 15 and 28. The former enables the Housing Executive to help voluntary organisations that are concerned with homelessness. We all agree that these organisations do a good job and should continue to receive support.

As the Minister said, article 28 provides the Housing Executive with powers to enforce notices requiring the carrying out of remedial repairs to properties in multiple occupation. In some cases, these repairs are more than necessary and it is only right and just that the Housing Executive should have these powers.

If a Division is called—I doubt very much whether one will be—the Minister may count on our support in the Lobbies.

9.33 pm

Mr. A. Cecil Walker (Belfast, North): I add my voice to that of the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) in expressing my sadness at the passing of a great dear friend of Northern Ireland, Sir John Biggs-Davison, who was always here to help us and to contribute to debates on the Province. He will be sorely missed.

The House owes you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a sincere apology for asking you to preside over the play-acting farce that is taking place here this evening called the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order. We are being requested to comment on yet another order where we do not have the power to dot an "i" or cross a "t".

Many hon. Members, together with other concerned organisations, totalling 58 bodies in all, including 11 district council and other professional and representative groups, have submitted comments and submissions on the draft. But as for a positive reaction from the Government, they could be whistling in the wind. Therefore, with your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I again register in the strongest possible manner my abhorrence of this dictatorial imposition of Government intention with no opportunity to amend or debate in a meaningful way the contents of the order.

You must also be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in an attempt to justify this thoroughly reprehensible form of government it has been suggested from time to time that such orders could be debated in the Northern Ireland Committee. The House knows that such a system would achieve nothing in real terms and cannot compare with real government as applied to all matters relating to other parts of the United Kingdom.

Nevertheless, although at this stage nothing can be done about the shortcomings of the order, I wish to acquaint the Minister with my reservations about some of the matters that are of concern to those in Northern Ireland who have the interests of this section of the population very much at heart.

It is an irrefutable fact that single people make up the largest percentage of the homeless population. It is stated that the Housing Executive will now be the main agency for housing homeless people, but it has intimated that the section making up the single homeless will have no right to housing unless they fall into a priority group.

The existence of priority groups means that some groups are being seen as having special cause to be given accommodation, leaving others, mainly single people and childless couples, with no accommodation. Only if single people are accepted as vulnerable can they be housed. Experience has shown that vulnerability is a difficult concept to prove. Therefore, clearer guidelines are required to assist in the assessment of physical, mental and other types of vulnerability.

In my constituency there is a high rate of intimidation from outside the home. Many young persons who have not acquiesced to the pressures of paramilitary organisations have had to move out of the family home for their own and their families' safety, and therefore are homeless. Moreover, no allowance appears to be made for people with family problems, for marital breakdowns or where a person is discharged from institutional care.

There is nothing in the legislation that enforces standards to prevent people from being placed in unsuitable substandard accommodation. Some adults and young children in my constituency are living in intolerable conditions in houses with inadequate roofs or ceilings or with rotten floors. Thought must be given to defining those standards, together with providing adequate resources, so that temporary accommodation in particular can be properly planned.

The concept of intentionality, as we call it, is thorny. The decision whether a person has made himself intentionally homeless is wide open to debate. Judgments about intentionality are bound to be subjective and lead to arguments about the deserving and undeserving homeless.

I am also worried that no reference has been made to any independent housing appeals procedure in the legislation. I know that the Minister mentioned that in his

speech. Such a procedure would have avoided lengthy, complex and expensive court procedures as experienced in this part of the mainland.

Another dangerous aspect of the order concerns those people who already have priority under the existing selection scheme where there is no limitation in law on single people or childless couples. It is therefore important that the legislation does not undermine these positive aspects of the Housing Executive's existing selection scheme.

The Minister has stated that the funds required by the Housing Executive to meet additional responsibilities in respect of homeless people will come from a transfer of resources allocated to homelessness elsewhere and that the executive's estimate of its requirements for dealing with homelessness will form part of the annual process of needs assessment and costing in the review of housing strategy.

The Minister should be aware of the magnitude of the task that he has set the executive in dealing with homelessness, and, in view of the swingeing cuts that have been imposed on the executive's budget in recent years, and the pessimistic forecasts for the future, I hope that specific funds will be available to ensure that the executive will not be hamstrung in its administrative responsibilities to this section of the population.

To achieve the standards of service required, concentrated attention will have to be given to providing staff with proper training in respect of homelessness, improving the provision of temporary accommodation for the homeless and increasing general housing provision to meet the needs of the homeless. Legislation is needed, and the measure at least represents an advance on the present situation.

The Minister has said that the legislation will give the executive considerable discretion to deal sympathetically with homeless applicants, but unless he backs his statement with the finance necessary to carry out that commitment, the situation will not improve. I wish to compliment the hon. Member for Leicester, South on making that point so strongly in his speech.

We do not want the scandal of sleazy bed-and-breakfast establishments littered around the Province of Northern Ireland. Carrick House is an example of an establishment where adequate funds have not been provided, although it is a credit to the hard-working and caring staff who are doing their best in completely unacceptable circumstances. The Minister should take time off from his more pleasant pursuits to look at Carrick House, which the executive will inherit under the provisions of the order.

We need new hostels, specially designed and equipped for the welfare of the homeless, but not at the expense of the existing housing programme, which is already extremely underfunded.

In that connection, I have been requested by my colleague, the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe), who cannot, unfortunately, be with us this evening, to acquaint the Minister with the complete lack of facilities for the homeless in Newton Abbey. He hopes that, when conisderation is given to the provision of such facilities in the future, that fact will be kept uppermost in the Minister's mind.

9.43 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Like hon. Members who have spoken before me, I welcome this piece of legislation, not because it covers all the problems that arise from homelessness and other matters such as multiple occupation, but because it is at least a step in the right direction. Like the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker), I am disappointed that the Minister has not taken the opportunity, in view of the experiences of the past 10 years since the legislation for England, Scotland and Wales came into force, to amend that legislation and to improve it.

In welcoming the order, I am sure that I am only echoing the sentiments of the Simon community in Northern Ireland, Shelter and the Council for the Homeless, all of which have been agitating for many years for such a provision. It might surprise the House to know that, until now, there has been no statutory obligation on any authority in Northern Ireland to house a homeless person.

The Housing Executive has no statutory duty and the health boards have a discretionary involvement. The statistics show that the boards' discretion is rather meagrely exercised. It is the voluntary sector that has carried the burden of providing accommodation and other necessities for the homeless. Its budget is restricted, as are its physical assets, and I pay tribute to it for what it has been able to achieve. The House might be interested to know that of the 39 hostels and other units of accommodation for the homeless in Northern Ireland, only three were provided by the four health boards. The House will appreciate immediately that the remaining 36 were provided by the meagrely funded voluntary sector. Great tribute must be paid to it. I am sure that the Minister will wish it to be closely involved in any further and continuing provisions.

The order is timely because of two further factors. Perhaps I should point out at the outset that the Minister will not agree with what I am about to say. I fear that there will be increased demand for provision for the homeless because of the new provisions for health care in the community. According to those who are in the know, this care is grossly underfunded. It is almost inevitable that some of those who have been put out of institutions into the community will drift into homelessness as a result of lack of care. We see in the United States the horrific consequences of unwarranted de-institutionalisation of those who are not able to look after themselves.

The order is timely also, given the stringent social security cuts which will bite more deeply on the family. I am convinced that there will be an acceleration of the breakdown of the containment of the family within the household. I believe that young people especially will be forced into leaving home and seeking help elsewhere. The disintegration of the family will contribute furher to the demand for provision for the homeless.

It is important that young people should have access to immediate help. In many parts of Northern Ireland, boys and girls without homes are recruitment targets for the paramilitarists. The paramilitarists have mafia-type operations and it is easy for them to provide immediate funding, ostensibly to help young people to get over a difficult time. They are approached when they need material help, when it is clear that they are under mental stress. As I have said, the agencies that provide housing

[Mr. Eddie McGrady]

provision should be immediately sympathetic and responsive to the individual's problem. If that help is not available, young people will be enticed into paramilitary operations, to the detriment of the community.

The order should have three broad attributes. It should definitely, positively and unequivocally identify responsibility for the succour of the homeless. This has been successfully achieved by transferring the function to the Housing Executive.

Secondly, the accommodation provided by the executive, be it interim or long term, must be of an acceptable standard. There must be an initial insistence on the part of the Ministry, the health boards and the executive that the accommodation must meet minimum reasonable standards.

The third requisite that I wish to mention—it is one on which other hon. Members have touched, and on which the legislation will, to a large extent, either succeed or fail—is funding. Like faith and hope, if one does not enjoy charity then the other two cannot survive. If there is no funding, there will not be the exercise of responsibility and the provision of meaningful and suitable accommodation.

The order has seen few changes since its original draft, despite the fact that, as the hon. Member for Belfast, North, said there have been 58 representations. In a short debate such as this, it is not possible to deal with every aspect, so I shall restrict myself to just a few of them. First, I thank the Minister for his detailed and lengthy reply to the submission that I made to him on behalf of the Social, Democratic and Labour party when the draft order was published.

The first point that I should like to have clarified—it is not written into the order but it is in the Minister's letter—concerns whether or not people who are in temporary accommodation are deemed homeless. In his letter to me, in respect of article 3, the Minister wrote:

> "It is clear, depending on individual circumstances, that a person living in unsatisfactory temporary accommodation could be regarded either as homeless or threatened with homelessness for the purpose of this Order."

That is a significant comment. It could have been included in the order, but unfortunately it is not. However, it may still be taken as a strong indication of ministerial attitude, which the Minister can convey to the Housing Executive in interpreting the order.

My second concern relates to interim accommodation, its duration and type. I sincerely hope that we shall not see introduced into Northern Ireland something that we do not yet have—the bed-and-breakfast syndrome. It is so debilitating and restrictive in every way—both psychologically and otherwise—for a man, his wife and family to be placed in such circumstances. If it is necessary for some reason to make such provision, I hope that it will be done for as short a time as possible, and that it will be replaced by properly standardised and permanent accommodation.

Article 5 of the order deals with priority need. I accept the six categories of priority listed in article 5, but it excludes, as has been mentioned by other hon. Members, the young, single, divorced or widowed person. While I accept the categories already included in article 5, there is a danger that, because others are excluded, in administering the legislation the Housing Executive, whose responsibility that will be, might treat those existing six categories as the only definitions of priority need.

I am greatly concerned that those people, whom the Minister in his opening remarks said constituted one third of the demand in the homeless market, if I might use that crude expression, would be disadvantaged. I ask the Minister to give an assurance that his instruction and the code of practice, if he is referring to a code of practice, will deal with that particular problem.

It is coincidental that other hon. Members have touched on the same kernel subjects, which obviously give us all cause for concern. Another is the question of "intentionality" and of "worsening one's circumstances". Again, I agree with the principle that anyone who deliberately worsens their own circumstances should not earn great sympathy or deserve immediate consideration.

The great problem is that the interpretation of intentionality will be left to an individual or group of individuals in the Housing Executive. Like the Minister, I have the greatest admiration for the Housing Executive and the way that it carries out its duties, but its staff are human and errors will be made. I have already suggested to the Minister—he rejected the suggestion—that there be some appeal procedure. He said that an appeal could be made by way of internal review in the Housing Executive and, failing that, a complaint could be made to the complaints commissioner.

However, if a homeless person in immediate need of accommodation is told by the Housing Executive that he has intentionally worsened his circumstances to put himself outside the scope of the order, but denies the circumstances, what redress has he for immediate review? The answer is none, because the internal review within the Housing Executive will take at least a couple of weeks; and as to a complaint being made to the complaints commissioner, a family may be dead and buried before getting an answer, never mind getting a house. I ask the Minister to take on board the suggestion that some tribunal, independent of the deciding officers in the Housing Executive, should be established, even on a local basis, to give redress to those who feel that they have been neglected.

The scheme for the purchase of evacuated dwellings is known in Northern Ireland as SPED. I urge the Minister to ask the Housing Executive to reappraise its attitudes towards SPED. It seems to think that only evacuated urban dwellings can be bought, whereas in many parts of rural Northern Ireland, because of intimidation or community factors, people have been forced to leave their homes and those homes connot be sold on the market because of the very circumstances which forced the people to leave—intimidation or sectarian attitudes. The Housing Executive must be made aware that that applies equally to the rural communities as to the urban conurbations.

The emergency repairs article in the order is almost a contradiction. If emergency repairs go through the administrative procedure, and there has to be a wait before the procedure is adopted, they will not be emergency repairs.

Funding exercised the minds of those who preceded me. It was with great concern that I noted what the Minister said in his opening comments and in the replies that he has made to others and to me. The funds available appear to be those that will be transferred from the four health boards, which will in effect be the proportion of their budget that they have utilised in helping the homeless. We already know that, of 39 hostels, only three are operated by the health boards, so amount of money transferred will

do precious little. I was interested to note that the Minister would be robbing his left hand pocket to pay his right hand pocket, because he has responsibility for both.

The Housing Executive will also be required to make a bid for additional funding. One has only to look at the experience of the Housing Executive budget in the past couple of years to see the problem: stop, start, stop, go —£5 million knocked off, £5 million added on, a £35 million reduction here and an increase coming back again there. The Housing Executive does not know whether there is a real new build programme or an approved grant system that is not restrictive as it is at the moment. The Housing Executive does not have adequate funding at present. The general house condition survey shows that it is falling back in its repairs. It does not have adequate funding for its existing function. If we add the homeless function and put that into competition with its existing function, I fear that the homeless will fare poorly.

Unless the Minister is prepared to give a special new allocation of funding to the Housing Executive for the purpose of this order, it will be nothing more than a cosmetic exercise that will not deserve any time for debate or be worth the paper that it is written on. I hope that the Minister will assure us that he will make a special budgetary provision for the transition period and for the couple of years that will be necessary to set up the hostels. Unless that is done, this whole exercise will be a charade.

10 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I begin by echoing on behalf of my party the tributes paid by hon. Members to the contribution to Northern Ireland discussions by the former Member for Epping Forest, Sir John Biggs-Davison. I am not a familiar and regular participant in these debates, but even I know that he made a signal and significant contribution to past discussions in the House on the thorny problems of the Province. As has been said, he will be very sadly missed.

I should like, too, to echo what was said by the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker), because again, as someone who is relatively new to these debates, I know that it must be frustrating for hon. Members who represent constituencies in the Province to have to subject themselves to this kind of legislative procedure. As a Member from a Scottish constituency, I say to the hon. Gentleman that, if I went back to Scotland and tried to justify this sort of machinery to my constituents, I would not last very long. That is something which we should never miss an opportunity to remind the Government.

I feel that the Minister has missed an opportunity to make some real and progressive improvements in the provisions for homelessness, especially in the Province. Of course, I recognise that this order is an improvement, and I certainly subscribe to the comment of the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall)—the official Opposition—that he would support it if a Division was called.

It is a bit complacent for the Ministers to say that we have pushed the arguments along a little in some of these areas and the problems are really not as bad as the Simon Community, Shelter and Housing Aid in the Province make out. Therefore, we should be grateful for small mercies. Of course, Governments have a difficult job. I am realistic about these matters, and I agree with the Minister that it does not do anyone any good to exaggerate the problems of homelessness in the Province and in other parts of the country. However, I do not think it is good enough—this point also was made by the hon. Member for Leicester, South—to say that it is what we have here and, therefore, by definition it must be good enough for Northern Ireland.

As I am sure the Minister will know, this legislation was introduced in 1977 by the former Liberal Member of Parliament for the Isle of Wight, now Lord Ross. I am sure that if he were taking part in the debate he would say that the thinking on the way that provisions are made for homeless people has moved quite considerably since the original legislation was passed. That is a process of evolution that should rightly continue.

We are making important orders for an important part of the United Kingdom. Lessons have been learnt since 1977. Why should we not take advantage of our recent experience and make improvements in Northern Ireland? What would be wrong with that? I believe that it is incumbent upon the Minister not to say that it is good enough for us, so it must be good enough for them. The onus is upon him to state why the many sensible improvements suggested this evening are not acceptable to the Government.

I listened carefully to the Minister. He said that there is some dispute about the extent of the problem. He said that some 2,200 people have been awarded emergency status and been accommodated within three months. How many applications were there? The number of people who have been awarded emergency status does not tell us much if five or 10 times that number applied but were rejected. It is important to know what proportion of applicants succeeded.

The Government have taken the opportunity to improve article 5, which deals with priority need for accommodation. They have included the categories of violence and financial and sexual exploitation, but they have set their face against other improvements, which seems a bit of a contradiction. The problem of single homelessness will have to be tackled in United Kingdom terms as well, as existing provisions are not working acceptably, at least not in my experience.

The Minister forgot to say that single people would be excluded by the intentionally homeless provisions if they tried to jump the queue and abuse the system. I sympathise with housing authorities, which have to make extremely difficult decisions. I should not like to have to make them, but it is incumbent on us to try to lay down the best possible guidelines.

The Minister can help housing authorities and the Housing Executive in Northern Ireland by drawing attention to the fact that they are able to reject applications by single people if they are able to show that such applicants have taken steps which make them intentionally homeless.

Agencies have drawn up a list of other groups who deserve to be treated as a priority. That list should be discussed. I should like to put forward the example of people who are homeless because of repossession. Such people would merit prima facie consideration as being in need of priority accommodation. A person who is homeless because of a marital dispute merits some priority. People who are homeless because of intimidation are in a category which, par excellence in terms of what is happening in the Province, might have been mentioned on the face of the order as in priority need. A young person

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who is homeless because of the poor family relationships might be in another category which deserves priority treatment. Such a category might deal with the single homeless problem which the Minister thinks he has. I think that he is exaggerating.

I have heard of 17-year-old girls in the Province whose parents refuse to take them back. The social security changes, about which I try to take an interest on a United Kingdom basis, are relevant in that respect. Another priority group might be people who have been discharged from institutional care. Community care and the Griffiths report are of United Kingdom wide relevance, but the issue could have been embraced here. People with alcohol and drug addiction problems could be argued to be a priority on a United Kingdom basis also. All those groups deserve careful attention, even if they are not given immediate attention by the order.

My penultimate point concerns intentionality, which, of course, has created difficulties and has been abused by some housing authorities on the mainland. There is evidence that the provisions as they operate in the United Kingdom are largely unsatisfactory, and an opportunity could have been taken to include in the order a more stringent and more easily interpreted definition. For example, the Housing Executive could have been given a time limit, possibly a year, in which it would be required to prove—the onus of proof would be on the Housing Executive—that somebody was becoming homeless intentionally.

There is a world of difference between doing something that leads to being classed as intentionally homeless and doing something with the intention of becoming homeless. I came across that point in my previous incarnation as a practising solicitor. A number of people have no idea that, technically, the consequences of their actions will catch them under the intentionally homeless provisions. Local authorities have not been paying enough attention to that very small but important legal distinction. The opportunity could have been taken in the order to put that right.

My final point concerns the appeal procedure. I am not an expert on the appeal procedure that applies in the Province, but I am sure that the Minister will put me right if I am wrong. Certainly my experience of the social security system is that an independent appeal procedure is a valuable longstop which gives confidence to everybody that, although there may be very difficult decisions and discretion being exercised by officers acting in good faith —as I said earlier, many of them have difficult jobs—there is many a slip between cup and lip.

The existence of an independent, free-standing appeal procedure gives everybody confidence that, at the end of the day, if a perverse decision has been taken or action taken contrary to natural justice, the appeals system will iron it out. It has to be independent, and it has to be seen to be independent. I am advised that an independent appeal system for housing benefit cases exists in the Province. If that is the case, it would be entirely appropriate to have the same system for decisions about homelessness. I cannot see the argument against that.

If the Minister sets his face against that provision, I warn him now that the process of judicial review, which I understand operates through the Northern Ireland courts in the same way as it does in Scotland and in England, will be used time and again. An expensive, extensive and complicated legal procedure using the full panoply of the civil law will operate to review such decisions. An independent appeal procedure would amass a body of precedents on decisions taken on questions which would be operated by people in the Housing Executive making day-to-day decisions on who is homeless and who is not.

That would be by far the preferable route, and if the Minister sets his face against taking that route he will be lumbered with the whole panoply of the judicial review procedure, which would not be sensible from anybody's point of view.

I have some worries about the lack of funding that seems to lie behind the order. I am advised that there have been recent Government cuts in the Housing Executive's budget of £24 million—£46 million and £48 million for the period 1988-90—but the hon. Gentlemen behind me will know more about that than I do. If that is the level of the recent cuts, we are right to advert to the lack of resources as a potential problem. It is not just a question of money for the bricks and mortar for new houses that we consider should be built; we need counselling and proper facilities to make the provisions work.

The order deserves qualified support. It is largely a wasted opportunity. I hope that the debate will give the Minister pause for thought and that some of the points raised will be reconsidered in the Department at a future date as a matter of urgency.

10.15 pm

Mr. Needham: The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) and others have paid tribute to the late Sir John Biggs-Davison. I add my words in support of that. He was the first or second Member of Parliament whom I met. He managed to persuade me to join the Monday Club, which in retrospect was not the wisest decision in my political career, and he sent me to the junior Königswinter conference. He was a man with enormous strengths and interests in Ulster, and he will be sorely missed.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South said that he felt that deficiencies that had been found in homelessness legislation for Britain should have been remedied in Northern Ireland legislation. Very few, if any, of the criticisms have much relevance in Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman suggested that I adopted a flippant attitude towards the problems of single homelessness. Nothing could be further from the truth. He said that in his judgment single homelessness accounted for about 80 per cent. of those who sought help. I pointed out to him that one third of the placements from the Housing Executive deal with the single homeless.

Is the hon. Gentleman really suggesting that we should give a priority right to single homeless people? It was not a position that his party took when it was in government in 1977, and it does not appear to have been the position that his party took in its 1987 manifesto, which said:

"We will launch a major housebuilding and public and private sector housing renovation drive as part of our jobs programme and to combat the problems of bad housing, overcrowding and homelessness."

It does not do the hon. Gentleman credit to make a submission which did not appear in his Government's actions, which did not appear in the 1987 manifesto, and which I doubt would appear in any forthcoming

manifesto. Giving priority to the single homeless does not make sense in any sensible measure of public sector housing policy.

Mr. Jim Marshall: The Minister referred to logic. Can he not see that, logically, if the Government bring forward a proposal to define homelessness, they have to include all categories of homelessness? They may not like one particular category or another, but legislation on homelessness has to include all categories. Within those categories are single homeless people. Surely, if they are homeless for what the Minister would consider to be genuine reasons, they have a right, like other homeless people, to be considered for housing.

Mr. Needham: The question is not about whether they are not homeless or whether they should not be classed as homeless, but whether they should be given a priority right. The answer is that they cannot be. They were not given a priority under the Labour Government's proposals in 1977 nor in the 1987 manifesto. The order accepts that some single people are homeless and that there are duties on the Housing Executive to provide consultation and advice for them. What it does not do, and cannot do—the hon. Gentleman's party would not do this if it were in government—is to give them a priority right to housing. That is the most important point.

I shall now deal with the point made by the hon. Member about the Housing Executive's funding. The Housing Executive's funding is still running at more than £500 million a year. That is over two and a half times the per capita funding in the rest of the United Kingdom. It would be nice if it were possible to increase that funding, but the problem that the Government face—as any government would—is one of priorities in funding programmes.

I should like the hon. Gentleman to consider what would happen if, were he in government, he honoured the commitments that he has given to increase funding to meet the housing priorities that he put forward. What would those of his hon. Friends who are not sitting behind him think—especially those who represent constituencies with major housing problems—if funding were increased beyond what the Government give in Northern Ireland —already two and a half times more per capita than elsewhere in the country?

The Government will continue to give housing in Northern Ireland as high a priority as possible.

Mr. Marshall: The Minister and I agree that housing policy in Northern Ireland is a success in terms of levels of expenditure over a number of years. I gave credit to the Government for that policy on a previous occasion. However, does the Minister accept that, in terms of relative deprivation, housing in Northern Ireland is still substantially worse than it is in the remainder of the United Kingdom? It is likely to become even worse unless the Housing Executive has sufficient funds. The Government have a duty to make priorities. Will the Minister accept that Northern Ireland has to be at the top of that list of priorities? It is vital that increased funds are made available.

Mr. Needham: That is why the Government spend two and a half times more per capita on housing in Northern Ireland than elsewhere in the country. That is why the levels of unfitness in Northern Ireland are continuing to come down and the quality of public housing in Northern Ireland continues to improve. Nothing that the Government are bringing forward in the housing expenditure profile will mean that levels of housing in Northern Ireland will not continue to improve. The position will not get worse. If we have to spend slightly less than the amount that the Housing Executive asks us to spend, the position will not improve as rapidly as we wish. Of course, we have continually have to switch our expenditure from priorities such as housing to law and order because of the problems of terrorism in Northern Ireland.

I must correct the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) by saying that we have not cut the housing budget. It is £508 million this year, whereas last year it was £500 million. We should, of course, like to spend more, and I am sorry that no one told the hon. Gentleman that. I realise that he is to give us his views on Northern Ireland only on a temporary basis.

The hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) talked about the problems of dealing with orders such as this in the present unamendable way. He knows that I have much sympathy with his view on that. It is not the ideal method for any Minister.

I enjoyed the ribaldry of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, although I am not certain that his party has ever made concrete proposals for what should be done instead. If it has, let us hear them on another occasion. The hon. Gentleman is new to the debate and is perhaps not entirely aware of his own party's policy.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) may be too modest to defend themselves, but if the Minister does his research he will discover that members of what is now the Social and Liberal Democratic party have repeatedly made a plea that Northern Ireland legislation should be by Bill, not by diktat or Order in Council.

Mr. Needham: I shall not bandy words with the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), who, outside the Chamber, refuses to address a word to me. Many Conservative Members would give greater credence to the right hon. Gentleman's arguments if he would enter into discussions with Ministers about the problems of Northern Ireland instead of fitfully and occasionally raising them here.

Although the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire has the support of the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley, I do not believe for one moment that the Social and Liberal Democratic party believes that the best way to deal with Northern Ireland business is by Bill. I suppose it would mean that Social and Liberal Democratic Members would be here even less often then they already.

Hon. Members fairly mentioned the need to make it clear whether accommodation is suitable for homeless people. I am not sure that they have all read the order carefully, and if the hon. Member for Belfast, North looks at article 12(1) he will see that it says:

"The Executive may perform any duty under Article 8 or 10 . . .

(b) securing that he obtains suitable accommodation from some other person".

[Mr. Needham]

The hon. Members for Belfast, North and for South Down (Mr. McGrady), and other hon. Members, raised the issue of intentionality. Intentionality has not been a problem in Northern Ireland. Under the housing selection scheme which the Housing Executive operates, deliberately worsening one's circumstances has been the criterion. So far as I am aware, that has been handled sensitively and professionally by the Housing Executive, and there is no record of large numbers of complaints.

We are proposing a draft code of practice and guidance within which we shall be able to discuss how the order will work on the ground. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire mentioned appeals. He was not right to draw an analogy with housing benefit, because if an appeal is made regarding homelessness, it must be against the Housing Executive's decision. That creates precedents for appeals on any decision made by the Housing Executive about the way in which it handles its tenants.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire is a solicitor. I am glad to say that I am not a lawyer, but if the Pandora's box of appeals is opened, much time of Housing Executive officers will be spent on appeals, to the detriment of the good organisation and running of the Housing Executive. I do not foresee how the system could be confined as narrowly as the hon. Gentleman wishes. However, I accept that the Housing Executive must have an alternative appeals procedure that meets the fears and worries of hon. Members.

I am sure that, with the code of practice and guidance, and following the seminar that we intend to hold, we shall be able to reach agreement. I think that there is high regard in Northern Ireland for the way in which the Housing Executive works, and I am sure that hon. Members—including the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley and the hon. Member for Belfast, North—will attend the seminar with me in a month's time so that we can discuss these issues in detail.

The hon. Members for South Down and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire referred to intimidation. That is covered by the SPED scheme. I note the point made by the hon. Member for South Down about that scheme. *[Interruption.]* The SPED scheme is not in the order, but works outside it. I make that point before the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire searches in vain in the order for it. The hon. Member for South Down said that it was not working in rural areas as well as it was in the city. If that is so, we must work with the Housing Executive to find out whether there are any particular problems. It is important that people in those circumstances are sensitively and properly treated.

I am not complacent about the problem of homelessness in Northern Ireland, but nor am I prepared to accept the views of Shelter and the Simon Community, which, according to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, have some weight in their arguments, but which could not be bothered to send us their figures, most of which were based on Housing Executive submissions, which the executive itself said were not properly thought through.

Under the proposals in the order, and with the code of practice and guidance, we shall be able to give the homeless people of Northern Ireland a sensible way forward which will handle the vast majority of the single homeless and those in the other priority categories.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 13th July 1988, be approved.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the draft Parliamentary Constituencies (Scotland) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 13th July 1988, be approved.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Question agreed to.

Haringey and Hampstead Health Districts

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon]*

10.31 pm

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for choosing the subject of the merger of the Hampstead and Haringey health districts for the Adjournment debate.

The proposal to merge the Hampstead and Haringey health districts has caused widespread alarm in my constituency. This is clearly demonstrated by the number of my constituents who have come to the House at this late hour to hear the debate. I welcome them and hope that the Minister will give my constituents some assurances.

This proposal emerged in March this year and is an initiative from the regional health authority. The proposed merger has come about because of two main factors. According to the regional health authority, these are: first, concern over the viability of the Hampstead health authority and in particular the Royal Free medical school; secondly, concern over the viability of the Haringey health authority, which is experiencing massive cuts and recruitment problems. It is described as an "administrative change" by the regional health authority. The proposal is out for consultation until 30 November. It will be considered by the region at its January 1989 meeting and, if agreed, will be passed to the Secretary of State for formal approval.

The region states that it cannot predict what any new authority may wish to do as regards its services and structures and says:

"No proposals can be or should be put forward in this document for changes to service provision. If the merger goes ahead the first task the new authority would face would be the development of a service strategy which would involve extensive research, discussion, debate and public consultation."

Basically, we are asked to give a blank cheque to the regional offices and, having agreed to the merger, we may then have a look at the effect on services. That is not satisfactory.

The regional health authority document states that the Hampstead and Haringey district health authorities would be disbanded and a new one established to take their place. It states that the health service across the two present districts would be managed by the single authority and a single management structure and that, as a single health authority, it would relate to the Royal Free medical school in all matters concerning medical education, including recruitment, training and research.

It states that there would be a single financial allocation to the new district and that the contracts of all staff, including medical staff, would be held by the new merged authority. The document adds that both the Royal Free for Hampstead and the North Middlesex for Haringey would continue to act as the district general hospital, so that there should not need to be any changes in patient flow or GP referral patterns.

A number of regional policy directions have led to this proposal being pursued. First, there is a desire to get teaching hospitals to spread their expertise and develop links with hospitals outside central London. Secondly, it is said that many specialist services are not viable within small districts. Thirdly, the desperate financial position of the region has led managers to look for even more radical measures.

The Royal Free medical school is the second smallest in London. It has an intake of 100 students a year, and for an intake of that size the regional guidelines say that there should be a catchment population of about 320,000 people. Hampstead has a population of only 108,000; and because of the loss of 112 beds at the Royal Free, it is becoming increasingly difficult to provide sufficient teaching practice for students. Indeed, we understand that the medical school feels it is in danger of being gobbled up by London university.

The Hampstead health district is not considered to be viable because a number of the services currently managed by Hampstead will pass into other hands over the next five years. Friern Barnet is due to close in 1993 and there is a proposal to transfer Coppetts Wood to a new specialist unit at the North Middlesex. That will call into question whether such a district can survive.

Haringey health district is facing extreme financial difficulty as well as recruitment problems. As of 1 August this year, the district has closed, temporarily or permanently, over 200 beds, representing a 40 per cent. cut. The Prince of Wales hospital has closed permanently and the district health authority has decided to end all acute work at St. Ann's hospital, Tottenham. The main hospital in the district is the North Middlesex in Edmonton, and a considerable number of its patients come from Enfield, not Haringey. This sad state of affairs has come about as the result of regional directions, and in our view it will not be corrected by the merger.

The consultation document lists a number of spin-offs that could arise from the merger. First, in terms of the use of the estate, it is argued that the merger would allow the Royal Free room for expansion and an opportunity for more land sales. Secondly, it claims that there would be more scope for income generation. Thirdly, it is said that there would be more scope for greater efficiency and getting better value for money, with the possibility of sharing facilities, such as works computing and physical services.

But why should there be a formal merger? Why cannot some of those benefits be achieved by greater collaboration? The three main reasons are said to be, first, that the district health authority would be able to hold consultants' contracts at district rather than regional level, and that, it is argued, would give the district more control. The second reason, it is said, is that Haringey would receive access to funds such as research money that is available for teaching districts only through the merger. It is argued, thirdly, that only through a formal merger would there be the necessary impetus for increased collaboration, particularly on the teaching front; only with the merger would the medical school be prepared to support academic departments at the North Middlesex.

Hampstead has a population of 108,000, although there is a large influx of patients from Barnet, and it is accepted that the district has the primary responsibility for patients from south Barnet. It has 710 acute beds, mainly at the Royal Free, but includes 70 beds for infectious diseases at Coppetts Wood, 130 care-of-the-elderly beds, and 810 mental beds, most of them at Friern. The number of acute beds has been cut by 112 since 1986, when beds were redesignated to receive the elderly people from New End

[Mr. Bernie Grant]

hospital, which has now closed. Coppetts Wood is to move to a district general hospital site and Friern is to close by 1993. The district has a budget of £63·7 million.

Haringey, on the other hand, has a population of 196,000. The North Middlesex hospital is the main acute hospital, in Edmonton. Residents of Hornsey and parts of Wood Green use the Whittington hospital for acute services. The other hospital in Haringey proper is the St. Ann's hospital. There is a proposal in the region to end all acute work there. It will become mainly long-stay. It has a budget of £50 million and had cut £3 million from its budget this year to stay legal. That has resulted in a freeze on the use of all agency staff for six months, and four wards are temporarily closed.

But there are other options for possible mergers and the consultation document looks at some of them. The three main ones are: Hampstead and Bloomsbury, Hampstead, Haringey and Enfield, and Hampstead and Barnet. They have all been rejected for various reasons.

Let me briefly examine the Hampstead and Barnet option. A number of things have happened. Barnet has refused any advances and wants to stay independent and conterminous with its borough. A merger would create one district in two separate regions—the North West and North East Thames regions. North West Thames does not want another teaching district or merged authority at present.

I wonder whether there have been other reasons why the merger has not gone ahead. These are neighbouring health districts, and they should merge. Is it true, for example, that the Prime Minister has had a word to say about this, as it lies in her constituency? Could it be that she wants her district health authority to stay small and beautiful at the expense of other health authorities such as Haringey? I look forward to the Minister's reply.

We are opposed to the merger for a number of reasons. Why does the North East Thames regional health authority need four medical schools in its region? Why does it not merge the Hampstead district with Barnet and, in so doing, transfer one of its four medical schools to the North West Thames regional health authority? Is it true that the only reason for keeping the Hampstead district is so that the region may retain £9 million of SIFT money that it would otherwise lose?

Why the haste? We understand that the Prime Minister's review of the National Health Service may do away with regional health authorities altogether—or at least alter their boundaries. Should not the merger wait until we are clear what the Prime Minister has in store for us?

As patient flows will not change, 40 per cent. of the patients will come from Barnet, not from Haringey—another reason why the neighbouring districts should merge. As a new district, a substantial proportion of these resources will go out of the district and into Barnet.

We want to know where the district general hospital will be. I do not accept the idea of two district general hospitals, or one in two parts. We want to know whether the district general hospital will be the Royal Free or the North Middlesex.

We are concerned about the movement of staff, of which we have had some experience. We understand that, under the merger, consultants will move between the Royal Free hospital and the North Middlesex hospital at will, but we do not believe that. We could not get consultants to travel one mile between the North Middlesex hospital and the Prince of Wales hospital or between the North Middlesex hospital and St. Ann's hospital. Can we seriously expect them to travel many miles between the Royal Free and the North Middlesex hospitals? Will the Minister give us some assurances on that tonight?

The waiting lists are much worse in Hampstead than in Haringey. Is the merger just to make the figures look better so that the average figure will lower the Hampstead health authority's figures? Will Haringey people have to wait longer as a result of the merger?

A report which appeared in the *Haringey Post* of 13 October this year under the headline "Hospital queue crisis" said:

"Health watchdogs are warning that women and the elderly are casualties of soaring hospital waiting lists. The picture is bleak across the North East of London. At the Royal Free, Hampstead, queues grew last year by 45 per cent. Nearly 1,000 patients have been waiting two years for surgery. A spokesman for North East Thames Health Authority, which covers Haringey, said GPs are referring more patients to crowded hospitals. 'Lists have grown, but we are getting through more patients.'"

The waiting lists are grim.

One of the innovations in the Haringey health district has been the upgrading of the haematology department which has done excellent work for sufferers of sickle anaemia, sickle cell disease and thalassaemia. That is because our district has large numbers of people from black and minority ethnic communities. West Indians, Africans and so on suffer from sickle cell and Cypriots suffer from thalassaemia. The North Middlesex hospital made special arrangements for those two diseases because the people are there on the doorstep. However, we understand that under the merger the haematology department is scheduled to go to the Royal Free hospital. Thus the department looking after those with sickle cell and thalassaemia will be miles away from the sufferers. That is a disgrace.

Recruitment is another reason offered for the merger, but in Hampstead vacancies stand at 8 per cent. and in Haringey at 10 per cent.—not enough of a reason for the merger.

We also note that community services in Haringey are good. They have been built up over a period of years. We have not drained our key services as other regions have done in order to build up our community services. We fear that the community services that have been fought for in Haringey will be put at risk under the merger.

We are also worried about the community health council. We have an excellent council in Haringey. What will happen after such a merger? Will there be two officers, one at the Royal Free hospital in Hampstead and one in Tottenham? On the basis of our experience, we are sure that that will not happen.

One of our major problems is the cost of travel. People from my constituency have to take three buses to reach the Royal Free which takes two hours, and the return journey takes four hours. If they go by tube they have to go to the City and then come back into London. It is even more ludicrous that people from Tottenham have to leapfrog the Islington health district to get to Hampstead. My

constituents will have to go past the Whittington hospital in order to reach the Royal Free. Time prevents me from developing that argument further.

We are very worried about the merger. Teaching hospitals may be prestigious, but they drain resources, particularly when the Government are cutting money available for universities, asking them to go to private industry. This is a retrograde step. It is a bad, ill-conceived proposal that should be withdrawn now.

10.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) on his success in proposing this subject for debate and presenting his concerns and those of his constituents about the possible merger of Haringey and Hampstead health authorities. It is a pity that other Opposition Members have been unable to support him. Perhaps the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), whose constituency is affected by the proposed merger, has been unavoidably detained elsewhere.

For the debate, I have looked at a number of cuttings from local newspapers serving the hon. Gentleman's constituency and seen how the possibility of change has aroused genuine concern about the future of local health services. I remind the hon. Gentleman—he mentioned this matter in his speech—that general practitioners refer wherever they think is appropriate for the patient whom they are treating, and they will continue to refer to the North Middlesex, whether or not there is a merger. No one will be forced to refer patients to the Royal Free hospital. As I understand the proposal, both hospitals will continue to serve as major hospitals in their areas. In that sense, therefore, the travel worries are probably somewhat exaggerated.

I was also rather sad to hear the hon. Gentleman's comments about the disadvantages of being in a teaching district. As he probably knows, I used to be chairman of a teaching district. Teaching authorities and medical schools are now trying very much to avoid hunting around the country for small numbers of esoteric, difficult cases which might provide teaching material. They are trying to respond to the health needs of the local population. Some fine work of that kind goes on in the teaching hospitals in London, and, therefore, I should have thought that that would be regarded as an advantage of the merger.

I offer the hon. Gentleman some reassurance about the proposed merger. I wish to clarify how the proposal may be carried forward. I am keen for him to understand the legal situation, which should be put on the record tonight. If I have time, I may describe some of the recent developments in the neighbourhood.

The hon. Gentleman will have read the consultation document from the North-East Thames regional health authority, which sets out exactly what it wishes to do. I wish to quote what the authority says on this matter. The document states:

"The amalgamation would enable the new authority and its managers to organise and deliver health services to people in Haringey and north Camden more effectively and to higher standards than are possible at present. It would provide wider opportunities for medical undergraduate education and better career opportunities for trained staff."

However, the main improvements, in the view of the regional health authority, would be to acute hospital services. The document states:

"health care services in the community, although less obviously affected by the changes"—

those services are very good in Haringey—

"would also benefit from the increased influence of the medical school and opportunities to attract financial investment and manpower."

Paragraph 1.2.3 of the consultation document states:

"Both the Royal Free Hospital"—

that is, Hampstead health authority—

"and the North Middlesex Hospital"—

that is, Haringey health authority—

"would continue to provide the main acute services for their localities. The range and scope of specialist acute services would be increased."

Paragraph 1.2.4 states:

"There is no intention to try to alter existing patterns of patient flows."

That needs to be understood. Those are the proposals as they stand. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will convey to his constituents the fact that they should not feel agitated about things that have not been proposed.

The discussion document has been produced by the regional health authority and, since August, copies have been issued widely for informal consultation to various interested parties, including the hon. Gentleman, his hon. Friends and my hon. Friends whose constituents may be affected. Comments have been invited by the end of November and will be considered by the regional health authority at its meeting in January next year. This debate and the hon. Gentleman's remarks will no doubt be considered, along with other representations on that date. It will then be for the regional health authority to decide whether it wishes to continue with the proposal.

The responsibility for making the decision whether there should be a merger rests firmly with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. If the regional health authority wants to pursue that course, it will need to put a submission to him making the case for a merger.

I apologise to the House, and to the hon. Gentleman especially, but I cannot respond in detail to some of the arguments that he has advanced or offer opinions on them. The issue may come to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, and to effect the merger my right hon. and learned Friend would need to lay orders before Parliament to define the new district and establish the authority. Before doing so, he would be required to consult interested bodies. That would allow those concerned to put their views direct to us. I am not trying to fudge the issue and I am not trying to avoid it. I have listened with the greatest care to the hon. Gentleman, but it is the legal position that precludes me from commenting directly on what he has said. I can guarantee, however, that there is no possibility that such a proposal could be achieved without close scrutiny and full consultation with all those who might be affected by it.

I know that Haringey has various difficulties, and, because of the measured and careful way in which the hon. Gentleman has made his case, I shall merely say that he and I know that the Haringey social services department has serious problems. That does not help in resettling and helping those who are being discharged from hospital. I ask the hon. Gentleman to use his good offices to ensure that the people of Haringey get a good service from the authorities, be they health authorities, which are part of my responsibility, or the social services and local authorities. Given the hon. Gentleman's experience before

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

he came to this place, I know that he has considerable influence with the social services and local authorities. I ask him to use his good offices as well as he possibly can.

The hon. Gentleman drew attention to waiting lists and said that the lists in Haringey are rather better than in Hampstead. That is partly because Hampstead, being a teaching hospital, attracts patients from a wider area. Some of the cases are the trickier ones, and it is sometimes probably more appropriate that they should be referred there to await the careful attention of the distinguished people they will see.

The hon. Gentleman asked me a question about waiting lists in Haringey, to which I replied on 15 April. I stated that on 31 March 1979 the number of those on the in-patient waiting list—the hon. Gentleman asked for an annual comparison—was 2,063. The number had fallen to 1,004 by 1987. In other words, the length of the list had been cut by half. The only times when the lists in Haringey have been high are 1979 and 1982—years when people had decided to take industrial action. That merely proves that industrial action hurts only patients. It does not hurt the Government or many of those whom it is thought will suffer by the making of a point. We should do all that we can to ensure that the flow of activity of patient care is not interrupted in an inappropriate way.

The hon. Gentleman may be aware of the marvellous plans for St. Ann's hospital and for some of the other developments that are taking place. I understand that the St. Ann's development is to be financed by the sale of the Prince of Wales site. That has been agreed, and a substantial sum has been made available by the Housing Corporation to enable some extremely useful and valuable housing associations to take over the site and provide housing. It seems that it will be a thoroughly beneficial proposal.

I was attracted by an article in a local newspaper, entitled *The Journal*, that appeared on 20 October. It set out in detail exactly what is proposed for St. Ann's hospital. I am not the first always to commend what is to be read in newspapers, but there are many occasions when they contain much good sense. The St. Ann's unit would in future be called the St. Ann's centre for health care. I understand that much of the emphasis would be on promoting the positive theme of healthier living and the prevention of illness wherever possible. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will join me in commending that approach.

The article reads:

"The main emphasis of care would be on the elderly and the mentally ill."

Research in the neighbourhood shows that that key group is not getting quite the attention that it should. In addition, St. Ann's will have an expanded children's centre. This will include, in addition to existing facilities, speech therapy, audiology, a community health clinic and a team of children's nurses who will work in the community.

The hon. Gentleman talked about services for those with the condition that is known as haemoglobinopathies, sickle cell anaemia, thalassaemia and the like. St. Ann's would include the first centre in the area completely dedicated to these blood disorders. That, I think, is the answer to the problem that the hon. Gentleman has posed.

The hon. Gentleman will know that my officials have written to all health authorities throughout the country to ask what services they are providing for haemoglobinopathies, because I for one am not satisfied that many parts of the country are getting a service. I must tell the hon. Gentleman that my constituents are not getting a service of that quality, and I commend those, as the hon. Gentleman has rightly done, who have worked so hard to improve the chances of people with those conditions or with the traits that might lead to them.

Similarly, I would like the hon. Gentleman to approach some of these topics with rather more optimism. Change is sometimes necessary. The districts that were drawn up in London some years ago have not always fulfilled expectations. Nearly all have falling populations, which makes it much harder for teaching hospitals that are an invaluable part of the medical services in London to draw on an adequate population. It also makes it much harder, as we now seem to have more boundaries than we need, to ensure that we have good links between the hospital services and the community services.

On that basis, I ask the hon. Gentleman to join me in a note of optimism for the future of the care provided by Haringey health authority. I repeat that the proposal for a merger with Hampstead will be the subject of full public consultation before the Secretary of State makes a decision.

Question put and agreed.

Adjourned accordingly at Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 28 October 1988

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Motorists (Eye Tests)

9.35 am

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I wish to present a petition from my constituent, Mrs. Marion Page, with 27,000 signatures, and her organisation called "Keep Death off our Roads", which she established after the tragic death of her son.

I agree with some of the conclusions of the petition —although not all—and I strongly support the recommendations for more stringent eye tests for motorists, which is the principal purpose of the petition, which states;

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of K-DOOR (Keep Death off our Roads) and supporters—14,981, and SCID, (Scottish Campaign Against Irresponsible Drivers) and supporters—12,063—

Sheweth that, whereas it is proposed to make a charge for the eye test (currently free), and whereas many drivers now wield their lethal weapon, the car, with defective eyesight, and whereas the eyetest requirements for British drivers are the lowest in the world, we believe charges would prove a false economy, because, (a) serious eye diseases will go longer undetected (b) deaths and injuries on the roads will result from poor eyesight.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House press for the retention of a free eye test, and for more stringent, frequent compulsory eyesight tests for motorists.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Radioactive Waste

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

9.36 am

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State on her first appearance on the Front Bench in a major debate on the environment. I wish her a longer tenure with that portfolio than that which I enjoyed some 14½ years ago, which was interrupted by a general election and was brought to an abrupt end after nine weeks. It was an interesting experience because I was given what was then known as the Protection of the Environment Bill to present to the House, but the general election frustrated that and I found myself, within a matter of days, opposing that same Bill—then called the Control of Pollution Bill —from the Opposition Front Bench. That experience gave me an abiding interest in environmental matters which I am sure my hon. Friend will soon share.

Since that time, I have had the good fortune to chair a Committee that has chosen to inquire into and produce a series of reports on matters relating to pollution and the environment, which have suddenly assumed a high political profile.

I was taken somewhat by surprise by the suddenness with which this debate was announced. I was with my Committee in Chicago last Friday when we were told that the report was to be debated today. The news was especially suprising because some three years had elapsed since the then Leader of the House—my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen)—had promised that the report would be debated. That just shows how long it sometimes takes for those who manage the business of the House to reach agreement on such questions.

Had I had the opportunity to discuss this matter with the Leader of the House, I would have told him that other reports from my Committee merited even closer attention, such as that on historic buildings and that on water pollution, which I am delighted to note will be debated next Friday. The fact that three years have elapsed since the report was published has forced me to re-read it. I found myself agreeing with the remarks of a scientist who specialises in that field. He told me that he was struck by the vigour, clarity of expression of the report and the soundness of its recommendations. I hope that the House will agree with those unsolicited sentiments. At the time of publication, the report also attracted great national and international interest. A leading article in a newspaper described it as a benchmark in the history of this subject.

I do not intend to take the House through all the report's 170 pages and 43 excellent recommendations, but I shall concentrate on three or four broad issues that were raised by it. A convenient starting point is paragraph 3. It pinpoints the main difficulty besetting the disposal of radioactive waste in the United Kingdom today. In the report's introduction, paragraph 3 states:

"It had become apparent to us that far from there being well-defined, publicly debated policy on the creation, management and disposal of radioactive waste, there was confusion".

A little later it states:

"On the one hand, bold announcements about prospective new disposal sites are issued. They are then withdrawn, left hanging in the air, or modified *ad hoc*."

[Sir Hugh Rossi]

Again it states:

"a sequence of different studies show that the UK is still only feeling its way towards a coherent policy. For an issue which is of such great public concern, this is regrettably inadequate."

It is interesting to note what happened subsequent to the publication of that paragraph, particularly in the context of the statement that I have just read regarding bold announcements about prospective new disposal sites being issued,

"withdrawn, left hanging in the air, or modified *ad hoc*."

Just a month after the publication of the report, on 25 February 1986, NIREX announced four sites to be explored to determine whether they were suitable for the disposal of low level and intermediate level waste. That was followed on 7 July by a special development order giving the necessary planning permission. My Committee's first reaction was one of satisfaction in the sense that, at last, steps were being taken to explore the geology of the United Kingdom to ascertain where the best and safest sites for the disposal of radioactive waste could be found, because found they must be. Even if we were to stop the production of electricity by nuclear power tomorrow, we would still have enormous problems in disposing of spent fuel and the low-level, intermediate-level and high-level waste that is created. We would also have the problem of decommissioning about 17 power stations. Exploration must take place and sites must be found, and the location of such sites must depend upon geology ensuring safe disposal.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the views of the local population should also be taken into account? It is not just a geological issue.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I shall refer to that matter in a moment, if the hon. Lady will be patient. Of course public feeling has a great deal to do with the problem.

The nation must recognise that we have these substances and that they must be found a home that will remain safe for centuries, and only geology can dictate where that home will be.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is a matter not only of geology but of the technology that can deal with the waste?

Sir Hugh Rossi: I agree entirely with the hon. Lady. Again, I shall discuss that matter in a moment or two.

Unfortunately, although it gave the Committee some satisfaction, Nirex's announcement went too far, because it included intermediate-level waste with low-level waste. That immediately caused alarm bells to ring loudly among the communities that were likely to be affected if the geology was found suitable for the kind of disposal being proposed. The Committee strongly recommended that intermediate level waste should be disposed of only in deep geological strata and not on the surface, however technologically good surface disposal places might be.

A consortium of four county councils was formed. Interestingly enough, it set up a research team which actually followed the route of my Select Committee in its inquiry—through France, West Germany and Sweden. I am not sure whether it went as far as Canada and the United States, but it certainly checked the evidence that we had collated on the continent of Europe.

Of course, the great public pressure that was built up as a result of that activity caused considerable alarm in the Government. They were forced hastily to announce that surface disposal places were to be used not for intermediate-level waste but only for low-level waste. It was too late. It is a pity that they had not studied the recommendations of the report a little more closely. If they had, that mistake would not have occurred. But the mistake had been made. The bandwagon was rolling, and it was far too late for the Government to do anything but eventually to abandon their proposals, which they did on 1 May 1987. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) is laughing. It would not have mattered whether the decision had been taken before or after the general election. That is the point that the hon. Gentleman wishes to make. The decision had to be taken. Obviously, from the Government's point of view, if it had to be taken, it might as well be taken before the general election as afterwards.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): The hon. Gentleman is not naive. He recognises the political reality. The Government's mistake was not to mix low-level nuclear waste with intermediate-level nuclear waste, but to allow Nirex to choose four sites represented by four Conservative Members who were worried about their seats, especially the Leader of the House.

Sir Hugh Rossi: That goes to prove how well served constituents are when they have powerful and respected Members of Parliament. What defeated the Government was NIMBY. NIMBY forced Nirex off the course on which it had embarked. NIMBY is an acronym for "not in my back yard", which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is now fond of quoting. He has used that acronym so often that I have noticed that the national press regards him as the author of it. I do not wish to diminish the Minister's status with the press, but, in fact, NIMBY was given to us by the Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, and we brought it back and published it in our report. As I have taken that acronym from the Secretary of State, I would like to offer him another one—NIMTOO. I see that hon. Members are puzzled. We picked that phrase up on our recent visit to the United States from the Environmental Protection Agency and others, and it is used with regard to the disposal of hazardous and toxic wastes. NIMTOO is the natural political consequence of NIMBY, and it means "not in my term of office". The combination of NIMBY and NIMTOO has certainly led to a paralysis of action and decision in dealing with dangerous wastes in the United States. That holds great lessons for us.

Let me deal with the intervention of the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing). In dealing with radioactive, hazardous or toxic waste, the operators concerned—the Government—must carry the public with them, or they will get nowhere in a democracy such as ours.

How is that done? What is the answer?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Is it not unwise to state that any solution is the most economic? We should always go for the safest solution.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I agree with my hon. Friend. She has anticipated a word or two that I shall be addressing to the House in a moment. That was problem that concerned the Committee, and a number of paragraphs deal with it.

The first matter that was clear to us was that the very secrecy with which the nuclear industry seemed to operate was a factor in enhancing the fear of the public when they heard about the disposal of radioactive waste; because in the eyes of the general public, they are dealing with something that is unknown, invisible, intangible but deadly. I am sorry to say that there is also a public distrust of "clever" scientists. We discussed that matter fully in chapter 3 and we argued for greater openness. We urged, at least as a start, that there should be more visits to sites. To give Nirex credit, it has opened up Sellafield, and I understand that in 1987 more than 100,000 visitors went to see the way in which it was operated. In 1988, already, some 140,000 people have visited Sellafield. Indeed, it has become a major tourist attraction, advertised by tour operators in Cumbria and the Lake District. However, even at the rate of 150,000 a year, it will take a long time for the 55 million people of this country to be convinced that the system is as safe as in fact it is.

I take the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) that the public need reassuring, and they can be reassured only by being made to feel that no expense is spared in ensuring the safety of themselves, of their children and of future generations, because nuclear waste can remain active for hundreds, if not millions of years, in some instances.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that to convince the public on safety there must be built into any disposal mechanism the opportunity for consistent checking on how the nuclear waste is being handled? That would be much easier if it was above ground on site, rather than disposed of under ground or under the sea.

Sir Hugh Rossi: The Committee considered the discussion among those in favour of storage and those in favour of disposal. We accept that, certainly with high-level waste, there should be a period of storage and constant monitoring, but when the waste material has reached the point where it is not generating a great deal of heat and some of the life has gone out of it, it is suitable for and should be disposed of geologically deep, preferably under the seabed. I shall return to that matter later.

The arguments are spelt out clearly and carefully in the report. I ask the hon. Member for Moray carefully to study the report and also the evidence upon which it is based, which is contained in the two rather heavy volumes that have been produced by the Committee.

We described the need for satisfying the public that everything possible was being done to render disposal facilities safe as the "Rolls-Royce treatment", and that is something that we recommend most strongly.

The third aspect of helping people in some areas to accept the inevitability of having to live with a disposal site near to them was that of compensation. We were impressed by what we saw in France and by the way in which the French public accepted nuclear power, which was partly because of the Rolls-Royce treatment that was being used, but also because the industry and the Government recognise that the individuals who suffer by having disposal units in their backyards should be compensated for any inconvenience, any anxiety and any loss of value to their properties.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Does the hon. Gentleman consider that the attitude of the general public towards nuclear power in France is due, partly at least, to the disgraceful management of the news on this issue by successive French Governments, which included a partial news blackout on the Chernobyl disaster?

Sir Hugh Rossi: I do not think that it is correct, because the consensus of the French public was obtained long before Chernobyl. Long before Chernobyl 60 per cent. of the energy supplied in France came from nuclear power, which was partly because France does not have the advantages of having its own coal, natural gas and oil and has to find other ways of meeting its energy needs. The French public recognise that.

There is also the advantage that if one lives, for example, within 50 km of a power station, one receives electricity at half price. In addition, the operator or the industry pays considerable sums of money to the local community, which is not clawed back by means of a rate support grant formula, but is outside that, and the community really derives benefit from it. That has influenced French opinion to such an extent that we found that local mayors were inviting their atomic energy people to build power stations in their localities because of the advantages. We found recently in the United States of America that the public became more inclined to accept operations for the disposal of hazardous waste—for example, by means of incineration—when the industry was paying 1 per cent. of the turnover of the operation to the local community, and the community was able, without Government interference or set-off, to keep that money.

Mr. Flynn: I hope that the hon. Gentleman included a visit to the town of Plogoff in Finistère, where there were demonstrations by the population, including the throwing of petrol bombs, and the community of Brittany said that there would be no more nuclear power stations. There is a strong objection in France to and a growing distrust of nuclear power by those who understand it. To say that people who visit Sellafield will be more trustful of nuclear power is the same as saying that people who visit the Chamber of Horrors in Madame Tussauds will find murder more acceptable. The deepening of the knowledge of the danger of nuclear waste means a deepening of the distrust of nuclear waste.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Naturally, since Chernobyl, the public throughout the world have a greatly heightened anxiety of anything to do with nuclear power and its products. Therefore, the task of carrying the public with the industry has become infinitely more difficult than it was previously. That is why giving the public confidence both in British technology and the ability of our scientists and the fact that no money will be spared in ensuring safety is a sine qua non of any acceptance of the continuance or the finding of disposal sites, which must be found because the stuff already exists.

Ms. Walley: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that no amount of additional compensation for people's homes and lower land values will compensate for the ill health and long-term effects on the health of those people and their families?

Sir Hugh Rossi: One must be extremely careful here because, obviously, if the operation is not carried out with the latest technology, the greatest possible care and the necessary expenditure to render it safe, there will be ill

[Sir Hugh Rossi]

health. But there is abundant evidence to show that where disposal is done properly and safely there is little danger to health. One must not exaggerate or become hysterical about these matters. We must provide the safest possible system that we can for dealing with substances that we already have and must handle. There is no escaping that. One can be terribly emotive about this, but we have a practical problem. The waste exists, it must be dealt with: how do we deal with it? That is what the report is about and on what I am addressing the House.

The industry defines three general types of waste: low-level, intermediate-level and high-level waste. The Committee disagreed with those definitions and suggested others which were more closely related to the disposal routes for the safe riddance of waste. The Government have not accepted our recommendation on that for the rather naive reason that low-level, intermediate-level and high-level waste are terms readily understood by the public. But it is not the public who are concerned with the actual disposal. Operators are, and they need a definition of waste which will dictate how they should dispose of it.

One of our concerns when we considered low-level waste disposal was the operation of Drigg in Cumbria. The operators knew only the source from which the waste was coming. They had no idea what was in the waste. It was all thrown higgledy-piggledy together, bulldozed into a huge trench and covered with earth. It is difficult to imagine a more Fred Karno operation.

The Committee had to comment on that, and at paragraph 70 stated:

"Nevertheless, the haphazard approach to what goes into Drigg does not inspire confidence. Monitoring required at Drigg is of the water flow of the stream draining the site and of the surface of the filled-in trenches. We are surprised that there is no systematic on-site check of what goes *into* the trenches. Once a nuclear facility decides that a package of its waste is suitable for Drigg, then the disposal operator accepts it as such, without check."

We found that wholly unacceptable and were critical of the Drigg operation. When the Minister then responsible, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol West, (Mr. Waldegrave), came before the Committee, he apologetically said that the technology was 20 years old and that if we were to do it again we would not follow the example of Drigg but would operate differently. One was relieved to hear that.

To do the company credit, BNFL has improved considerably its operation at Drigg. It is now capping existing and future trenches to limit the ingress of rain and ground water. It is refurbishing and improving the trench drainage system. What is more, it is compacting the waste —we insisted on that—to reduce the volume, so enabling a greater capacity at Drigg. It is containerising and labelling different wastes so that if there is any unforeseen incident the waste responsible can be readily identified and found. But it does not yet monitor and check what goes into Drigg.

In their response to recommendation 4e, the Government said:

"Methods of checking . . . are kept under constant review."

But as far as we know, no checking is yet carried out on what goes into Drigg. What has this constant monitoring and review of what goes into Drigg produced? How far have we got? When will a system be implemented which checks the waste for radioactivity before it goes into Drigg to ensure that it is low-level, not intermediate-level, waste?

The Committee feels that intermediate-level and high-level waste should be disposed of in deep geological sites. Our preference is to tunnel under the seabed and to follow the example of Sweden at its Forsmark site. Everybody who goes there cannot but be impressed by its engineering, the inbuilt safety and remoteness from centres of population—which is important to deal with the problem of NIMBY. A great deal of thought and attention has been given. The Swedes' experience may direct us to Sellafield as a place for exploration because the public there have now accepted nuclear power as a fact of life and are reconciled to it. The fact that the waste generated by Sellafield is to be disposed of by tunnelling away from the shore, provided the geology is right—that is the important qualification—will probably mean that the NIMBY syndrome will not operate against the industry to the extent that it would elsewhere, except perhaps in Caithness where similar considerations may well apply.

I understand from the latest information that Nirex is now looking at Sellafield and Caithness to see whether the geology is right for the proper and safe disposal of radioactive waste. It is important that those explorations take place. The research must be done because, although it is possible say in abstract terms, as the Department of the Environment has been saying for many years, "We know that a particular kind of geology is safe for disposal and that geology can be found in certain broad areas", the experience derived in Sweden, Germany and Canada shows that, until we put down holes, we cannot be sure that the geology holds up to the general theory.

The great danger in the disposal of radioactive waste is the percolation of water. When water is present, one cannot know where the stuff that one puts down will end up in centuries' time. Therefore, it is right that anhydride mines, salt mines and granite without fissures is the geology preferable for dealing with deep disposal of such waste.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I am interested to hear the hon. Gentleman's commendation of the Swedish model, but is he aware that Nirex's considerations concerning Sellafield and Caithness are not, so far as I understand it, in any respect comparable with the Swedish model? Nirex is considering on-land sites and, furthermore, sites which are close to centres of population.

Sir Hugh Rossi: My understanding is that Nirex is at present considering both boring deep on land and tunnelling out to sea. No doubt the Minister, who has more up-to-date information, will confirm the position.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) is wrong. Although Nirex is considering a range of options, British Nuclear Fuels both has made planning applications for bore holes and is proposing an underground, undersea option. That is not disposal. We should be clear about the difference between disposal and storage. If it is underground, it does not have to be disposal. One can store underground as well as on the surface.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his confirmation.

I wish to draw the attention of the House to paragraph 83 of the report. In January 1986 we said:

"There is no proper research programme in the UK for deep geological disposal."

We were told that

"over 15 per cent. of the geology appears to be suitable for the most dangerous radioactive waste . . . but no potential sites are currently being investigated".

As I explained, that was a matter for great criticism. It is essential that exploration takes place to find the right geology for the disposal of the waste. A home must be found for it, and the sooner, the better.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that one of his Committee's major criticisms was of the Government's piecemeal and non-strategic approach? Does he accept that the fears and problems of the past few years in this country were brought about because there had been no long-term planning in this respect? The Government should have started by saying, "Let us survey the geology. Let us look at the options that other countries have explored. Let us have a proper consultative debate with open access to information so that we can make an informed conclusion on an issue that cannot be put to one side and will not go away." The waste must be dealt with. The Government have been at great fault in not strategically working out with the public and interested parties how to deal with the waste that we now have and are likely to have in the future.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I do not recall whether the hon. Gentleman was in his place when the debate opened.

Mr. Hughes: I was.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Then he will recall my reference to paragraph 3 of the report, which I read out in extenso and which makes exactly the point that he has just made. However, I can go further, if it was not clear from my remarks, by saying that the fault lies not with just one Administration, but with a series of Administrations dating back to when nuclear power was first used in this country. I see that I have provoked the hon. Member for Bootle.

Mr. Allan Roberts: I cannot allow that to go unchecked. In 1979, when the Government came to power, they cancelled, as an economy measure, specific research into the disposal of nuclear waste. That was one of the many measures that they have taken to cut research.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I am glad that the Committee has stimulated such research once again. Little progress was made by the hon. Gentleman's party when it was in power. It initiated a programme which did not go very far and great reliance was placed—and, in the Department of the Environment, is still placed—on research done in other countries, reading up pamphlets and not carrying out the kind of exploration that we requested in the report.

Mr. Flynn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Hugh Rossi: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman again; I have been most generous in doing so. I must be allowed to come to a conclusion or I shall carry on until 1 o'clock if the House does not stop me.

The National Radiological Protection Board recently stated that there must be significantly more stringent standards for authorisations concerning permits for disposal of short-lived and low-level waste. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that the current requirements were being reviewed. I should like to know how far that review had gone and the extent to which it affects Drigg.

I have referred to the Committee's views on the disposal of low-level, intermediate-level and high-level waste and now wish to turn to the question of reprocessing. That subject occupied a great deal of time in Committee and is reflected in three chapters of the report. The Committee came to no real conclusion because it felt that it did not have the evidence available to it to make a firm recommendation.

We therefore asked for a cost-benefit analysis of THORP—thermal oxide reprocessing plant—to be carried out to decide whether it was really necessary. We had evidence, for example, that raw uranium is much cheaper than reprocessed fuels. Why, therefore, reprocess, and inevitably increase, the high volume of low-level and intermediate-level waste when high-level waste could be disposed of integrally in a much more convenient fashion when disposal sites had been found?

We were aware that a sudden closure of THORP, started by the last Labour Government with some £600 million already spent and 4,000 people employed in construction, could cause considerable local and economic problems. Nevertheless, in view of the environmental hazards that were then attached, and which may still be attached, to reprocessing—some have been obviated by improved methods at Sellafield—we felt that the economic disadvantages of closing THORP ought to be weighed against the environmental benefits of ceasing reprocessing.

The Government reconsidered the matter and concluded, as is carefully spelt out in their reply, that THORP must continue. I quite understand that Ministers have inherited a decision which was made a decade ago and that much expenditure and employment depends on THORP—to the extent that they feel that the programme should carry on. I wonder, however, whether as a result of more recent developments there is now another question mark over THORP. I understand that research for fast breeder reaction at Dounreay has been abandoned.

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Gentleman is misrepresenting the Government's decision which was announced in July. Work at Dounreay will continue for many years, although there is considerably reduced funding. Moreover, the Government have reiterated their support for fast breeder reactor collaboration in the European Community.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I stand corrected. My information is that no future was seen for fast breeder reaction in the foreseeable future and it was therefore decided not to proceed with it.

We have also to consider the fact that the Central Electricity Generating Board has decided to build, at considerable expense, a dry storage facility for spent fuel at Heysham.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It has not decided. It wants to investigate the site.

Sir Hugh Rossi: We are playing with words now, but that is the thrust of thinking in the CEGB.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It is going to change—we will change its mind.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I hope that the hon. Lady will seek to intervene to make these points.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is a subject on which I feel very strongly. I am awfully sorry.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Perhaps the hon. Lady will catch my eye later in the debate.

Sir Hugh Rossi: My hon. Friend and I have reached agreement on a form of words, which is that the thrust of the thinking of the CEGB is to build a dry storage facility at Heysham. No doubt my influential and powerful colleague will do everything in her power to stop that happening.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Absolutely.

Sir Hugh Rossi: We shall watch with interest. The point I was seeking to make is that if the CEGB has seriously considered this option, does that mean that it is no longer interested in having its fuel reprocessed by THORP? Reprocessing by THORP is extremely expensive and the CEGB could buy its fuel far more cheaply on the world market. It is distinctly possible that, after privatisation, the operators will decide that sending spent fuel to THORP for reprocessing is not the most economic option. That possibility puts another question mark over the facility.

Perhaps the fundamental reason for Nirex's continuance with THORP is the fact that there is no deep disposal facility for the safe disposal of high-level waste. Until such a facility is found, reprocessing must continue. Interventions that have been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House demonstrate the NIMBY syndrome operating overtime, and Nirex may take a rather jaundiced view about the time scale on which it will obtain a deep storage facility—if it ever does. Reprocessing is therefore perhaps inevitable. That may be the real reason for the continuance of THORP.

I would like to conclude where I began, at the introduction to the report. At paragraph 5, the Select Committee says:

"it has to be recognised that, if no satisfactory and publicly acceptable means for the safe disposal of radioactive waste can be found, the continuing production of such waste and, consequently, the nuclear power policy will be put into question."

That is the bottom line. If we cannot satisfy the public and we cannot obtain facilities for the disposal of radioactive waste, the future of the nuclear industry will be called into question, as will the further production of nuclear energy. The matter must be resolved satisfactorily if the Government wish to continue their nuclear power generation policy. For sound reasons, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has felt that it is necessary to continue with nuclear power. The Department of the Environment must therefore consider how it will deal with the byproducts of nuclear power in a way which is acceptable to the country.

I am sorry if I have detained the House, but I was rather generous in giving way. I hope that, by putting the report in context, I have been helpful to the House.

10.27 am

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I listened intently to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) and found his speech informative and helpful. Despite the moderation of his speech, I feel that the management of nuclear waste disposal is a problem that is too difficult to solve. The public have recognised that, and critics of the nuclear industry recognised it a long time ago. There are some problems that are simply too difficult to solve. For example, we will never be able to travel to the nearest star, and we are discovering that certain cancers will never be cured. The disposal of nuclear waste is another such problem.

Nuclear waste is quite different from toxic waste, as industrial waste is chemical, and its disposal involves entrapping chemicals. With nuclear waste, alpha, beta and gamma particles are emitted. They are much more corrosive and cause much more biological damage because they are so penetrating. In its public relations literature the nuclear industry tries to give the impression that nuclear waste is small in volume, but whenever a uranium atom is split the fragments have virtually the same mass as the original material. For every tonne of uranium that undergoes fission, 1 per cent. gives energy, while the other 99 per cent. is dangerously radioactive waste. Uranium itself is radioactive, and the products of fission are millions of times as radioactive as the original uranium.

There is no way that we can allow such products to leach into the environment. As for the amount produced, every nuclear reactor, every year produces a thousand times as much long-lived radioactive waste as was released at Hiroshima. That is the size of the problem. At the moment Nirex has no responsibility for high-level waste. Generally, as it was even in the excellent speech of the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green, the problem of high-level waste is deferred to the indefinite future.

The high-level waste produced in Britain at the moment is stored in Sellafield. The amount is hundreds of thousands of times as much as was released at Hiroshima. It frightens me that if there was ever the confrontation that we all seek to avoid one direct hit by a nuclear weapon on Sellafield would render wasteland northern Europe, as there is so much radioactive waste there already. If the nuclear industry and the policies of the Government bear fruit, and if we go into the next century with an energy policy whereby nuclear power becomes the leading source of energy, by the middle of the next century we will have 10 times, or even a hundred times, as much radioactive waste in Sellafield as there is today. On no account should we leave future generations such a legacy.

I have been interested in the subject for more than 15 years. During those years, as a scientist, I have examined the various options that have been thrown up for the management and long-term disposal of waste. We have had some idiot solutions over the years, such as rocketing to the sun or metal canisters boring through the Antarctic ice caps. Even disposal on the seabed was considered seriously. Now we have the deep bore holes and engineered repositories just offshore. As a scientist, rather than as a politician, I have looked in detail at each of those, and it is my sincere conclusion that not one of them is remotely a Rolls-Royce solution. The general public realise that.

Back in 1981 the Government proposed to drill boreholes in various parts of Britain, in mid-Wales and in north Wales, in Gwynedd and in Powys. I became involved in work at Pandora in Powys and in Madryn in north Wales to prevent those borehole proposals. It was obvious that that was the thin end of the wedge. First they would drill boreholes and then, within five or 10 years, they would dump high-level waste.

Mr. Norman Miscampbell (Blackpool, North): The Committee and the House accept that there is a problem. If the hon. Gentleman has looked at all the solutions and says that none of them is any good, what are we to do about it?

Mr. Williams: I shall go into that in detail in a few minutes. First, I shall knock down the present options being considered by the Government. In 1981 I spent three years examining the proposals for deep boreholes. I was working under my predecessor, the then hon. Member for Carmarthen, Dr. Roger Thomas. We tabled a whole series of parliamentary questions and I was in touch with the Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell about its methods of long-term disposal.

We were examining the problem of high-level waste. The solution then being proposed was vitrification. Vitrified waste was put into solid metal canisters which were drilled 5,000 ft or 10,000 ft into hard rock and then buried underground. As a former research chemist, I shall explain what would happen. With intensely radioactive materials, the glass would very soon shatter and the metal canisters would corrode, in exactly the same way as metal rusts, but much worse in the case of radioactive materials when radiolysis occurs. There is groundwater flow even through the very hardest, oldest and toughest rocks. Frankly, drilling the borehole into the rock creates the very path by which groundwater gets to radioactive waste. I am glad that the Government have thrown that idiot option into the indefinite future. There is no way that we can dispose of radioactive waste in deep boreholes.

As for the present option that Nirex is considering, we have heard talk of Sellafield and Caithness as the only two sites in Britain where public acceptability would allow it. It is not a matter of geology or technology. Public acceptability rules it out in 648 out of 650 constituencies in Britain. It is an act of desperation that Nirex has to go to Sellafield and Caithness, where the populations are trapped. Sellafield has a long history of nuclear waste processing—not a very good history, given all its leaks and so on—but the waste is there and it is convenient to store it there. No other population in Britain would be willing to accept the waste. The same applies to Caithness, especially now that the fast breeder reactor programme is being run down and there will be several thousand workers with nowhere else to turn for comparable employment.

The present proposal is for engineered repositories, tunnels under the seabed and ultimate disposal there. I and other hon. Members have been sent a beautifully glossy leaflet—it spares no expense in its public relations—showing diagrammatic representation of the repositories. They look very pretty, with beautiful sandy colours, but that is about it. If we dispose of intermediate-level wastes in those repositories, the very same objections apply as to deep boreholes. Eventually, groundwater will get to those repositories. Indeed, I visited a coal mine a few weeks ago, and one of the problems in all mining technology is that water has to be continualy pumped out from underground.

I understand that that idea is simply for retrievable storage. My hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) pointed out a few minutes ago that one of the key features is that it is retrievable. It is vital that all nuclear wastes are retrievable for the next hundreds of thousands of years, because they cannot be allowed to leach into the environment. If they are to be retrievable, why bother to put them underground? Why not keep them above ground? If the idea is to put them underground just to take them out again, why put them underground in the first place? Frankly, that solution is simply to hide the problem out of sight and out of mind. It is pulling wool over people's eyes. It is no answer to the problem of waste disposal.

I understand that in some public pronouncement on this subject the chairman of Nirex has given the game away and said that in 50 years' time the tunnels would be filled in any way and that retrievability is just for 50 years. Frankly, if that is done and groundwater gets to them, they will leach back into Sellafield and into the Irish sea.

What should we do with our problem, which we have created over the past 40 years? During the past 40 years we have managed our waste at nuclear sites at nuclear power stations and at Sellafield. I am afraid that the answer is indefinite above ground storage at Sellafield and other nuclear power stations. They are under continual monitoring. If there are leaks, as regrettably there are, at least we can do something about them. It is a sad answer, but that is the state of the game. There is no Rolls-Royce answer.

I listened carefully to my predecessor's remarks on reprocessing. I have always thought that reprocessing is unnecessary. It was invented and developed in the 1940s to isolate plutonium for nuclear weapons and the military programme. We now have an embarrassing stockpile of plutonium. We have 45 tonnes at Sellafield which we do not know what to do with. We have so many nuclear weapons worldwide that we do not need that extra plutonium. As a result of the announcements about Dounreay, we know that plutonium will not be needed in fast breeder reactors. The Government have at last seen that the fast breeder reactor is a non-starter. The world will not choose the nuclear option. Hard-headed realism has hit a few people in the Department of Energy and they realise that we will not move from U 235 to plutonium.

Why reprocess waste at Sellafield? My predecessor and the Central Electricity Generating Board have been thinking about the dry storage option. That may happen post-privatisation. By taking waste to Sellafield, dissolving it in nitric acid and carrying out the other reprocessing methods we are increasing the volume by 10. We are creating enormous volumes of low-level waste which we will have to discharge into the Irish sea. We are creating radioactive pollution by reprocessing. Therefore, reprocessing simply multiplies the problem. It is uneconomic and is one of the main reasons for last year's disappointing results from the CEGB. Reprocessing is an extra cost which a privatised electricity industry will not be paying. We do not need the products from reprocessing. The products of reprocessing are unchanged uranium—that is cheap enough anyway on the world market—plutonium—we have embarrassing stockpiles of that—and high-level wastes which we do not know what to do with. Sellafield should be closed down.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): The hon. Gentleman talked about the effects of a nuclear missile attack on the waste stored above ground at Sellafield. Later in his remarks he came to the conclusion that above ground storage was the only option. Therefore, presumably he is happy about that. Surely it would be better, to obviate the risk about which he is worried, to

[Mr. Hugo Summerson]

create a proper facility under the seabed so that if a nuclear missile arrives it will not scatter the material all over the place.

Mr. Williams: I am not happy about above ground storage. The only long-term answer to nuclear waste is not to create it in the first place. If it is put underground 1 mile or 3 miles off shore, it will be no safer than in Sellafield itself. It will be an embarrassment to civilisation for the rest of time.

Mr. Summerson: The hon. Gentleman said that he would close down Sellafield.

Mr. Williams: I would close down the reprocessing plant. Unfortunately, we cannot close the site because it will never become a green field site. The nature of the industry prevents that. The waste at Sellafield will have to be looked after for hundreds of thousands of years.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Does my hon. Friend mean that he would close down THORP and the reprocessing at Sellafield? Surely he does not mean that he would close the entire site, because the Labour party is committed to using the skills there for decommissioning as we phase out nuclear power.

Mr. Williams: Despite representing the Labour party, on the management of the nuclear industry I have serious differences with the policies of the party. I claim that the views I am putting forward today are the views of the majority of British people.

Berkeley will have the first example of decommissioning. It will take over 100 years to take out the fuel, the non-radioactive parts and then to try to dismantle the core. That will not work. It is incredible that we built those reactors 20, 30 or 40 years ago and have no idea how to take them apart. There are vast quantities of intermediate-level waste—about 25,000 tonnes per reactor. Where do we put that? that is what Caithness, Sellafield and other areas will be designed for.

As I have said, to take a nuclear power station apart is a 100-year job, at a cost of about £300 million. That is probably an underestimate and we do not even have the technology to do it.

What do we do with our redundant nuclear power stations? The Magnox power stations will all become redundant by the turn of the century. My belief is that we should leave them where they are. They were designed to contain high-level waste and have a biological shield around the reactor core. When Berkeley comes to the end of its life, the safest option is to drop in all the control rods and leave it there for the rest of time. Why take the fuel out if it means shipping it to Sellafield, multiplying the cost and the volume and not knowing what to do with the products? We might as well leave it where it is. The answer to the nuclear waste problem is to stop producing nuclear waste. It is the end of the nuclear dream.

I am certain that the comments that I have made represent public opinion. People do not want nuclear power stations. They want us to stop generating waste. They want us to stop reprocessing nuclear waste at Sellafield or wherever. Certainly there is 100 per cent. belief in the fact that we should not dispose of nuclear waste in the out-of-sight, out-of-mind ways that the Government are considering.

10.48 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I appreciate the opportunity of being able to take part in the debate—one of the first debates in my new position. I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) for his kind words of welcome and pay tribute to his distinguished work as Chairman of the Select Committee and on a great number of subjects. He referred to his report on historic buildings. That is also one of my responsibilities and I hope that we may have an opportunity to debate that in the future. He also said that he held ministerial office for nine weeks. I am pleased to have exceeded that, but I am not sure whether in the fullness of time I shall be able to succeed to his present distinguished position.

This is an extremely important subject. Already it is clear from what hon. Members have said that strong feelings are held in terms of the principles and constituency interests involved. The Select Committee report made an extremely important contribution in clarifying the issues involved and moving the debate forward. I recognise the quality of the work that went into the Committee's first report on this important subject. It is two years since the Government published their response in a White Paper and it is time to review progress and report on developments. Much work has been done to solve the waste management issue. The remaining doubts result largely from different underlying conceptions rather than from primarily technical considerations. They can lead to strong passions and feelings, as we have already seen this morning.

Radiation is all around us, and it always has been. It is in our homes, our food and our bodies. Many hon. Members, like me, will be wearing watches which contain radioactive material, will have smoke detectors protecting their property, which rely on radioactivity for their sensitivity and will put fertilisers on their gardens containing naturally radioactive materials.

Radioactivity comes from space, the ground we walk on and from the air that we breathe. On average, well over four fifths of the radiation received by the population of the United Kingdom is from such natural sources. Most of the rest comes from medical and industrial applications of radioactivity. About one thousandth of the total comes from the nuclear industry.

To be prudent, we assume that even the smallest amount of additional radiation potentially could be harmful, and the Government recognise that. Radiation is controlled more rigorously than any other form of pollution, which is why all users of radioactive substances have to be registered or otherwise controlled by licences from Government regulatory bodies.

There are over 6,000 registered premises in England and Wales, of which 1,000 are authorised by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution to discharge small quantities of radioactive waste. The nearest registered premises to the House are to be found in St. Thomas's hospital just across the river. The House was measured for radioactivity two years ago. Low levels were found as a result of natural processes.

We strive to ensure that the total contribution to radiation exposure from radioactive wastes remains insignificant. Radiation doses received by individuals are, and will continue to be, kept well within the limits

recommended by the International Commission on Radiological Protection, the United Nations Scientific Committee for the Evaluation of Atomic Radiation and our own National Radiological Protection Board.

The Government have established two independent committees—the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee and the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radioactivity in the Environment, which advise us on such matters.

Processes that give rise to the release or disposal of radioactive waste will continue to be examined thoroughly by Government inspectors. Operators have to observe the numerical limits laid down in authorisations. They also have to use best practicable means to limit further any radioactivity discharged. All such authorisations are reviewed regularly to ensure that the necessary high standards are maintained.

A common misconception is that there are vast amounts of radioactive waste awaiting disposal. By the year 2030, all the radioactive waste produced will be the equivalent of only two to three weeks' domestic refuse production—an amount small enough to make it possible to concentrate on the development of a single national disposal facility. Most of this waste has a low level of radioactivity. It presents such a small risk that it can be handled by workers wearing normal industrial clothes—gloves and laboratory coats. Nothing more is needed. Much of the waste remains radioactive only for a short time, and it can be disposed of quite safely in the same way as other industrial and household wastes.

Wastes with an intermediate level of radioactivity can be handled safely using remote tools, cranes or simple shielding. Nevertheless, they may retain their radioactivity for many centuries and need to be disposed of well away from people, deep underground or under the seabed.

The rest of the waste is heat generating. It contains well over 99 per cent. of the radioactivity with which we have to deal. It is concentrated to a very small volume. The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), reported in his evidence to the Committee that the amount of heat-generating waste arising to the year 2000 would fill two large rooms. This waste will soon be vitrified, and because of its radioactive content the glass has to be treated with great care. It will be stored at Sellafield for at least 50 years to allow much of the radioactivity to decay. A decision can then be taken whether to store it still longer or dispose of it deep underground.

Whatever we do now, radioactive waste exists. It will continue to be produced from a wide range of conventional industrial activities as well as from our hospitals and universities, irrespective of its production from electricity generation.

Mr. Allan Roberts: It is a typical line taken by the nuclear industry and Ministers that the nuclear industry is the same as a hospital. Only the nuclear industry produces high-level waste; low and intermediate-level waste are produced by other industries and by hospitals. The Minister cannot get away with that.

Mrs. Bottomley: Hospitals certainly produce radioactive waste, and I accept that the energy industry is responsible for much waste. It is important that people see it in its proper perspective and understand the full range of ways in which waste is generated.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mrs. Bottomley: I should like to proceed.

I shall give a few examples from the wide range of important applications of radioactive substances. In industry, they measure the quantities of hazardous liquids in sealed tanks, avoid the build-up of static electricity, which could otherwise cause gas or dust explosions, and provide emergency signs on exit and evacuation routes. In hospitals, to which the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) referred, they are important tools in research, have a wide range of clinical applications—for example, to detect and treat thyroid disorders—and are essential for cancer therapy. In universities and research, they play a part in developing new drugs, help us to understand rare species and their preservation in their natural habitat, and ensure effective grouting of oil rigs to the floor of the North sea.

All those life-enhancing applications inevitably create some waste. They must be considered alongside the waste produce from the generation of electricity by nuclear means, which is crucial to maintain an essential diversity in the supply of electrical energy.

The main focus of debate is often related to wastes arising from the creation of nuclear power, as the hon. Member for Bootle said. Britain has enjoyed the benefits of nuclear power for over 25 years. Our nuclear power stations have had an enviable safety record for many years. There is no question of abandoning this source of energy, which has provided an important and safe element of diversity and security to the country's energy supplies.

Unlike some of our European neighbours, nuclear power in Britain supplies only about 20 per cent.of the electricity that we use. By the end of the decade, this should rise to about 23 per cent. Belgium and Sweden, by contrast generate over 50 per cent. of their electricity by nuclear means. France generates over 70 per cent. and this will rise to over 80 per cent. within a decade. Japan is making a major commitment to nuclear power, as are almost all other advanced countries.

Renewable forms of electricity generation—the wind, sun, tides and others—can provide useful contributions and are well worth developing. The Government will be spending over £150 million on such research and development to the end of the century. However, it would be wrong to conclude that these sources of energy will have no effect on our environment. All sources of energy have some environmental cost. To substitute for even part of the enormous and constant amounts of energy that nuclear power can provide, large tracts of land or water would have to be changed, and there would be noise and visual pollution. Other amenity and ecological effects would be inevitable. Such renewable forms of energy cannot, in the short term, substitute for all the electricity currently generated by nuclear stations.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green said, in recent weeks there has been a serious debate about the importance of safeguarding the global environment, which was initiated by the major speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the Royal Society. Our debate must take place against that backcloth. There is an overwhelming environmental case

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to be made for nuclear power. Many profess to be concerned about acid rain and the greenhouse effect, but as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said earlier this month, nuclear power provides the best environmental method of generating electricity on a scale that does not involve the emission of carbon dioxide or sulphur dioxide. Those are two of the biggest pollutants responsible for the greenhouse effect and acid rain. To oppose nuclear power can only be to advocate conventional pollution.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Is the hon. Lady aware that if the Government were prepared to develop some of the remaining coal seams in Scotland, we could produce non-sulphuric coal, which would solve the problem that she raises? The Government's direction is wrong in assuming that nuclear power is the best way to protect the environment.

Mrs. Bottomley: There is no fossil fuel that does not have the disadvantages of causing acid rain and producing the greenhouse effect, especially through the production of carbon dioxide.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the Minister accept that the argument that she has repeated, which was put forward by the Secretary of State and others—that the only safe energy process is nuclear power and that that process is the one most compatible with protecting our environment—is flawed for one fundamental reason: that the by-product of nuclear power is the production of waste with which we cannot safely deal? There is no technology to deal with that waste in Britain, and the problem is compounded by the importation of waste which we reprocess, resulting in other by-products. It is hardly environmentally good stewardship to create a problem that we have no means of solving.

Mrs. Bottomley: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman should try to convince some of his colleagues of those arguments before trying to convince me. The purpose of the debate is to discuss radioactive waste, the seriousness with which the Government regard the issue, the need for public information and the way forward.

Ms. Walley: Does the hon. Lady agree that the Government are advocating further investment in nuclear power at a time when we cannot even deal with the present waste? All we are doing is creating a greater problem for future generations.

Mrs. Bottomley: I hope that, at the end of the debate, the hon. Lady will feel that the Government have clear plans to deal with waste. That is the purpose of our policies. I have made it clear that our nuclear energy is very modest compared with that of many other countries. It is time to stop looking to the past and thinking that there will be some easy solution. Nuclear power has been with us for 25 years. We have a good record in the industry. We are proposing long-term plans for the disposal of waste. That is the purpose of this debate.

The steps being taken by the nuclear industry to reduce the environmental impact of its operations are welcome. BNFL has reduced the levels of radioactivity in the liquid wastes discharged into the sea from its Sellafield plant to well under one tenth the 1979 level. I hope that that reassures the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams). Committed improvements mean that those levels will be reduced even further by 1992. I repeat that the amount of radiation exposure from nuclear wastes, in the United Kingdom as a whole, is less than one thousandth of that from the natural background radioactivity to which we are all exposed.

I turn to some specific issues raised in the Environment Committee's report. The Government welcomed the Committee's work, which played an important part in helping to clarify many of the issues involved. The report contained a wide range of recommendations, which we have considered most carefully. In their response, the Government took full account of the Committee's recommendations and updated their overall strategy on waste disposal. The strategy remains valid today.

A number of the Committee's recommendations were directly relevant to the development of a disposal facility for radioactive waste. We strongly support the Committee's endorsement of Government policy that safe disposal routes can be developed in the United Kingdom and that early disposal is the right answer for low and intermediate-level wastes. We note that the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities has recently endorsed that view.

Since the publication of the Environment Committee's report, the Government have accepted the advice of the chairman of UK Nirex Ltd. to dispose of both low and intermediate-level radioactive wastes in a single deep facility. This will be similar in many respects to the Forsmark facility adopted by the Swedes as their solution, an approach advocated by the Select Committee. Investigations are currently being undertaken by UK Nirex Ltd. and we look forward to receiving detailed proposals so that we can make rapid progress. Both the Environment Committee and the House of Lords Select Committee have emphasised that there is a solution and that we should proceed to disposal as soon as practicable. The task before us is clear.

The principal disposal facility now available to the nuclear industry is at Brigg——

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Not Brigg.

Mrs. Bottomley: I mean Drigg in Cumbria. My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) has caught my eye.

Since the publication of the Committee's report, we have required considerable improvements, and the Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have revised the authorisation for the disposal of radioactive wastes. Stringent limits are now placed on the activity of wastes and compaction is required as a good waste management procedure which also prolongs the operational life of the site.

Mr. Flynn *rose*——

Mrs. Bottomley: I have given way a lot already.

This authorisation will be reviewed again in three years as further improvemens are made. For instance, British Nuclear Fuels plc, the owner of the site, will use a system of concrete-lined vaults to contain the waste. These will be similar to those which the Committee saw and admired in France. These improvements reflect a need to ensure that risks to the public are as low as are reasonably achievable

and to bring operation of the site in line with the best waste management practice. I hope that that reassures my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes.

The Select Committee foresaw major practical difficulties in disposing of drummed waste in the deep ocean, as was undertaken annually until 1983. In May this year, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy announced that such waste, including that prepared for sea disposal in 1983, would be consigned to the facility to be built by Nirex. Nevertheless, continuing research still shows that sea disposal is a safe disposal option. The Government remain of that view and will keep the option open for large items arising from decommissioning operations.

As part of its response to the Committee's reports, the Department asked the Central Electricity Generating Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board to respond to recommendations relating to the storage and disposal of spent nuclear fuel without reprocessing. We have now reviewed their assessments. We are satisfied that it remains prudent policy to continue the present arrangements whereby spent fuel is reprocessed at the Sellafield plant of British Nuclear Fuels plc. There is a clear commitment to that policy in the White Paper and the Government remain committed to it. However, the Central Electricity Generating Board has recently announced plans for a dry store for fuel from advanced gas-cooled reactors, which it proposes to build at Heysham in Lancashire. This would permit storage before reprocessing or direct disposal. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman) hopes to catch your eye later in the debate, Madam Deputy Speaker, to make further remarks about those proposals.

The Select Committee and the House of Lords Committee concluded that safe disposal routes can be developed, and the Government agree. The main difficulties, to which the Committees have drawn attention, are public understanding, confidence and trust. The remaining problems which we face with radioactive waste are not technical in nature. The policy of successive Governments has always been to require a wide margin of safety in response to public concern. The results of extensive research programmes and sound, impartial, technical advice from a broad range of independent bodies are available. The Government will continue their policy of full consultation on all significant waste management proposals. The current approach by Nirex to site selection for a disposal facility, including its recent consultation exercise, together with the Government's decision to hold a public inquiry, reflect that commitment. I hope that many hon. Members will be reassured by that. Whatever solution is adopted, it will be developed as quickly as possible and will satisfy the most stringent safety requirements.

11.9 am

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I welcome the Minister to her new post. She has been given a very difficult job—to defend from now on the Government's record on the environment. If today's speech is anything to go on, she will deal with it with a delicate complacency. That was the hallmark of her speech on the disposal of nuclear waste. As well as delicate complacency, her speech showed an outrageous disregard for Government policy over the past nine years—nine years of neglect of the environment and of contributing to the destruction of the environment. Yet, one speech by the Prime Minister and the blues have supposedly turned green. What nonsense! The Minister will not be able to escape from the Government's record over the past nine years.

The most outrageous of the twists and turns in the Government's policy is their new-found commitment to the expansion of nuclear power because fossil-fuelled power stations cause pollution. I wish that the Government had admitted that two or three years ago. For nine years we have been telling them that fossil-fuelled power stations that have not been retrofitted or properly treated because there was not the necessary expenditure cause pollution. The first report of the Select Committee on the Environment under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) dealt with that issue.

Three years ago the Prime Minister became worried about acid rain. Chancellor Kohl of West Germany complained that forests in Germany were being destroyed, and the Scandinavians said that their lakes were being destroyed and that fish were being killed in southern Norway, so the Prime Minister thought that she should look into the matter. A meeting was held at Chequers, but the mistake that was made was to invite Lord Marshall to attend. It was a long weekend. It must have been one of the longest and dirtiest weekends in history. [HON. MEMBERS: "Contemptible."] Yes, it was contemptible that the Prime Minister came out of that meeting believing the CEGB line that there was not a problem, that nothing needed to be done and that Britain could continue to pollute the European environment. That has been the Government's policy.

Sir Hugh Rossi: When the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) spoke of having given constant warnings, I hope that he was referring to the work of the Select Committee on the Environment, and that he was not saying that as spokesman for the Labour party. Not a word about acid rain was heard from the Labour party until the Select Committee report came out. Moreover, when the Labour party was in power, I consistently asked questions about the dangers of sulphur dioxide, and time after time Labour Ministers said that they saw no significance in that.

Labour and Conservative Governments have been in the same position of waiting for evidence with which they could be satisfied. It is true that the chairman of the CEGB gave information to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister which suggested to her that there was no connection between emissions from power stations and the damage caused overseas. However, as a result of the Select Commitee's report, monitoring and research took place, and it was two years after that that the Department of the Environment accepted that a nexus existed.

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman knows that I am a great admirer of his chairmanship of the Select Commitee on the Environment, and I admire the way in which he has managed to produce all-party reports 99 per cent. of the time. He chose issues which, at the time, did not have a high political profile. Until eight or nine years ago there was neither the knowledge nor the realisation of the causes of acid rain. As soon as there was, the Labour party outlined one of the best and toughest policies on the

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environment, which took account of the recommendations of the Select Committee on the Environment. The Government have refused to accept those recommendations. Why is that?

What the Labour party said five or six years ago has proved to be true. The Government were planning a long-term strategy. They were happy to ignore the problems of acid rain and pollution from fossil-fuelled power stations, and they did not spend the money necessary to retrofit them. They were happy to pretend that there was no problem until other people stigmatised fossil-fuelled power stations. They used that as justification for their policy of spending money on nuclear power and running down the coal industry. That was their tactic.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: In 1979, was not the Labour Government about to order a prototype fluidised bed combustion power station for Carmarthen bay? That technology allows coal to be burnt without any acid rain pollution and involves using limestone to absorb the sulphur, but this Government have abandoned work on that technology at Grimethorpe.

Mr. Roberts: That is true. There are two methods for cleaning up fossil-fuelled power stations. If new power stations are built, we should include fluidised bed combustion, and we should retrofit existing power stations with scrubbers to take out the sulphur. The Government plan to retrofit at most five or six out of 40 power stations, depending on whether one listens to the advice of the Department of the Environment or of the CEGB.

Britain is the only country in Europe that is still increasing emissions of sulphur—200,000 tonnes last year. The Government called it a hiccup, but that was more than the whole of Norway's emissions in 12 months. The Government refuse to join the 30 per cent. club to do something to prevent acid rain—along with Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Greece, which are hardly the European countries most famous for cleaning up the environment. Britain has a scandalous record. The Government refuse to act on fossil fuel pollution, but then use that as justification for the expansion of nuclear power.

The Government's policies on nuclear power and waste disposal are a mess. The Minister referred to the radioactive waste management advisory committee, which the Government established. Its report in July 1988 said: "policy remains disappointingly confused and deficient". The truth is that in the words attributed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, we have a "not in my back yard" Government. The right hon. Gentleman wants development everywhere and for concrete to be sprayed all over our green and pleasant land, but not in his back yard. Nirex proposed four locations for disposal in shallow burial sites of low-level waste, but that was abandoned before the general election because the Leader of the House and three other Conservative Members did not want the sites in their back yards.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): I remind the hon. Gentleman that this is an un-Whipped debate, in which we can discuss the disposal of nuclear waste honestly, without engaging in party polemics I should be deeply grateful if we could return to the subject of the debate.

Mr. Roberts: The Minister's speech was outrageously party-political and complacent. I intend to answer in kind and to deal with the issues, which I, at least, understand.

There are different levels of nuclear waste. First, there are discharges into the environment, and the Minister was complacent about them. It used to be believed that anything could be put into the sea and that the sea was so vast that the waste would disappear and disperse. We know now that that is not true and that the waste will become concentrated in the silt, that worms will eat the silt, that fish will eat the worms and that we shall then eat the fish. Pollution has occurred in the Irish sea as a result of discharges from Sellafield, and that is only one example of a major problem. Discharges are still coming from Sellafield at an unsatisfactory level. If we had a Labour Government—as we shall after the next general election—they would end all nuclear discharges into the environment.

After nine and a half years in power the Government still have no policy on low-level waste, having cancelled the sites in Conservative constituencies. It is all being dumped at Drigg near Sellafield in a way which, despite the acceptance of the nuclear industry in that area, is becoming unacceptable to the community there in view of the nature of the dumping, the amounts involved and the fact that there is no end to it in sight. *[Interruption.]* That is exactly what the Shadow Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) would have said because he asked me to say it on his behalf. The people of Drigg and the surrounding area are sick of being the dumping ground for the whole nation's low-level waste, and some satisfactory alternative disposal route must be found.

As for intermediate waste, the Government cancelled site specific research in 1979. Intermediate waste was then mixed with concrete, put in a kind of container and dumped in the sea, but that is no longer possible, although the Government would have broken international agreements against sea dumping of intermediate waste had not the National Union of Seamen prevented that by refusing to go out and dump the waste. So where is all that intermediate-level waste now? The Government talk about public confidence in the nuclear industry, but that waste is stored in great hangars and sheds awaiting disposal. Neither the Government nor Nirex have any idea of where to dispose of it, so it remains there in the form that was used in the past for sea dumping. No alternative disposal route has been found and the Government have sat around complacently for five or six years doing nothing about the problem.

As for high-level waste, there are basically two forms. First, there are the spent fuel rods. Uranium is put into fuel rods and burnt in the power stations. The spent rods constitute hot, high-level waste with probably a million years of radioactive life and are stored under water in ponds at the Magnox power stations. They are then transported, stored in ponds, for reprocessing. If the rods are not reprocessed, the high-level waste remains to be dealt with. Reprocessing gets rid of the fuel rods but produces plutonium—the most dangerous substance known to man. In other words, reprocessing produces another type of high-level waste, which is then stored in tanks at Sellafield in liquid form and stirred to stop it settling. Now and then, the tanks leak.

The Government say that that waste must be vitrified, and a vitrification plant is being built at Sellafield. The

resulting high-level radioactive glass with a million years of radioactive life will then be stored on the surface at Sellafield for 50 to 100 years—the Minister says perhaps about 50 years—not as a solution, but until a solution can be found, if, indeed, a solution can be found. If no solution can be found, the waste remains retrievable and monitorable. That must be taken into account in the wonderful mañana theory of cheap nuclear power, because storage and monitoring for all those years will cost a great deal of money.

With the exception of the greenhouse effect, which may affect future generations—the Labour party is the first to accept that and to demand action—there is a difference between nuclear pollution and toxic waste such as acid rain. Nuclear pollution affects the unborn in a way that toxic waste does not. That is why the subject is so sensitive and why the British people are so concerned. And that is why it is criminal neglect for the Government, having been fervently committed to the expansion of nuclear power, to have no real policy for the control, disposal and monitoring of nuclear waste. That is their situation after nine years in power, and it is a very difficult record for the Minister to inherit and to seek to defend.

In the past the Labour party has often criticised the way in which Nirex is constituted and the manner in which it operates. We still believe that the present consultation process would have been more appropriately carried out by a body not seen to be solely representative of the nuclear industry. The Royal Commission on environmental pollution described Nirex as entirely a creature of the nuclear industry. Although Nirex may consult about methods of disposal of intermediate and low-level waste, it has no remit to question the policies of the bodies which produce the waste and those which support reprocessing. In our view, that is a mistake. Nirex also has no remit for the disposal of high level waste. As a minimum, those with environmental concerns and the trade unions in the industry should be part of Nirex, and the commitment to consultation should not seek to limit the scope of the debate.

The document produced by Nirex suggests that consideration can be given only to a choice of three relatively similar deep disposal sites and that only the locality is a matter for debate. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) in objecting to that, although I am not so opposed as he is to the idea of retrievable, monitorable underground storage. If I were, I should not have signed the Select Committee recommendations suggesting it as one of the alternatives.

I should also not have been so impressed with the Forsmark facility in Sweden, which is not disposal, but storage under the sea. People think that it is sea dumping, or that it will travel through the sea, but it is monitorable and retrievable, and the rock in the sea acts as a barrier to stop the radioactivity getting out. Nevertheless, that is not the only option on which Nirex should be consulting. We should also be considering on-site storage, surface storage, and so on. Every alternative should be part of the debate.

I should make it clear that the Labour party is against any disposal of any radioactive waste, of intermediate or of high level, especially because in the light of current knowledge the final disposal of such waste is not an option. It must be retrievable, and it must be stored, monitored and controlled, because we do not yet have the technology or the evidence to show that waste other than low-level waste can be disposed of safety in a way that does not result in the radioactivity getting back into man's environment. What we wanted from the Select Committee was research into the whole question of reprocessing and its costs. The argument is that fuel rods from Magnox stations, once they have been wet stored, have to be reprocessed, otherwise they cause even more environmental problems.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House his party's policy on low-level nuclear waste?

Mr. Roberts: We are in favour of the storage of low-level waste, with intermediate waste in the respository being researched by Nirex. In the Select Committee on the Environment we were in favour—I put my name to it—of proper engineered burial sites for low-level waste, but the Government have ruled that out, saying that it can be deep stored with intermediate-level waste rather than disposed of. That seems a safer, more sensible option than putting it is shallow trenches and covering it with soil, as has been going on for 20-odd years at Drigg.

We do not shy away from the problems of the treatment and disposal or storage of nuclear waste. If a Labour Government were elected next week and we stopped the development of nuclear power and started to phase it out, in the short term we should create more nuclear waste than would be created by continuing the present programme because of all the decommissioning activities. Therefore, we must find a way to deal with nuclear waste. No one in the Labour party is sticking his head in the sand like an ostrich in relation to the need to decommission the Polaris submarines and to dispose of their nuclear components. We are certainly seriously considering the issues and how best to deal with existing waste. The long-term answer may be to stop producing it, but that does not deal with what is already being produced.

The Select Committee ruled out any argument on whether to continue with nuclear power, and instead considered the practical issue of disposing of what had already been produced. The Labour party has also considered that matter and has ideas about what to do. On day two after we have been elected to Government we will end all secrecy surrounding the nuclear industry and take it out of the scope of the Official Secrets Act. We will stop the production of all military grade plutonium, which is the most dangerous substance known to man. There will be a comprehensive review of the transportation of nuclear waste, and we accept the recommendation of the Select Committee that rail would be the safest way to deal with it.

A Labour Government would end all nuclear discharges into the environment. We would reconstitute Nirex so that it is representative of trade unions and environmental organisations. We would maintain research into a deep underground repository, but we would also research other sorts of storage facilities. No nuclear waste should be disposed of under the seabed if that requires the waste to pass through the sea, which we think to be an unsound practice. No nuclear waste should be dumped or discharged into the sea.

A Labour Government would start the decommissioning of Magnox power stations. I challenge the Government to accept that those stations must be phased out and decommissioned and that the necessary

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expenditure must be committed. We must prove that it can be done or there will be no credibility for the future of the nuclear industry.

I repeat my allegations that the Government's record on nuclear waste and their policies for dealing with it are abysmal. Their record gives the lie to any belief that they are concerned about the environment. They are dealing with one of the most poignant, important and significant issues—that of nuclear waste and discharges into the environment. It affects not only the present generation, but will affect future generations of unborn children. If the Government cannot get that or any other environmental problem right, they must accept criticism in good faith. If they truly want to solve the problem of nuclear waste they will have to change their policies dramatically.

11.33 pm

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I am most grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me so early in a debate on a matter of the greatest possible interest to both my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd), who, for obvious reasons, cannot take part in the debate.

I wish to direct my remarks to one aspect of radioactive waste disposal—the storage of spent fuel from AGRs prior to reprocessing. To store it on one site outside Sellafield is unnecessary. There are two AGRs at Heysham, on the outskirts of my constituency and that of my hon. Friend. The spent fuel from the first reactor and a small amount from the second is currently stored on the site prior to reprocessing at Sellafield. Indeed, some of it has already been sent to Sellafield.

There is currently a suggestion, as the Minister phrased it, from the CEGB, although not from the Government, that all the spent fuel from AGRs throughout the United Kingdom should be stored at Heysham prior to reprocessing at Sellafield. As I pointed out to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), who presented his report so brilliantly, neither I and my colleague nor our constituents are interested in finding a cheap solution to the problem for the CEGB or its successor; we are interested only in finding the safest solution.

My overwhelming duty to my constituents coincides exactly with my own feelings as my home is but a mile from the proposed site, and on the prevailing wind side. I am not in the business of imperilling my constituents' children and grandchildren or my own, and nor is my hon. Friend, who lives nearby. It is the duty of the CEGB to find the safest solution for the storing of spent fuel rods and it is the duty of the Minister and the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate to ensure that it does so. If it is thought for one moment that safety is not at the top of the CEGB's list, we shall not hesitate to oppose it tooth and nail. Neither I nor my constituents are satisfied with the current position. We have our own solution, which is that each AGR should store its own spent fuel on its own site.

The storage of spent fuel rods must also include transportation to and from the site of the material, and it is that aspect that causes the deepest concern. I am very well aware that trains run into the power stations, but I am also aware that, in its initial proposals, the CEGB said that, although rail transport would be mainly used, road and sea transport might also be used. That is one reason why it suggested Heysham. I can imagine absolutely no area whose road system is more inadequate even for normal transport, let alone nuclear transport, than Heysham. My hon. Friend and I have been saying that to the Minister for Roads and Traffic—and this is not unknown to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State—for very many years.

Quite apart from the inadequacy of our roads, I cannot understand why each site cannot store its own spent fuel rods and send them direct to Sellafield for reprocessing. There would then be no transhipment. It would be one bite at one cherry rather than two bites at one cherry. The CEGB has been sending spent fuel rods to Sellafield from Heysham for years for storage prior to reprocessing. Why cannot other AGRs do the same? The future privatised electricity supply industry will have precious little incentive to build such a monstrosity when it can send its spent rods direct to Sellafield and later to THORP for reprocessing. Admittedly, all the CEGB's statutory responsibility, procedures and organisational arrangements for nuclear safety will be vested in its privatised successor, but I cannot envisage anyone obliging it to choose such an enormously expensive store when on-site storage at each power station is so much more sensible.

The proposed store is said to be temporary. In my experience, and, I am sure, in yours, Madam Deputy Speaker, few things in this life are as permanent as those described as temporary. I should like a definition of "temporary". What will be temporary? Will it be the store itself? That is most unlikely as it will be very expensive. Will it be the contents? As it is anticipated that there will be a steady supply to THORP, it could be said that any batch will be only temporary. However, if it is immediately to be replaced by another similar batch, it would not really be my idea of temporary. I understand that the CEGB is prepared to give an undertaking that it will take only fuel rods from AGRs. That means that it cannot take waste from abroad as there are no AGRs abroad. I further understand that it is prepared to promise not to take other sorts of waste, but of late some statements on that appear to be rather less than firm.

One of my constituents is anxious to know what will happen to material contained within the structure when it reaches the end of its active life. I should also like an answer to that. What time scale is envisaged? My hon. Friend and I have repeatedly said that it is not for us to make a case for the CEGB, and nor is it for the Minister to do so. The CEGB, in the widest possible public consultation, must make its case and convince the public. Unless and until it does, it cannot expect the support or even the acquiescence of local people. It certainly will not have my support. I shall continue to press for on-site storage of spent fuel at each AGR and its direct shipment to Sellafield for processing. If BNFL wants fuel to keep its THORP plant going when it is decommissioned, it will have to make arrangements with each power station for direct shipment. It is as simple as that.

11.40 am

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Thank you for calling me so early in the debate, Madam Deputy Speaker. I promise that my remarks will be brief.

I come from a part of the country that has no nuclear installation. Therefore, I do not represent people who have the advantages of an allegedly cheaper electricity supply, employment and the other economic factors involved. However, we suffer from all the disadvantages of the nuclear industry in that, for the past 50 years, since Windscale was established, enormous amounts of radioactive waste have been dumped into the Irish sea, which washes the shores of my constituency. It would not be presumptive of me to say that I represent the views of all the people of Northern Ireland on a completely cross-party basis. There is total opposition to the discharge of nuclear waste into the Irish sea and the continued expansion of the nuclear industry.

We are particularly worried because of the alleged concerns that the Government have expressed from time to time. For example, they have contravened the London dumping convention which prohibited the discharge of nuclear waste into the Irish sea. But then we are used to the duplicity of the nuclear industry, and particularly that of British Nuclear Fuels. It was with a sense of wonderment that I came to the debate this morning. I have in my hand the "British Nuclear Forum Bulletin", a publication of British Nuclear Fuels. The headline states:

"Now that we have found safe ways of coping with waste, let us use them".

We should read the article and implement its recommendations. That demonstrates the sort of con game that is causing us to distrust all matters pertaining to the nuclear industry.

There is a long history of disenchantment about Sellafield. Long before it was popular to question the edicts and diktat of the nuclear industry, we in our country questioned the veracity of the nuclear industry's statements. I refer to the misrepresentations and misinformation given to Dr. Black regarding Sellafield. We suffer from the consequence of an ongoing 40-year leak of radioactive material—not storage—into the sea, which an all-party Committee of the House described as the most radioactive sea in the world.

It is in that context that I protest at the continuing discharge, at any level, of radioactive waste into the Irish sea. Waste is not only going through the food chain, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) said, but it has the ability, from silt deposits on the shoreline, to be windborne inland. In my opinion, it has caused many cases of child leukaemia on the coast of Down, Antrim, and Louth in the Irish Republic. I am not an expert in these matters, but I understand that the only known cause of child leukaemia is exposure to radiation.

I said that my remarks would be brief. I plead with the Government to stop dumping waste now. We know that the technology for it exists; it is only a matter of finance. We must stop causing pollution, in contravention of the Government's own admission, which is that "dilute and disperse" should not be a general principle of waste management. But that has been the general approach of successive Governments for the past 40 years.

I view with considerable cynicism the proposals for solid waste disposal on land. I attended the conference, under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi). Nirex published a book entitled "The Way Forward". Initially, we were waiting to consult the public, but I was convinced that the decision to store solid waste at Sellafield was already made. The booklet strongly suggested that that was the case. Chapter 6, paragraph 3, referring to Sellafield, states:

"despite the uncertainty of geology because of the proximity to major sources of waste."

The intent is quite clear. It is not a question of what is good or proper; it is simply what is convenient. Bearing in mind the uncertain geological factors in and around Sellafield and the known seismic problems that have occurred during minor earth tremors between Wales and Ireland, we cannot take seriously the so-called search for sites. The decision has been made, and waste will be stored in and around Sellafield.

That conclusion having been made, I make one plea —that we do not bury waste under the Irish sea where it will not be able to be monitored or retrieved in years to come. We must keep it where it can be monitored, recovered and re-treated if necessary. I plead that waste be stored on land.

Why oh why do we import from the rest of the world so much nuclear dirt? There is no logical answer except the yen for the yen. I was one of the first visitors to Sellafield before it became popular to visit sunny Sellafield, as one tourist guide described it. One of the most horrific scenes there was the line after line of high-level radioactive waste that would be there for centuries to come. I was distressed to realise that I was part of the generation that is handing that waste on to the future. Let us stop handing on problems and stop importing toxic radioactive wastes from all over the world—the dirty washing that has ended up in the Irish sea and is polluting the environment of our isles. Let us stop importing other people's problems. We have enough of our own.

11.47 am

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): Like other hon. Members, the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) demonstrated the seriousness with which he regards this subject. In truth, it is a serious matter not only for us and our constituents but for many generations ahead. After hearing my hon. Friend the Minister's fine speech, I was surprised to hear the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) describe it as delicately complacent. I was even more surprised when he said that he would respond in kind. I am bound to say that the similarity of approach escaped me, save to say that the hon. Gentleman regarded the subject of the debate with the utmost seriousness.

I wish to intervene briefly because of the great concern of my constituents—mainly in the Whitby area—about the findings of Nirex. I congratulate the Select Committee on its report and the significant way in which it has changed our approach to this subject. Nirex, too, should be congratulated on the way that it is approaching the difficult problem with which it is faced. It now has the responsibility for developing a repository for the disposal of low-level and intermediate-level radioactive waste. Merely to say that is to create considerable concern in the minds of the general public. Indeed, the report says clearly that public anxiety is significant and deep rooted. I am bound to say that my constituents are no exception to that view.

We should put on record what the Select Committee has said about this matter in Volume 1, paragraph 225, of its report:

[Sir Michael Shaw]

"Thus fundamental decisions involving the expenditure of large sums of money and substantial risk to the public are not taken publicly but by the industry and its sponsors behind closed doors. So far as radioactive waste is concerned, the extent of public anxiety about it is so great, and the problems of its management and disposal so dependent upon public opinion, that this situation cannot be satisfactory. The matter cannot be left to managerial decisions within the industry, but must involve wider considerations of Government and public accountability."

The conclusion that the Select Committee comes to in that short paragraph is overwhelming. I believe that this report, because of that paragraph alone, is one of the most important reports that we have had for a long time.

Over the years there has been far too much secrecy and, because of that, a deep-rooted suspicion has developed. It is the fear of the unknown and of the unseen, which have always been present in mankind's make-up. When people are not told everything—or when they are not told anything—and when serious mistakes are found to have been made, fear and suspicion are only too well justified. The problem is that there is a backlog of suspicion and, if we are to move forward, we must show that we are genuinely explaining the problems, exploring the alternatives and the needs and coming to well-judged conclusions.

I believe that the Select Committee report is clear in its demand for consultation over the widest possible area before any decisions are made. That is exactly what Nirex is doing. Nirex has been at pains to get as wide a view as possible from the public. It started by producing a report, which was published and sent to many people—Members of Parliament, and councils and organisations of all descriptions who might be interested. I thought that "The Way Forward" was well structured and informative. Nirex has made real efforts to meet people all round the country. I met Nirex not only with Ministers, but also at meetings in my constituency with the county council, the national park authority, the borough council and the town council of Whitby, who all expressed their views. All those bodies sent written evidence to Nirex to support their case. That written evidence, which includes some 2,500 responses, is now being assessed by the university of East Anglia.

I am repeating all these matters because I believe that they show a tremendous contrast between how we do things now and how we did things in the past, and that must be the way forward. It is interesting to note that not all the responses were negative. Admittedly, there were very few that were positive in their response, and those will clearly have planning and other problems. I understand that in the new year Nirex will be able to put proposals to the Government.

Having put that side of the case, and having shown the new approach to this matter, we should look a little at the other side of the equation—the way in which people such as those in my constituency, the customers, should respond. Thanks to the report and the consultations, they know what Nirex is seeking to do. They know that the geology, the different types of disposal and all the alternatives are being considered. Having been given that information, we have a responsibility to put our case. I need hardly say that our case—hon. Members may say that it is the NIMBY syndrome—is solidly against having low-level and intermediate-level deposits anywhere near our constituency. I believe that our case is a good one. However, having put our case forward, we must accept that there has to be a waiting period when the responses are considered and assessed and proposals made. During that period it is not a lot of good trying to persuade Nirex to come to a decision prior to its investigations. If the Government, and Nirex on their behalf, are acting responsibly in taking the public into their confidence—I admit that we must build up this confidence—the public must make the responsible decision to allow the process to follow its natural course.

My message this morning is that we should understand that the public is now being consulted, that the Government are seeking to make disposals that have been shown by this debate to be inevitable—hospitals and industrial processes must continue—and that the Government are spending £5 million a year on research into the safe disposals of radioactive waste. Action is being taken to make the disposal of nuclear waste as safe as possible.

I stress that, in the short period between May and early next year, we should not try to persuade Nirex to come forward with over-hasty decisions. As I am afraid is occasionally done, we should not exaggerate the concern that is felt beyond the natural concern that must exist because of the facts presented. The Select Committee showed disturbing examples of this sort of exaggeration which occurs with little evidence to support it.

We must wait. If we over-exaggerate the dangers, we shall harm tourist and business developments in our areas. Clearly, developers will not be anxious to commit themselves to fresh endeavours and capital expenditure with this threat and worry hanging over them. Nevertheless, this period of waiting is essential to give a real chance for a proper solution to be found. I hope that it will not be long in the new year before Nirex can produce proposals which have been well thought out and widely discussed, and that then the public and this House can consider them realistically, bearing in mind that a solution must be found now rather than postponed to the next generation.

12.1 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I agree with the hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) that the Nirex consultations are to be welcomed. I have read "The Way Forward" and, with colleagues, submitted a response to it on behalf of my party. It excludes certain options on the basis of presumption and is not therefore the proper, open consultation about a range of options that it might be. I hope that I am proved wrong about that, and I shall return to the subject.

The debate is timely because the consultation document has been published, responses have been collected and they are being assessed. But it is untimely in the sense that we should have had it a long time ago. That is not the Minister's fault. As the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) made clear, for years we have suffered both from having ad hoc occasional responses to the growing and inevitable problems of what to do with nuclear waste and from not having a coherent strategy. I need not repeat the point that he made as Chairman of the Select Committee and that I made in an intervention.

I wish to put on record my gratitude for the report, which gives us a good and proper basis for this debate. It asks the key question: what should we do with nuclear

waste? It did not go into the issue of whether we should have nuclear power. That is a separate issue, because nuclear waste is a present concern and does not arise only from our activities in generating nuclear power. The Select Committee did a good job.

My only sadness is that we had to press so long for this debate, and the Government's alleged greenness and concern for environmental issues ring hollow on that count. The Government made their written response to the report within a few months, but it was a couple of years before we could have the debate. I welcome the fact that we shall debate environmental reports on two Fridays in a row, but we should note, first, that the debates are on Fridays and, secondly, that they are belated responses to these matters.

At the heart of the Government's responce and policy is our investment in making the right sort of decisions. The Select Committee report states:

"The poor state of research in the UK means that it is impossible at this stage to recommend any disposal option with total confidence. The UK is well behind other nations in the research and development programmes."

That was 10 years after the Flowers commission on environmental pollution made the same point. It stated of nuclear waste:

"We think that quite inadequate attention has been given to the matter and we find this most surprising in view of the large nuclear programmes that are envisaged in the coming decades."

The lack of resources for research and safety that is attributable to present economic policy is worrying.

I have already sparred with the Minister once and pointed out that she was concerned about the lack of resources for a research institution in her constituency before she was promoted in July. I hope that these issues will remain among her campaigns. It is important that we realise how much investment is needed. The Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee report of July 1988 pointed out that we have only five inspectors to deal with our 5,000 waste sites. The chair of that committee said that nuclear waste disposal suffered "inadequacies" on a number of issues and that there were

"enormous uncertainties whether a deep disposal site will be found, assessed and in place by the year 2005. . . On top of all these deficiencies in strategic planning, we are continually being met with pleas about the severe limitations upon resources for the radiochemical inspectorate of HM Inspectorate of Pollution, which is required to administer the present system of administrative and technical controls. We were concerned to learn that there is no structured monitoring."

The committee accepts that there is some strategic monitoring of ground water, but continues:

"The lack of available resources and the consequent gaps in monitoring activity"

require further attention. Some sites where radioactive material is dumped are not monitored. That is not a disputable fact.

These are the findings of a statutory committee, doing its job and reporting back to the Government and the House. Given those conclusions, will the Government ensure that resources are provided for the proper inspection, monitoring and control of the present sites, so that we know exactly what is going on now and the public can be assured that it is safe and that the prospective and potential danger is contained until we work out the best solution?

I challenge the Government fundamentally on their complete avoidance of a response to the Select Committee on the matter of reprocessing, particularly the importation of materials for reprocessing. We are the major importer of other countries' spent fuel which we use to generate profit for ourselves. It is entirely irresponsible to import spent fuel simply to obtain profits for our domestic economy. I know that there are by-products, and the Government in their response make it clear what they are. They do not accept the Committee's basic premise that there is no overall strategic technical and economic case for reprocessing AGR fuel and that financial considerations are the sole reasons for continuing with the THORP contract. The Government point out that we must preserve the opportunity to utilise uranium and plutonium.

An important report published recently, written by a member of Friends of The Earth, shows unequivocally —I invite anyone who can to dispute its findings, because I think that they are indisputable—that the enormous secrecy of the CEGB for 20 years is partly attributable to the fact that it wanted to conceal that the nuclear industry did not principally and only supply fuel, but existed also for nuclear weapons and nuclear military by-products. That remains the case.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Considering the hon. Gentleman's party's apparent commitment to a replacement for Polaris and an independent nuclear deterrent, would a Liberal or Democratic Government maintain Sellafield, and is the production of military-grade plutonium supported by his party?

Mr. Hughes: I am able to give a straightforward answer. One advantage of a new party is that one does not inherit pages of policy. Liberals suffered in an old party from having too many masses of policy. We have had one conference and have formulated some policies, but we have not yet formulated either our defence policy on Polaris or our policy on these issues. We shall have answered these questions by the next election, but the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) should not criticise us for not having done so yet, only six months after forming our party, when his old party is currently undergoing a two-year policy review. He will have to wait for the answers.

The most important questions now are about the Government's policy. The money that we make processing spent fuel, accumulating spent waste and handling spent fuel at THORP is entirely unacceptable. The hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams), who has now left the Chamber, made a good speech, because he speaks on this subject with expertise and knowledge of the industry. He spoke about some of the technical problems of the Government's policy. He said that the procedure of reprocessing and what is done in THORP only intensifies the production of waste. The figures show that 100 cu ft of spent fuel removed from the reactor and processed at Sellafield produces 62 cu ft of high-level waste, 1,000 cu ft of intermediate-level waste and 15,000 cu ft of low-level waste.

We cannot afford to continue to import waste, which we then massively increase, when we do not have a satisfactory way of dealing with it. The only thing that it will be used for, if, according to Government policy, we phase out fast-breeder nuclear reactors, is nuclear weapons. That must be the result of the process and we must not pretend otherwise. The main customer for

[Mr. Hughes]

THORP will be Japan. We are already receiving much of its waste. It is then transported around the country, and one of the greatest problems, not addressed by the Government, is transportation. Every hon. Member has concern expressed to him by his constituents when they hear that nuclear waste is being transported by road, rail or air, for example, across the Irish sea to Prestwick.

One of the best arguments for on-site storage, as the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) said, is that we avoid the danger of waste being transported around the country, with all the risks that ensue. The Association of County Councils responded to Nirex's report, "The Way Forward", and said that it was concerned that the document did not address transportation issues sufficiently clearly. Three or four nuclear waste trains come through London every week. Ten tonnes of radioactive waste are sent along the fairly remote north London line on their way to Sellafield. They go through major centres of population in the north of England. We must do something to reduce the transportation risks, particularly as it is probable that there may be lower safety standards as a result of the privatisation of the electricity industry.

Nirex is investigating all the options. It took a preliminary view that there should be deep disposal storage, either onshore or offshore, as opposed to on-site storage. In some respects deep disposal storage may be safe, but it is less safe from the view of geological movement. That is a risk whether one buries deep down under sea or under land. There are fewer risks associated with on-site storage. The waste is more easily monitored.

Given that much of the waste has to be stored above ground anyway, there is a growing consensus that storage should be on site because it is more easily monitored. That is my view and that of my colleagues. That is the view that we put in the response to "The Way Forward". We should store on-site until we find an alternative method that is safe beyond reasonable doubt. If we cannot, we should take an alternative such as, for example, the off-site Swedish precedent. We may have to do that, but we should not do so until we have reached a scientific decision.

Mr. Allan Roberts: I have my doubts whether it is a good idea to proliferate storage all over the country wherever there are nuclear power stations. Some of those nuclear power stations will be phased out in the not too distant future and the general public will not support that idea.

The Labour party believes that we should not dispose of intermediate and high-level waste. We believe that it should be stored and monitored, but I do not see why that cannot be done in the safest possible way, barriered to the greatest extent possible from people and the environment. Provided that it is not disposed of underground, it is far bettered barriered in that way than in any facility that man builds on the surface.

Mr. Hughes: Storage, whether above or below ground, is clearly more acceptable than disposal. We have to be able to see what is going on to monitor the waste and to retrieve it if necessary. There is a consensus about that. Even two or three years ago people talked about disposal as an option, but that is now receding as an acceptable option.

The people who live near nuclear power stations may not find it acceptable to store there. The case I know best is that of Trawsfynydd in north Wales, where the community has come to accept the power station although it is not something they would choose to have in their community. None the less, even if a nuclear power station is to be decommissioned and takes 100 years to dismantle, it is better for storage to be on site until the problems of transportation and storage elsewhere have been solved.

The policy for radioactive waste must be agreed across party political lines. I hope that the Government will not seek to steamroller through a view to which there is substantial scientific or political objection. The crucial issue is whether we are agreed on the strategy for all the waste that we currently hold and will produce in the future. I hope that the Government will listen to the increasing number of people who say that they want a safe answer to the present dilemma as well as a reduction in the amount of nuclear waste that we shall have in the future. There is no entirely safe way of disposing of or storing the waste It cannot be safe, because of the nature of the product. We must therefore reduce the amount we produce, the amount we transport around the country. Our communities are at risk.

This debate is welcome. When Nirex has given its conclusion, we must have another debate so that we can respond to the document and ensure that we make the right decision.

12.18 pm

Mr. Norman Miscampbell (Blackpool, North): I intend to be very brief after the excellent introduction to the debate by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), who is the Chairman of the Committee on which I have the privilege to serve.

We have had opportunities since the publication of the report to discuss these matters, especially when we placed the orders to consider the four sites. I congratulate the Government on their change of attitude since we last debated the matter. It is one of the most remarkable changes that we have noticed for some time. The thrust of our report was simply that we must get a Rolls-Royce result. The Government were pretty chary about accepting the expense and drive of it, and some people talk of the impossibility of getting one, but I do not think that anybody disputes the fact that we must keep high-level waste above ground for many years.

We need a Rolls-Royce result, not just for high-level waste, but for intermediate and low-level waste. We shall get public acceptance of nuclear power only if we deal with all levels of waste in a way that is probably more expensive and nearer the Rolls-Royce solution than is necessary. The Germans are fortunate to have salt domes that go down 3,000 ft and in which they know there has been no water for 180 million years. We have salt too, but I do not think that we have the domes. Solutions are open to us in Canada and the United States.

I went round each of the four sites which the Government proposed for low-level waste disposal until shortly before the general election. Any one of them would have done as long as it was confined strictly to low-level waste. I dare say that if I had been the Member of Parliament for any one of them, however, I would have been opposed to waste being dumped there. It is clear that Drigg is not acceptable, but there is not the slightest

evidence of leaching, despite the low level of technology there. That shows that getting rid of low-level waste is not a serious problem.

We heard interesting speeches from the hon. Members for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) and for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), who say that they will phase out atomic production of electricity.

Mr. Allan Roberts: I never said that. There is a policy review. I am in exactly the same position as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). We fought the general election on a policy of phasing out nuclear power. A commitee of the Trades Union Congress and the Labour party is considering the issue. I said that if we phased out nuclear power we would create more nuclear waste in the short term than we would if we kept nuclear power.

Mr. Miscampbell: I accept that. Nevertheless, there is a view, which is expressed eloquently by Opposition Members, that the way to solve the problem is to turn our back on nuclear energy. One of the problems with politics in Britain is that for the most part we have 10-year problems and five-year Governments—at least that was true until 1979. We have here a 50 or 100-year problem, and we are approaching it as though we can produce political solutions that are acceptable to our constituents now.

I do not believe that Western society will for long tolerate the absence of personal transport. There are 18 million cars in Britain alone and there are children being born today who will not be able to get the petrol necessary to run a car. There will not be sufficient petrol for individual motor cars, to say nothing of the needs of industry. From a political point of view, it is impossible to take away from Western man his capacity for individual transport. That being so, the only solution to the absence of petrol is some form of electrical transport. Replacing cars in 50 years' time will require an electricity generating industry that is three or four times the size of the present one. In cannot conceive of the possibility of turning our backs on nuclear power.

When the Select Committee was in Sweden, we were told that they had had a referendum and that they would close down nuclear generation. We spoke to a distinguished and, I thought, practical scientist and asked what he thought would happen. He replied that when they face reality, people will change their minds. I believe that that is the truth.

12.24 pm

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I also welcome this debate, but it would be much better held in prime Government time. It would also be better if we were able to deal with other important factors such as energy and environmental and economic issues. I should have liked the relevant Secretaries of State and the Chancellor of the Exchequer and their shadow Cabinet equivalents to be present so that each component of the debate could be explored.

The Prime Minister has signalled her intention to continue with nuclear power for what she regards as sound reasons. I believe that they are not sound environmental reasons. The council in Stoke-on-Trent is worried about the environmental aspects of the matter. I believe that the Prime Minister's concern is misguided and economic, and that her new-found commitment to environmental issues has more to do with nuclear defence than with environmental issues.

The Minister told us much about the benefits of nuclear power. Women are not convinced of the new-found benefits of nuclear power. Anybody who takes the trouble to read the appendices to the Environment Select Committee's first report on radioactive waste will find that even the National Federation of Women's Institutes says:

"about one-third of our members feel the risks arising from radioactive wastes are so great that the nuclear power programme should be halted."

We must take the important issue of health into account. A very important meeting organised by the nuclear-free zone authorities is to take place in London soon. It will consider leukaemia clusters and radiation. None of us should ignore the important health considerations involved in this debate.

We must note what the Chairman of the Select Committee said about the problem of existing nuclear waste. We cannot ignore it, and we must find a means of doing something about it. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) I deplore the fact that in 1979, or shortly afterwards, the Government cancelled research into possible sites for dealing with the problem. Had the money not been cut, and had the research gone ahead, we might now be in a better position to deal with the problems. Far more research should be done into meeting our energy needs. We have to take on board the fact that in three generations we shall have squandered energy resources that have taken millions of years to be produced. We have to consider those issues.

How do we deal with the problems that we have at the moment? I should like to bring to the attention of the House the comments made by my local council, the city of Stoke-on-Trent council, following the discussions of its environmental committee on the Nirex document, "The Way Forward". I believe that the comments of the city of Stoke-on-Trent council are extremely important. I know the concern of the chair and vice-chair of that committee, Councillors Marion Beckett and Norman Rides. We have to take their comments into account. They said:

"The disposal of radio-active waste is an environmental problem which should have been foreseen when the commercial exploitation of nuclear power commenced . . . It is strongly recommended that the waste be stored in a secure site, which will remain accessible to cater for the possibility of finding a long-term solution whereby radio-active waste could be neutralised."

I add my support to the view expressed today that we should be talking, not about permanent disposal for all time, but about storage, so that at some stage in the very near future proper technology can be found to deal with our existing problems.

Stoke-on-Trent also considers it essential that

"accurate records of the storage of radio-active waste be kept for future generations"

and that

"the consideration of safety is paramount to that of cost and the choice of best method of disposal should not be subject to budgetary constraints."

In these days of market forces, I find it very difficult to understand how the far greater costs to public safety can ever be reconciled with the concern for profit, particularly when we now face the privatisation of the electricity industry. There is real concern that when privatisation goes ahead—I am sure that it will if the Government have

[Ms. Joan Walley]

their way, but not if we, the Opposition, have our way—the profit motive will continue to prevail. The council states:

"It is likely that the waste disposal costs, and therefore the unit charge of electricity generated by nuclear power would be higher than if powered by other means. A private electricity company using nuclear fuel may be tempted to economise on disposal costs in order to undercut its competitors. Should private nuclear electricity generation prove unviable the cost of waste disposal would fall on the exchequer."

I remind the House of the comments of Walter Marshall, who said that the consumer will have to pay for the phasing out of Magnox power stations.

We have heard a lot today about "not in my back yard" and "not in my term of office" from the Government. However, I should put it on record that the geological record centre at the City Museum in Hanley reveals that the general geology of Stoke-on-Trent is totally unsuitable for a deep repository, being comprised of mineral reserves, principally coal, and is heavily faulted. That area is also prone to earth tremors.

When the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) introduced his report, he said that geology should determine where we are to put the waste and how we should treat it. I feel strongly that it is not just a matter of geology, but, as I pointed out in an intervention, of technology and public concern. I was not convinced by the comments of Conservative Members who said if only it could be like it is in France, if only we could offer people living in areas where there are nuclear power stations better compensation for the cost of their homes, if only we could bribe them in some way—which is what that amounts to—they would be more likely to accept what I believe are great dangers to health from nuclear power.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Even give them free electricity.

Ms. Walley: Free electricity may come into it.

The transportation of spent nuclear fuel has not been dealt with. I am alarmed about the way in which we are importing nuclear waste when we do not have the technology to deal with our own industry. The Minister is not in the Chamber, but I see that my remarks are being written down and I am grateful for that. I should like the Minister to give me a cast-iron assurance that when the Channel tunnel opens it will not be used for the transportion of spent nuclear fuel. We have heard much about the dangers of sea, air and road transportation. This is an issue which the Nuclear Free Zones Association has taken up on many occasions. We have to know what sort of controls, if any, the Government intend to place on the Channel tunnel when it becomes operational.

All those issues are important. We have to address ourselves to the safe disposal of nuclear waste. If we cannot satisfy public opinion, the terms of paragraph 5 of the report, which were read out earlier, will have to apply. A policy of nuclear power cannot continue if we cannot find a safe way of dealing with the large problem.

12.36 pm

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): If, on a Friday, we were discussing capital punishment or abortion, the Chamber would be full. We are discussing nuclear waste, which is just as deadly as any other subject we discuss in the House, and there is a level of mutual incomprehension between those who are totally against nuclear energy and therefore against any more nuclear waste and those who see nuclear energy as the only way forward. My points register a cross-bench view.

The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) may not recall the fact that we made our maiden speeches on the same day. He spoke at length about privies in Bootle, and I well remember the trouble he got into by reading some rather lengthy statistics. Everyone assumes that the generation choice is nuclear energy or dirty, nasty coal, gas, oil or something that produces CO_2 and other noxious substances. It is not. If we want simplicity, even the privies of Bootle would produce the methane gas to run my colleagues' motor car in years to come. Similarly, the tide rises and falls 36 ft a day around the coast of north Devon. If we could harness that into a decent Severn barrage, we could produce 20 per cent. of the energy for the whole country. There are other alternatives to think about beside nuclear or coal energy.

If we continue with nuclear power, nuclear waste will increase as will the storage problem and we will have to trust the solution that my hon. Friend the Minister said has been found or allow ourselves more time to find it. However, there is a "but". I have recently been in the United States which is an advanced country, although one would not think so since the Minister mentioned France, Italy and other places but omitted the United States as having nuclear energy. There is virtually no construction industry left for the nuclear industry in the United States. The population want electricity at the flick of a switch and probably do not think too much about how it is produced. However, they get extremely anxious and refuse any planning permission for new nuclear plants.

The same is happening in this country when Nirex does its duty. I have no quarrel with Nirex, the CEGB or British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. They consist of professional people doing a professional job. If we seek to attribute to them wicked habits that is both illogical and nonsensical. They are doing their job legally and with superb safety standards. We tend to replicate much of what happens in the United States, for better or worse and that country is leading in the disposal of waste. I do not know of one hon. Member who would want a nuclear waste storage site in his constituency.

Mr. Michael Brown *rose*—

Mr. Speller: There are one or two.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

Mr. Speller: We accept that one hon. Member from either side of the House is a fair balance of sanity.

Mr. Allan Roberts: My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) recently received a letter from someone in Brigg and Cleethorpes saying, "Let us face it, Mr. Cunningham, you would not allow any of this stuff in your constituency, would you."

Mr. Speller: The debate is improving as the hour increases.

The essence of the nuclear dream, which many of us shared and some still do, was plentiful, cheap and clean energy. But is is a fact that in the past year we have put less nuclear energy into the grid than over the previous five or six years. My hon. Friend the Minister said that the figure

was rising to 22 per cent., but the coal industry is producing 80 per cent. of our electricity and a ratio of four to one is high when we have had nuclear technology for a quarter of a century or more. It is quite unreasonable to assume that there are only two choices.

As to cheapness, the only fuel that is not decreasing in price is nuclear energy. The price of coal has plummeted, as has the real price of gas and oil. Nuclear energy is not now claimed to be a cheap fuel. With regard to cleanliness there is the everlasting problem of nuclear waste, so if we are to continue with nuclear power we must accept some of the ideas advanced by the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams). He made a lot of sense about surface storage of nuclear waste. I was delighted to hear that my hon. Friend the Minister believes that we have a policy to look after waste. However, I know of no member of the public who shares her confidence. I know of no one who would want a waste site adjacent to his house, that of his neighbour or even of his mother-in-law. The public just do not believe that there is a safe answer to nuclear waste.

I favour privatisation, not only because of the enterprise that it generates, but because if a nuclear generating plant cannot be insured no private enterprise firm will ever build one. The wishes of the anti-nuclear people may come to pass through the chance of privatisation, unless the Government will bind themselves and their successors, which I do not believe they can do, to being the insurer of a private industry. We may have the surprising but quite hopeful position that shareholders in the private electricity industry will say, "We do not want our electricity generated in this way, we do not wish nuclear waste to increase, and we do not want it to be hidden away on our land." Through the privatisation process, the public will decide whether the nuclear dream has ended and, so I suspect, over a few years will the nuclear energy industry itself.

12.42 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Like other hon. Members, I congratulate the Minister on her promotion. She may be interested to know that as a result of today's debate I had to cancel a long-standing engagement to speak to the Soroptimist International group in Glasgow, which will be attended by 2,000 members. The debate relates to the need for more women in senior places in business and commerce and in politics. It is hoped that that would lead to an impact on the environment to the benefit of the community. I hope that the Minister will note the significance of that debate, take away our words of wisdom and, in a future debate, say that the Government are changing their mind slightly on their policies.

The debate is of particular importance to Wales and Scotland, not just to the other regions to which reference has been made in the debate. That stems from the fact that in the document "The Way Forward" Nirex mentions the areas that it considers suitable for disposal of low and intermediate-level waste. The red areas, which have been defined as being the most likely acceptable places were all around the coast of Scotland and the Isle of Anglesey.

My hon. Friends—who cannot be here today because they are in Wales at the Plaid Cymru conference—and I initiated a debate on 8 December last year, which is recorded in *Hansard*. Some of our questions have not yet been answered. I believe that this debate today is the only debate of any length on this subject. Referring to the planning procedures in respect of the application by Nirex for the disposal of waste, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment—the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan)—said that it might be necessary to bring forward

"a special development order approved by Parliament."—[*Official Report*, 8 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. 296.]

The position is still not clear. What will be Parliament's role in granting permission to Nirex to proceed with orders for the disposal of waste on or beneath land? A confidential legal agreement has been drawn up in principle between Lord Thurso and Nirex which would enable Nirex to buy land from Lord Thurso if Nirex wanted further to develop the Altnabreac site in Caithness. What will be the Government's role in an agreement between a private landowner and Nirex? Will such a matter come before Parliament?

What cognisance will be taken of the strong opinion expressed by elected Members, by the Grampian and Highlands regional councils, by district councils and in referendums by people who do not want this development to proceed? The view of the public must be given full weight if we are to believe that we still operate in a democratic society. I should like clear guidance from the Minister. Perhaps she will look at the matter in detail and respond to me by letter at a future date. We need much more information on the procedures.

I draw the Minister's attention to a referendum organised by Banff and Buchan district council. The turnout was 41,198, or 65 per cent. of the electorate. Of those who were asked whether they regarded the possibility of such a site as acceptable, 98 per cent. said no and 2 per cent. said yes. That is a clear statement in a referendum conducted by an elected body that the development is unacceptable.

Highlands regional council in its letter of 10 May to me, and presumably to other Scottish Members, said:

"a single repository for the United Kingdom set in the Highlands carries the potential to change public perception of the Highlands as an area having a clean environment and upon which so much of the economic activity of the Region depends; the potential for this change of attitude towards the Highlands represents a risk which the Regional Council would not wish to see taken."

That is a clear statement by elected members.

The regional council for Grampian, where my constituency is situated, has responded to Nirex in a detailed document, and I should be happy to send a copy to the Minister if she wishes to discuss it. In the context of strategic planning, Grampian regional council said:

"The general policy of the Regional Council to nuclear waste disposal is provided in the Aberdeen Area Structure Plan Review . . . which states:

'There will be no disposal of nuclear waste other than low level within the Region. Proposals for the disposal of low level nuclear waste will be required to satisfy the Regional Council that there will be no detriment to the health and welfare of the population or to the environment.'

A similar policy . . . is included in the Rural Area Structure Plan. The Secretary of State for Scotland reserved his approval of both these policies when he approved the plans in January 1988 and June 1985 respectively."

Why has the Secretary of State for Scotland reserved his approval for those comments by Grampian regional council?

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Does the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) agree that

[Mr. Malcolm Moss]

one district council in the Dounreay area of Caithness has said that it would look favourably at the disposal or storage at depth of nuclear waste in the locality?

Mrs. Ewing: That is true and that point was made earlier. However, the population overall has shown that it dissents from that attitude. Surely our democracy is based on the belief that the majority view should prevail.

The Dounreay area faces major problems of unemployment about which the local people are concerned. Nirex and the Government have held out hopes—they are perhaps false—about the employment prospects attached to the disposal of nuclear waste. I shall deal with that later.

I know that the Minister has no responsibility for the Scottish Office, but I ask that she liaise with the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales on planning procedures.

Much of the debate has centred on the "not in my back yard" attitude. Some people may consider that that is an emotional attitude, but we have to consider what the back yard represents to people in the area. The words "back yard" are rather derogatory and many people find them offensive. Nirex referred to NIMBY in its document about the area. One aspect that Nirex argued was important was that there would be a low population density in the areas that were chosen for the disposal of medium-level waste. In the Nirex presentation, which I, and other hon. Members, attended, a slide was shown that was supposed to represent population density in the United Kingdom. However, for Scotland the slide showed that only the Lothians and Edinburgh have high levels of population density. Glasgow, the central belt, Aberdeen and the Grampian region were missed out. If that is the background against which Nirex is operating, it is no surprise that people in my area are deeply worried about the effectiveness and efficiency of Nirex's approach. They have genuine fears about what will happen to their community. They think of health, for example.

A report was issued by the National Radiological Protection Board entitled "The Risk of Childhood Leukaemia near Nuclear Establishments". The report's findings were not conclusive, but it raised major issues. For example, researchers reported:

> "An approximately ten-fold excess . . . of leukaemia registrations in the 0-24 age group, in the period 1979-1984, at distances less than 12·5 km from the Dounreay Nuclear Power Development Establishment, . . . Caithness, which includes Thurso."

Many heartbroken families in that area are watching their youngsters dying from leukaemia, and that causes major anxiety about health and the way in which we control nuclear waste and the nuclear industry.

The disposal of nuclear waste also has an impact on industry. We have assessed that if the negative effect of the disposal of nuclear waste at sea were limited to reducing employment in the fishing industry by a mere 1 per cent., 250 permanent jobs would be lost in the north-east and the north of Scotland. That is a conservative estimate of the possible job losses in one industry. My area is dependent on tourism, agriculture, whisky, and fish and food processing. All of those industries rely on the concept and reality of a clean environment. People in those industries in my area have little doubt that if the area is chosen as a likely site for a deep depository, those industries will suffer because people throughout the world will have doubts about the cleanliness of our products, which is something on which we have prided ourselves over the years and which has brought considerable revenue to the Exchequer. That is why there is considerable antagonism.

Nirex has said that 100 long-term jobs are a likely result of the establishment of an underground depository, but I am not prepared to see many hundreds of other jobs disappear for the sake of 100 jobs. We want a long-term future for our area. We have seen Highland clearances before and we are not prepared to have our rural communities used in this way, with complete disregard for their long-term benefit.

In Scotland, we recognise our responsibilities in the disposal of nuclear waste. After all, 60 per cent. of United Kingdom nuclear energy is produced in Scotland. The Minister's statistics suggested that the dependency was smaller, but Scotland is responsible for 60 per cent. of the production and therefore faces all the risks that that entails. Many incidents in recent years have caused great concern. For example, the leakages at Hunterston had a knock-on effect into the Irish sea, as the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) pointed out. Scotland lives with that reality, and we recognise our responsibility in the disposal of existing waste.

The Scottish National party is non-nuclear. We wish to see decommissioning, but we have to face the existing situation. We have come to the conclusion that on-site, above-ground, storage is the best way to handle nuclear waste. Beyond that, however, there is a clear need for the Government to involve international decision-making on this matter, which is a major problem not just for the United Kingdom but for the world. I hope that a great deal more emphasis will be placed on sharing research, debate and discussion so as to resolve the problem.

When I say that we must have international discussions, I do not mean that the United Kingdom should become the repository for everyone else's nuclear waste. We are not prepared to become a nuclear dustbin. We recognise our responsibilities in relation to existing waste in this country, but for far too long the United Kingdom seems to have been prepared to take in everyone else's problems and process their waste with consequent danger to our own community.

The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), who opened the debate on behalf of the Government in his capacity as Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment mentioned "NIMTOO", or "not in my term of office," as a new aspect of the phraseology of these debates. How long I remain as Member of Parliament for Moray will depend on the decision of the people there, but I make a clear comitment to the House, to my constituents and to the people of Scotland in general that if the Highlands and the north-east of Scotland are designated as the area which is to take in everyone else's nuclear waste problems, I will lie down in front of the bulldozers and do everything possible to stop that happening.

12.57 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): It is a pleasure to speak after the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and I hope very much that the final picture that she painted in her speech will not become a reality.

Before dealing with my concern in this debate, I must make one or two comments about the gratuitous and

wholly uncalled for attack on my hon. Friend the Minister by the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts). Anyone would have thought that Labour party policy on this was clear and united, but nothing could be further from the truth.

It is interesting to note that the recent Labour party document

"Social Justice and Economic Efficiency",

makes no mention whatever of nuclear power. In a recent radio interview, however the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said that nuclear power would be needed as part of a balanced energy programme, but later the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was quoted as saying:

"Labour's policy does not accept that we need to maintain an element of nuclear power in order to balance our resources"

and the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has said that Labour

"should not abandon altogether the option of developing Civil Nuclear Power".

And so it goes on.

I also dug up *The Guardian* of 21 October 1987, in which the hon. Member for Bootle, unveiling Labour's first policy commitment on radioactive waste disposal, was quoted as endorsing the commitment to back British Nuclear Fuels' plans to store nuclear waste under the sea off Sellafield.

Mr. Allan Roberts: I reiterated my commitment to research into an underground waste repository, where nuclear waste could be retrieved and monitored. I was a signatory to the all-party Select Committee report which we are debating and which recommended exactly that.

Mr. Bellingham: I read *The Guardian* carefully, and it may be that it was wrong——

Mr. Allan Roberts: No, it was right.

Mr. Bellingham: So it was right. However, it was only on 4 November last year that the hon. Gentleman said:

"Does the Minister not accept that there are no proposals by BNFL or anyone else to dump any nuclear waste under the sea and that the Labour party does not support any proposals to dump waste in the North sea?"—[*Official Report*, 4 November 1987; Vol. 121, c. 924.]

Mr. Allan Roberts: I cannot understand what on earth the hon. Gentleman is talking about. The BNFL proposals are not to dump anything anywhere; they are to store waste in a retrievable, monitorable form in a deep underground repository. That was my point. No one is in favour of dumping in the sea or anywhere else.

Mr. Bellingham: That is fair enough. However, the Labour party is hopelessly divided on this issue. It is in a muddle. The hon. Gentleman's attack on my hon. Friend the Minister was uncalled for.

I start from the premise of someone who supports nuclear power. It has a crucial role to play and is the only alternative to fossil fuels. I accept my hon. Friend the Minister's point about renewable energy sources. We must spend money researching them, especially tide and wind. Indeed, a great deal is already being spent. However, to pretend that environmental consequences will not flow from such energy sources is pie in the sky. It has already been clearly shown that there will be major environmental consequences from adopting those sources. We must spend the money researching them, but it is unrealistic to assume that they are a solution to our problem.

The environmental case for nuclear fuels is very strong. We have heard a great deal about SO_2, sulphur dioxide, and acid rain, and I accept that it is a serious matter. However, the technology exists greatly to reduce emissions of SO_2. We have not heard much about CO_2, which is the main contributor to the so-called greenhouse effect. My hon. Friend the Minister is aware that every year CEGB power stations emit 200 million tonnes of CO_2——

Mr. Allan Roberts: Scandalous.

Mr. Bellingham: It is scandalous, but the technology does not exist to reduce those emissions. The Labour party says that we must spend more and more money on coal-fired power stations. Emissions of SO_2 can be reduced, but what about CO_2? I have spent much of this year serving on the Environment Select Committee, so ably chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), considering the effects of environmental pollution, acid rain and the greenhouse effect, and I have no doubt that nuclear fuel is one form of energy for which there is a strong environmental case.

If we accept that argument and pursue the stance that I am taking, we must accept the need to dispose of or store low-level and intermediate nuclear waste. My hon. Friend the Minister made the important point, which is worth repeating, that the volume of waste is small. I read the other day that all the low-level and intermediate-level waste produced in the next 42 years will in volume represent no more than three weeks of domestic waste. When compared with the coal mining industry, it is equivalent to 10 days spoil. That puts the matter into perspective.

We are not talking about a huge amount of waste. Although the hon. Member for Moray made an excellent speech, listening to her one would have thought that she was talking about huge amounts of waste, when in fact it is a relatively small amount.

Mr. Allan Roberts: No one has ever argued that the problem is the volume of nuclear waste. The problem is its radioactivity and its toxicity and the fact that, by nature, it must be barriered in a way that other wastes are not. That is the issue.

As for clean coal, when it was studying acid rain, not the disposal of nuclear waste, the Environment Select Committee visited a town called Södertälje in Sweden. We saw a coal-fired power station that put out through its chimneys air that was cleaner than the air that it took in. That was because of coal-burning technology. The waste heat from that power station provided economic heating for the whole town of Södertälje. The amazing thing was that the people of the town use British coal because they have none of their own.

Mr. Bellingham: I read that part of the Select Committee's report. The hon. Gentleman is quite right to say that that power station was able to reduce emissions of sulphur dioxide, but there are still large emissions of it. We cannot avoid that. We will not get away from the greenhouse effect.

Even if we were to stop the nuclear programme tomorrow, we would still have to deal with a large amount of nuclear waste. Furthermore, if we want modern

[Mr. Bellingham]

medicine, modern technology, and a modern industrialised society, we shall have a great deal of low-level waste. The problem must be gripped and examined positively, and we must take constructive, determined steps to deal with it.

I am not 100 per cent. clear about the Government's policy on reprocessing. The Nirex document "The Way Forward" makes it quite clear that the vast bulk of intermediate and low-level nuclear waste comes from the manufacturing or reprocessing of nuclear fuel. A chart shows that, up to the year 2030, at least half of both types of waste will be caused by manufacturing or reprocessing nuclear fuel. At least 80 per cent. of AGR fuels come from uranium recovered from the reprocessing of Magnox fuels. The implications are fairly obvious. If production were to stop tomorrow, alternative supplies would have to be found. Although there is a great deal of expertise in reprocessing, there is little experience in the disposal of spent fuels. That matter must be considered.

We are in more difficulty with the reprocessing of irradiated oxide fuel from AGRs and PWRs. I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Minister will wind up the debate or reply in correspondence, but perhaps she can clarify the Government's policy on the funding of fast breeder research. We have already had some discussion about that matter. Is it the Government's policy slowly to phase out such funding? If that is their policy, surely they are going some way towards acknowledging that there is no future for plutonium as a fuel material. Obviously, that would cast a doubt on the rationale of reprocessing at Sellafield.

I draw my hon. Friend's attention to remarks made by Lord Marshall the other day. He is reported to have told the Engineers and Managers Association that the Government would have to pay the extra costs of reprocessing after privatisation of the industry. I should like my hon. Friend to consider that matter, even if she cannot find an answer now.

The THORP plant must also be considered carefully. It took the Government a long time to clarify exactly what will become of the plutonium that is recovered from Japanese spent fuel. I understand that it is the Government's intention to transport it by road to Prestwick airport, and then, by 747 aircraft to Japan. By the year 2000, 23 tonnes of plutonium will be transported at the rate of more than one flight per month. Each flight will carry enough plutonium to make at least 50 atomic bombs.

The Japanese electrical utilities are on record as saying that they do not expect fast breeders to become economic before the year 2030. If that is so, why are we proposing to shift so much plutonium so far, so soon? We must consider the safety and security implications. I hope that the Minister will deal with these concerns, which are genuine, and have been put to me by the people of west Norfolk and the the surrounding constituencies, who are worried about the Nirex proposals.

I have read carefully the Nirex document, "The Way Forward". I believe that it is a well-balanced document. It sets things out extremely well, in a great deal of detail and in a way that is sensitive to and understanding of the concern that will be generated in the different communities. I feel that it makes the case strongly for the technology and technique of deep storage disposal.

If one looks at recent reports dealing with this matter —such as the Environment Committee's report, the House of Lords Sub-committee F report, the TUC nuclear energy review body report and the Association of District Councils report—one sees that they all come down in favour of the technology behind deep disposal. They all say that it is technology that can work, and one of the big advantages of it is that there is one storage /disposal site. By concentrating everything on that one site the problems can be dealt with and coped with for many years to come. There are a good many advantages in adopting that stance. As I am not an expert on this subject, I have looked carefully at these reports and I support the conclusion that the technology behind it is sound, reliable and safe.

West Norfolk is one of the areas included in, shall we say, a long list of sites. A few of the potential sites in those bands have been drawn on the map in "The Way Forward". During the past few months Members of Parliament for Norfolk, for Cambridgeshire, and for Lincolnshire have been bombarded by representations from constituents. There is a great deal of concern based on what the Select Committee itself has described as the fear of the unknown. In paragraph 221 of volume I of the report the Select Committee sums it up well. It says:

"Public anxiety is significant and deep-rooted. A part of it originates from the nature of radiation. It is associated with dreaded nuclear weapons and the scenes at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Not only is radiation difficult to understand but it 'cannot be seen, felt or smelt, it is known to be associated with cancer and other genetic diseases, and it is regarded as uncontrollable, insidious and potentially lethal to large numbers of entirely innocent and trusting people.' These emotions are very powerful. We cannot believe that the industry thinks they can be dealt with simply by increasing public relations budgets."

That is also my experience.

Some of the representations that I have received are from people who are completely opposed to nuclear power and are obviously taking the opportunity to use this as a legitimate campaign, not just against the plans of Nirex, but against the wider policy of nuclear fuel. However, many of those who signed those petitions and are deeply concerned about the proposals as they relate to west Norfolk, support the Government's nuclear programme and the arguments in favour of a deep storage disposal site.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss), I have met many of the signatories to the petitions. On Wednesday we shall meet a delegation of "No to Nirex" campaigners who will hand us a petition signed by 46,000 people in our constituencies. That is a vast number of people, and they have signed these petitions because they are concerned that, because Norfolk is on that long list, it will be studied more carefully, may be subjected to further investigation and then may be put on a short list and eventually chosen as the site.

Several themes emerge. The first and most significant is that this area is one of outstanding natural beauty. Much of it contains a heritage coastline, and many areas are sites of special scientific interest. I am pleased that "The Way Forward" states that there is an argument for excluding in the first instance SSSIs, environmentally sensitive and important sites and sites with particular heritage value as well as areas with a high level of population.

The whole business of transportation has been rammed home to me time and again. Nirex pointed out, probably somewhat conservatively, that we are talking about 15 train loads a week to the railhead. That means at least 500

lorry movements a week from the railhead through to the Nirex installation. Alternatively, a railway may be built to the installation. I do not know which option Nirex would adopt if it came to East Anglia, but I expect that the cost of extending the railway to the installation would be such, given that it will be some distance from the nearest railway station, that it will probably rely on heavy lorries to transport the waste.

Mr. Allan Roberts: From the Select Committee and other recommendations, it seems that the best option would be for the waste to be transported by rail, and that whether it can be so transported should be a consideration, as the disposal site for low-level waste or the storage facility should be reachable by rail. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the present policy of British Rail and the Government of keeping secret the transportation of nuclear waste, and not even telling local authorities through which it travels when and how it is coming, would have to end if there was the frequency of transportation suggested by the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Bellingham: I agree. If we are to proceed with the present policy, far more information should be given to the public. The public should be aware of what happens. The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that the Select Committee's recommendations are along those lines, but "The Way Forward" envisages a railhead connected by road links to the installation. If that happened in west Norfolk, the effect would be disastrous. Time and again my constituents have stressed that ours is an area of outstanding natural beauty, that it is mainly a farming area, where the roads are already inadequate to take the amount of holiday traffic generated during the tourist season, and that if we had to contend with that number of heavy lorry movements a day the effect on the local community would be devastating and truly unacceptable.

I know that the diagrams of the installation are artists' impressions of what it will look like and that it may be possible to landscape it perfectly well, but it would remain a scar on an attractive landscape. Nowhere in west Norfolk, north Norfolk, south-west Norfolk, north-east Cambridgeshire or south Lincolnshire could an installation be located without having damaging effects on the immediate surrounding community and the wider communities. Aesthetically, it would be damaging.

The other point that has been made to me on many occasions is about the effect on tourism. The hon. Member for Moray made a good point about the psychological impact of this sort of installation. The psychological impact on industry, business and tourism would be immense. One must accept the fact that the goods and services from the area would be tarnished and that it would take many years to get over that psychological hurdle. That point has been rammed home to me. It is not made in "The Way Forward", but Nirex must take on board that fact and consider it carefully.

I am a self-confessed NIMBY. I am also a self-confessed NIMTO because, if the installation comes to my constituency, I shall not have an office to which I can return, as the volume of public protest that I have received is enormous. There is no doubt that if west Norfolk were included in the short list that opposition would increase and people would become more and more carried away. I shall not go so far as to say that there would be law-breaking, but there would certainly be civil disobedience and people would resort to tactics to which one would not expect the people of north Norfolk or East Anglia to resort. We are normally quiet people, but the installation would generate so much ill-will and opposition that I cannot imagine that Nirex would ever dream of including west Norfolk on its short list, bearing in mind its comment in "The Way Forward" that it will have to carry the local community with it.

I am a NIMBY, but I strongly believe that the debate must be carried on in a constructive and unemotional way and, furthermore, that the sites must be considered. The installation must go somewhere. When a district council says, "There is a case for having it in our district," Nirex must consider that option and bear in mind that, if it takes that option, it will probably carry public support with it.

1.22 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): It is a pleasure to follow in the debate my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham). I know exactly what he and the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) have been speaking about because for two years I experienced everything that my hon. Friend is about to face. He will have to take some difficult decisions and should be congratulated on saying openly and honestly where he stands. He has given his views on nuclear power and on the circumstances that relate to one of the most beautiful parts of the country. My hon. Friend, and any other hon. Members in a similar position, will have my greatest sympathy and I shall take a deep interest in the matter until we reach a final decision.

It would have been easy for me to have washed my hands of the matter on 1 May 1987 when the Secretary of State announced that he would not take on the people of Brigg and Cleethorpes or their Member of Parliament. I cannot do that and have decided that it is incumbent on me to pursue the matter, bearing in mind that I have two years' experience of living through what my hon. Friends will have to go through. Nirex may not yet have learnt its lesson in Brigg and Cleethorpes and may want another go at me. It is important for any hon. Member who has experienced what I have experienced to continue to participate in this important debate. That is why I have decided to add my two pennyworth to the debate.

I wish to concentrate first on a little bit of history, following the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) in his excellent speech. He has also taken a great interest in the subject for many years and his advice, guidance and support during the two years when I had to deal with the matter on a constituency basis were invaluable to me. I read Select Committee reports avidly and prayed them in aid, trying to persuade the Government to change their mind.

I am delighted to see that the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), is to reply to the debate and I congratulate her on her appointment. I am sure that she will be as effective a Minister on behalf of the electors of Brigg and Cleethorpes as her husband, the Minister for Roads and Traffic, has been. He has always responded to everything that I have asked of him about roads. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be able to respond similarly on behalf of the Department of the Environment. While this is a difficult issue, it is fascinating.

[Mr. Michael Brown]

This is my first opportunity for 17 months formally to put on record my gratitude to the Government for listening to and recognising the arguments that I and my hon. Friends who were also affected deployed. The charge that the Government do not listen has often been made, but I have to acquit them of it totally. I argued forcefully for two years and saw Ministers, Secretaries of State, Under-Secretaries of State and Ministers of State. We argued from week to week and I virtually lived in the Department of the Environment between 1985 and 1987. If I had not, this debate would not be taking place. If I and my hon. Friends had lain down and allowed Nirex to walk all over us, following the statement that was made in 1987, we would probably have shallow burial facilities for low-level and intermediate nuclear waste. That battle, which I and my hon. Friends fought, and won, has resulted in a change of policy.

The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) is probably about to ask me what the new policy is. Minds have not yet been made up, but we have got the Government away from a policy which was wrong and which the Select Committee said was wrong. It is wrong for intermediate nuclear waste to be put in a shallow burial facility. The Select Committee said so and the Government dropped the proposal. Once the Government had given way on intermediate waste being put in a shallow burial facility, it became clear that public opinion would not accept such a means of disposal.

I am delighted that the Government have decided that they should ask Nirex to go back to the drawing board.

Mr. Allan Roberts: One of the Government's problems is that that is exactly how they are disposing of low-level waste at the moment. Drigg will be full soon and, having abandoned shallow burial sites in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and those of other Conservative Members, the Government have no policy. They are in a real mess.

Mr. Brown: That is a problem which the Select Committee considered. I believe that it supports shallow burial for low-level waste because it was so horrified by what it saw at Drigg. We must find a publicly acceptable solution as quickly as possible. Circumstances at Drigg cannot be justified, even if they are improving, and, as the hon. Gentleman says, there is a problem with capacity. Clearly we have to address ourselves to that problem.

I believe that it was absolutely right to fight the battle that I fought between 1985 and 1987, although the spotlight is now turning to some of my hon. Friends, and although they would have been spared if it had gone into my backyard. I freely concede that Brigg and Cleethorpes might not be the most beautiful constituency in the country and does not have vast sites of special interest. However, it is important for the people who live in constituencies which are not regarded as the most beautiful in the land but which to them are home. They have the right to feel that, although they live in an area that is not particularly attractive to some people who have never visited the area, they should not have to accept all the rubbish and junk from the rest of the country. Nevertheless, I accept the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West that those constituencies which earn their principal income from tourism have a special case. I acknowledge that. I recognise that the battle that I won is causing some problems for some constituencies in the United Kingdom, and that someone, somewhere will get a site unless we follow the road recommended in the Select Committee report.

We have had a very useful debate this morning. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have addressed the question that has often been misunderstood—whether we are talking about disposal or storage. I like the idea recommended by the Select Committee of creating a facility along the lines of Forsmark in Sweden. That has always been my view.

I draw the attention of the House to the speech that I made on 9 February 1987 when I initiated on a private Member's motion a three-hour debate on nuclear waste. I said then, and I repeat today, that I am

"most impressed with the committed and far-sighted view which the Swedish people take of radioactive waste disposal. The Swedes have spared neither effort nor expense in coming to terms with the problem."

Everyone in the delegations that visited Forsmark, from the Select Committee and from the county councils coalition of Humberside, Lincolnshire and Bedfordshire,

"... was deeply impressed by the sheer size and vision of the Forsmark undertaking. It is clear that the Swedish authorities have decided to pay the greatest attention to deep-seated public concern, and have come up with a demonstrably acceptable and safe solution."—[*Official Report*, 9 February 1987; Vol. 110, c. 29.]

The advantage of that solution is that final decisions about disposal still do not have to be taken. As the hon. Member for Bootle and other hon. Members have said, such an impressive facility—it impressed hon. Members on both sides of the House when the Environment Select Committee went there; it certainly impressed me and the politicians of all political parties from the county of Humberside—is likely to impress the public. The advantage is that it is not taking a final decision. The waste is still retrievable and it is still possible to carry out monitoring, but it gets over the problem of the backyard, because a facility such as that at Forsmark is away from the centres of population, such as Norfolk, North-West or any other constituency where people are rightly anxious about the proposals that Nirex is considering.

I should like to comment on the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw), who spoke very warmly and highly of the way in which Nirex has been going about its business in recent months. I am delighted to hear that. If that is the case, it is an advance and the battle that I fought for two years some 18 months ago was worth fighting. In all my dealings between 1985 and 1987, I found the whole business very disagreeable. I was treated with great contempt. Elected representatives of the local authorities were not considered or consulted and were regarded as a nuisance.

I was regarded by Nirex as public enemy No. 1. It never took me into its confidence and I was never given proper or sensible briefings. From what my hon. Friend has said, it seems as if it has learnt its lesson. If that is so, I am delighted and I warmly congratulate Nirex on cleaning up its public relations act because it was abysmal when I had dealings with it. I remember Nirex charging round to the local magistrates court, obtaining injunctions and throwing them at the feet of protesters when they were trying to get on the site or when they were carrying out gentle and mild protests. That was wrong from a public authority. If it has cleaned up its act, is consulting hon.

Members and is making itself available to local authorities, the battle I fought on their behalf was worth fighting. My experience was most unpleasant.

I endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellet-Bowman) said about Heysham. As we consider radioactive waste, we have to consider transportation. The solution she proposed was right and I hope that the Government will take her ideas seriously.

Although my hon. Friend the Minister is not present, I want to draw the attention of Government Front Bench spokesmen to a specific question. I have given my hon. Friend notice of it. If she catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she is likely to be able to respond to it. Do the Government have any view on the three options put by Nirex in its document, "The Way Forward"? Have the Government made any submission to Nirex during the consultation period? I have taken the opportunity of responding to the Nirex consultation document. I recommended the Forsmark solution. I hope that any other hon. Member with an interest in the subject will take the opportunity of sending in a formal submission to Nirex. Those submissions are now being evaluated.

As I have already said, hon. Members who are ultimately faced with the problem will have to make some difficult decisions. Because of that, and because of the concern that they will have for their constituents, I believe that the Forsmark idea is the best. It is the solution which least affects individual constituents in any part of the country. I do not wish to say, "I have solved the problem for the people of Brigg and Cleethorpes and I do not care whether the site goes to a Labour, Tory or Liberal constituency." I will take an interest in the subject on behalf of any individual because I know what it does to people.

When my constituency was one of four sites selected, people could not sell their houses. In one tragic case a house was mortgaged for a business. Two years ago, when the bank saw that house prices were falling, it went to the owner and told him that the value of the house as security against the bank loan on the business no longer matched the overdraft facility and that facility was called in. That is what the Nirex proposals can do to people. That is what my constituents have had to experience and I hope that the constituents of other hon. Members do not have to experience it. Hon. Members will have my full support if they feel that their constituents are not being treated fairly by Nirex or the Government.

Mr. Allan Roberts: They have to threaten to resign.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman has touched on an important point. We have had some fierce talk today—which I respect—on behalf of the people of the Highlands and Norfolk. Two years nine months ago, I made a speech on nuclear waste, one week before the Secretary of State said that my constituency was to be one of the four sites. There was a tremendous amount of secrecy about it beforehand, but for about six months Nirex and the Government had been denying rumours, so it was pretty obvious that my constituency would be selected.

In my speech, I promised that for as long as I was the Member of Parliament for Brigg and Cleethorpes there would be no nuclear waste disposal in my constituency. I said that in February 1986, and I stand by what I said, save that I am prepared to accept that, providing it is geologically acceptable, any hon. Member should be prepared to consider the Forsmark idea. Indeed, I said that in February 1987 before the general election, when the decision to abandon the original policy had not been made.

I remember that when I was facing the possibility of nuclear waste disposal in my constituency my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) challenged me, saying:

"If NIREX were to follow the examples that he has listed,"—

Forsmark in Sweden—

"would he withdraw all his objections to a low-level disposal site in this country?"

I said:

"If Her Majesty's Government can say through my hon. Friend the Minister during the course of the debate that the experience at Forsmark had convinced them that that was the best way of disposing not only of intermediate-level waste but also of low and very low-level nuclear waste, I would accept that the problem of public opinion would have been dealt with, that the concern of public opinion would have been substantially allayed and I would be very much more inclined to accept such a proposal."—[*Official Report*, 9 February 1987; Vol. 110, c. 29-30.]

Any hon. Member who is affected by this issue will go though a difficult time. I decided to stake my political career on the issue because it affected my constituents so deeply. Everybody knows what the implications would have been if I had been unable to deliver that commitment to my constituents.

Much good has come out of that battle. The Government listened and rightly asked Nirex to consider more acceptable alternatives for the disposal of waste. Throughout the difficulties, battles and arguments that I have had with the Government, they have listened and taken account of public opinion and individual hon. Members. I hope that that will be an incentive to any colleagues who may face similar problems in future.

We are beginning to advance the debate for the better. We are beginning to arrive at a more publicly acceptable solution, and I hope that when Nirex brings forward its ultimate proposal it will choose the under-sea facility, which enables low-level and intermediate-level waste to be stored and barriered, thereby making it retrievable and monitorable. That solution was contained in the Select Committee report of some years ago and nothing has changed to alter its conclusions.

1.43 pm

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): Not unnaturally, the debate has been concerned, first, with whether we should have nuclear power. I hold clear views that we should, although I do not intend to rehearse them again. I suspect that by saying that I shall shower myself with the credit of my colleagues.

Secondly, the debate has been concerned with nuclear waste. Again, not unnaturally, it is fashionable when discussing nuclear waste to couple it with waste from nuclear power stations. As I do not have a nuclear power station in my constituency, I shall leave other hon. Members who are affected, or may be affected, by the building of repositories to take such waste, to speak about that.

That does not mean that I do not have a problem. I do. As my hon. Friend the Minister mentioned, under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 all kinds of organisations are entitled to dispose of nuclear waste. Fifteen

[Mr. James Cran]

organisations on Humberside are so authorised. I pay tribute to the Government, following a disreputable programme last year by Channel 4 on the cancer cluster problem in my constituency, for readily agreeing to the publication and updating of that information for the whole of the United Kingdom. That showed that the Government were seized of the need to be as open as possible about this subject. I shall not dwell on that point because it has been addressed by other hon. Members.

Industrial companies, hospitals, local authority departments, universities and colleges and goodness knows who else may dispose of waste. I am prepared to accept the comment by my hon. Friend the Minister that it is low-level waste, but I repeat that there is a problem in my constituency. Such was the cancer cluster problem that last year the East Yorkshire health authority commissioned a report on the subject, which was conducted by the Leukaemia Research Fund Centre for Clinical Epidemiology at Leeds university—no mean organisation. The report referred to the fact that

"clusters of leukaemia in children and adults occur elsewhere in the country and are widely distributed throughout those areas under surveillance, including Cumbria, Lancashire, the Trent Region, South Wales and the South West.

The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) rightly referred to cancer clusters in children in relation to nuclear power stations. I merely add that they occur elsewhere, where nuclear power stations do not exist.

The position is slightly more complicated than that. The report revealed that

"the statistical research methods which have excluded an industrial link with leukaemia have found an unexpected and unexplained number of brain tumours in both adults and children in a pattern on North Humberside that appears to have a 'geographically-based relationship'."

The report made it clear that the number of cases is very small. None the less, it recommended that further studies be carried out. There is a cancer cluster problem not only in my constituency but in others, and we do not know the reasons for it.

When this matter was raised in a disreputable manner by the Channel 4 programme, the finger was pointed at one industrial company—Capper Pass, which is part of Rio Tinto Zinc. I pay tribute to the Government, who moved like greased lightning on the suggestion that I and others made of instituting a report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution on Capper Pass. We all expect to hear the results of that report shortly and want to know when the report is to be published. It would be helpful not only to me but to my constituents, and it has ramifications for other constituencies.

Prior to the certificate of authorisation being granted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate on Pollution to Capper Pass to emit polonium-210 from its chimney, there are points to be considered. It seems strange to some of us that some of the ore used by Capper Pass—in common with many other companies—is found in granite, which emits alpha particles. Many of us wondered why the initiative did not rest with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution to suggest in the first place that the emissions from that chimney be discovered in a pragmatic way rather than accidentally, as actually happened.

It is also the case that the certificate requires all companies that are registered under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 to conduct environmental monitoring programmes. I have made it clear to the Department of the Environment that I consider it to be wholly unsatisfactory that the gamekeeper and the poacher are one and the same. Those of us who are worried about the problem believe that that is unsatisfactory. I ask the Department of the Environment to reconsider that and to arrange for some independent body, such as the local authority, to conduct that monitoring programme for the company, if for no other reason than the one eloquently given by many other hon. Members—public confidence.

The report by the Leukaemia Research Fund Centre, to which I have already referred, makes a recommendation about licensed industrial sources of radiation. It recommends that further studies be carried out. Will the Minister tell us whether the Government are prepared to take part in such further studies or to fund them partly? I fear that as resources are scarce—as they always will be—the recommendations will not be carried out.

As a result of the cancer clusters, my constituents are also worried about dose limits. Other hon. Members have referred to the International Commission on Radiological Protection and the fact that it advised in September 1987 that background radiation in the environment was rising. That should be noted, as should a striking statement in the subsequent National Radiological Protection Board interim guidance, which stated:

"The Board recognises that estimates of the level of risk associated with radiation exposure are rising, and advises those with regulatory responsibility to consider the possible implication for dose limits. As long as the legal dose limits remain at their present levels, the Board emphasises that it is even more important to keep exposures as low as reasonably possible, since continued exposure near the dose limit represents a level of risk which verges on the unacceptable."

Even more distressing for my constituents is the fact that the report goes on to say:

"It may be that risks at younger ages are higher and consideration needs to be given to this in the establishment of dose limits for the public."

As I understand it, responsibility rests with the Health and Safety Commission to decide whether dose limits should be changed. I ask the Government again when the Health and Safety Commission's report will be published and, more important, whether it will consider the risks to those of younger ages. I impress on the House that the number of children in my constituency who have died as a result of leukaemia and other associated diseases is very small. None the less, when a family loses a child in that way, it is a 100 per cent. tragedy. The statistics show the occurrence of leukaemia to be well above the national average and the average for Yorkshire and Humberside. That must be a matter of great concern to the House and to all the authorities involved.

In terms of public knowledge and awareness, I am glad to see the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment in his place as the Select Committee report has done us an enormous service in this regard. I do not pretend to have read all three parts of the report, but the bits that I have read have been clear, concise and easily understandable by one with very little technical knowledge of the subject. In that respect, the Committee has achieved in practice what it asks all agencies, including the Government, to do. That is a major plus for the Committee.

In relation to the problem in my constituency, there was undoubtedly a tendency among some people considering the matter in positions of authority to try to protect the

community from being frightened by the knowledge of what was going on. I simply do not believe that that is justified. I have dealt with many ordinary people who have lost children or feared that they might, as well as people just beginning to study the subject, and it became very clear that people's ability to judge the situation was immeasurably raised simply by having more knowledge and facts. My role in the exercise was therefore to ask all involved to "tell it as it is"—to tell the truth without any embroidery and to put it to people in that way. I therefore agree strongly with recommendation No. 20 of the Select Committee with reference to reviewing the way in which the public are informed and involving them. That is absolutely correct. In this respect, I pay tribute to the work of the Capper Pass company, which preceded the Select Committee report, by involving the surrounding community in a very sophisticated way. I believe that that was subsequently helpful in dealing with the role played in the cancer cluster problem.

If that is true for the nuclear industry, it must be equally true for the other companies and organisations licensed under the 1960 Act to dispose of waste. I put it to my hon. Friend the Minister that not enough is known about those other bodies. I know of 19 on Humberside, but there are many more elsewhere. I do not believe that the community knows what those companies are doing, however innocently it is being done. I believe that a code of practice of some kind is required to encourage those bodies to tell the community exactly what radioactive substances they have, what they are used for, and how they are disposed of when they become waste. As other hon. Members have said, the same must apply to the Government. I therefore repeat what I said at the beginning of my brief remarks. I am sure that the Government take the view that the more open they can be with the community, ultimately the easier it will be to solve such problems as we have.

My constituents would not forgive me if I did not pursue this matter extremely forcefully, and that is exactly what I intend to do. I put it to my hon. Friend the Minister that we need far more research into the causes of child cancers and brain tumours. The longer that the current position pertains, when people simply do not know enough, the more suspicious they will become.

I look to the Government, first, for something for which I have not looked to them before—the necessary funds for research programmes. The House knows that essentially the money involved is peanuts.

Secondly—and this is within the ambit of the Department of the Environment—we need to know why random cancer clusters occur. They may well occur for random reasons. It may well be background radiation, not radiation from a chimney. There could be a whole host of other factors. For as long as the reasons are not known, suspicion will remain.

Thirdly, we need to know a great deal more about what is happening with companies and organisations, other than power stations, that dispose of waste. I envisage action on that through a code of practice.

I have been impressed by the manner in which the debate has been conducted. It has been level-headed, in stark constrast to the various television and radio programmes that have put my constituency under the spotlight. The "Face the Facts" Radio 4 programme last week was the most sensational, nasty little programme that I have heard for some time. I do not want to hear a repeat of such treatment of my constituents' problems. There was also the Channel 4 programme that I mentioned earlier. We need a more responsible attitude from the media, but that is not currently forthcoming.

2.2 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) on his work, which has been appreciated for many years. I certainly appreciated it before I came to the House, and I appreciate it now. We owe him a debt of gratitude for the quality of his work and for introducing a new word into our vocabulary—NIMTOO. The Minister gave us an example of NIMTOO—not in my term of office. The Government are saying that for at least 50 years some of the most fiercely radioactive waste will be stored at Sellafield and some of the radioactivity will be allowed to die away. The consequent problems will not occur in the Government's term of office.

If we understand the signals from the Conservative Benches, the Government appear to have surrendered to the NIMBY syndrome—not in my back yard. Yet every part of Britain is someone's back yard. The only two areas that the Government now favour are Caithness and Sellafield, and there is a special reason for that. In the back yard of Sellafield the majority of the bread winners—the work force—have a vested interest in nuclear power, so public opinion has become distorted. In Caithness, the workers at Dounreay are under threat because there is no long-term future for nuclear power or for the fast-breeder experiment at that plant. The workers face a Hobson's choice of future unemployment or accepting nuclear dumping, which the remainder of the country does not want in its back yard.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: It is not the simple Hobson's choice that the hon. Gentleman defined. Other sources of energy could be investigated. We have recommended that Dounreay would be an ideal site for an alternative energy research station. About 2,000 jobs have been created in a similar institute in Denmark.

Mr. Flynn: I am grateful to the hon. Lady. She made the point rather more eloquently than I.

If I can remember her words exactly, the Minister said that, in the short term, there is no alternative to the available renewable energy sources. There is no nuclear power in the short term either. We must remember the long-running fiasco of Dungeness B power station. It was 16 years before it produced enough electricity to light a bicycle lamp bulb. It has been a story of continual catastrophe, which, in the words of the chairman of the CEGB, we must never repeat.

The creation of sources of energy is a long-term process. If nuclear power is the purest, most benign form of energy, how does the Minister compare it with tidal power? Tidal power is eternal, it is British, and it can be created by several sources around the country. It can create up to 20 per cent. of our power—a huge amount—and it is non-polluting. That great surge of energy—that cliff of water—that runs around our coast could be tapped in its best form in the Severn, but also elsewhere—in the Solway, the Mersey and the Forth.

The cheapest energy produced anywhere in the world is at Laurens in Brittany. A tidal barrage is producing energy for virtually nothing. A few miles from my constituency,

[Mr. Flynn]

with the great potential tidal power of the Bristol channel, there are eight nuclear reactors—two at Albury, four at Hinkley Point and two at Berkeley. They are all within a 25-mile radius of a population of 2·25 million people. We are shortly to see the nuclear power cycle come to an end. It was only in 1963, the same year that the Llanwern steelworks opened—it is going well and has a long-term future of possibly 100 years—that Berkeley opened. It produced a tiny amount of electricity. Yet is is now to be closed down. There has been a 10-year process of taking some plant away. For a century, it will stand as a monument—a nuclear graveyard. For a minute amount of energy, it will be a headache and a problem for our grandchildren's grandchildren, because the fiercely radoactive material must be put somewhere else if it is not to be left there. I support the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) of leaving it encased on site. It must be cooled and looked after. All that we have heard in the debate is a story of corporate irresponsibility by many Governments, and that, for 25 years, we have added to the problem without any clear concept of the long-term solution.

Radiation was described as natural. For all time, we have had radiation, and flora, fauna and babies have been born with mutations. Every form of radiation has a damaging effect on all species. It has probably contributed to the evolution of all species. In our time, certainly, nuclear power has not been the main contributor—nuclear weapons in space and many other forces have been involved—but we have added to the stock of radiation in our world without any concept of the long-term effect.

I warm to what was said by the hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran). We must not reach rapid conclusions. We should be humble and approach the matter carefully. There are no causal links that we can be certain about, but the likelihood is that future generations will say that, for a tiny short-term power gain, we as a generation have left them with a nuclear nightmare and eternal nuclear graveyards.

2.10 pm

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): This has been a good debate, but a long overdue one, on a subject that is of great concern to the citizens of this country as well as to my constituents in Cambridgeshire, North-East surrounding the Wash. I pay tribute to the excellent introduction to this debate by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), and in welcoming the Minister to the Dispatch Box for perhaps her first debate I congratulate her on a speech that was characterised, not as the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) suggested, by delicate complacency, but, by a robust concern to solve the problems.

Opposition Members have failed to address the critical question in the debate, which is whether significant emissions of radiation are escaping from stored nuclear waste. The evidence is that there is virtually none, even from the storage of high-level waste. That does not rule out the possibility of radiation escaping in the future, but at the moment it is simply alarmist to say that many people are at risk from the waste that is being stored.

The hon. Member for Bootle told us that the Labour party's policy—it is his policy, so it may be that of the Labour party—is to go for underground repositories to store, but not to dispose of, nuclear waste.

Mr. Allan Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Moss: If the Labour party intends to adopt that policy if and when it achieves power, it cannot say that such storage is unsafe or unproven. If that is its policy, and if it is being put forward on the basis that it believes it to be unproven and unsafe, it is a dishonest policy.

Mr. Allan Roberts: I wish that hon. Members would listen to what is said. I have not said, and I do not think any of my colleagues have either that it is Labour party policy to have deep underground storage. What we have said is that that is one of the options that should be considered, along with retrievable, monitorable storage of low and intermediate-level waste on the surface. We believe that those are options that should be considered. I do not recall myself or any of my hon. Friends saying that we do not believe that it is possible to store low and intermediate-level waste safely. We believe that that is possible. If that were not possible, we would be in a powerless state.

Mr. Moss: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that clarification. However, I have heard him say on many occasions that he is in favour of looking at and going along with deep level retrievable storage.

Mr. Allan Roberts *indicated assent.*

Mr. Moss: The hon. Gentleman has confirmed that. The main difficulty in this debate is that we are dealing with perceived reality and not necessarily with the facts. It is true to say that the nuclear industry has an enormous problem in convincing people of the safety, not only of nuclear waste disposal, but of the nuclear industry as a whole, certainly since the Chernobyl disaster.

The disposal of waste needs attention now, because waste is with us. It has been with us for many years. Indeed, when the Labour party was in power it did not face the problem as it should have done. I did not hear the hon. Member for Bootle tell us that up to 1979—during a Labour Government—low and intermediate-waste was in fact put in drums and disposed of in the north-east Atlantic.

The debate is mainly a political one, and it is used by those who oppose nuclear power and energy in principle. The Government have clearly and unambiguously accepted their duty to ensure that nuclear waste is properly dealt with. I shall quote from the Government's response to the Environment Select Committee's report. It says:

"It is Government policy that wastes should be disposed of under strict supervision to high standards of safety and that the periods of storage should be the minimum compatible with safe disposal."

Our nuclear industry directly supports at least 100,000 jobs. Any threat to those jobs is to be deplored. The Labour party's policy of phasing out nuclear power and replacing it with more coal-fired production will be vastly more expensive if the new generating capacity estimated by the CEGB by the mid-1990s is to be met. Coal-fired energy production is not without its own environmental effects, as many hon. Members have pointed out. For example, it produces carbon dioxide, which adds to the greenhouse effect, and sulphur dioxide, which, with nitrous oxide,

produces acid rain. What we are not told is that even coal-fired power stations emit radiation. For example, when a 1,000 MW coal-fired power station creates 1 million tonnes of ash a year, the ash contains about 5 tonnes of uranium, according to the Nuclear Electricity Information Group.

The waste is with us now and needs to be dealt with today. The decision should not be postponed for future generations. Most groups which have involved themselves with this problem agree that indefinite storage above ground presents unacceptable risks. Before Opposition Members leap to their feet, I remind them that the TUC nuclear energy review body report published in April this year firmly states that storage at nuclear sites should be seen only as a short-term option until an agreed strategy is found.

Mr. Allan Roberts: That is right.

Mr. Moss: But the hon. Gentleman said that that was an option that his party would consider. We have evidence over a long period that that could lead to greater risks to workers in nuclear installations.

Mr. Allan Roberts: I wish that the hon. Gentleman had listened to me. I made it clear that storage on site at nuclear power stations where the waste is reproduced was not a solution because that would proliferate storage sites throughout the country and would be unacceptable to the public. When I talk about retrievable and monitorable under-surface storage, I am talking about one facility. We could afford only one facility because of the cost of building it safely and acceptably.

Mr. Moss: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that clarification.

I wish to put the problem in perspective. Hon. Members have described the size of the waste. By the year 2030 we shall be looking at 1·5 million cu m of low-level and intermediate-level waste, which is equivalent to 2 million tonnes of packaged material over 40 years. I ask the House to compare that with the 30 million tonnes of domestic waste each year and the 60 million tonnes of coal-mining waste. I read somewhere that the total waste would fill Westminster Hall 20 times. It would probably equate to the cubic capacity of the Palace of Westminster, but I am not proposing it as a site.

We must get the radiation problem into perspective. The overall effective dose equivalent from radiation of natural and artificial origin is about 2,150 microSieverts a year. Ninety per cent. of that is natural radiation through cosmic and gamma rays, and radon and thoron gas. Only 10 per cent. is artificial, of which less that 1 per cent. comes from the nuclear industry. The annual risks of death from accidents in various industries compared with cancers induced among radiation workers are, one in 800 in the fishing industry, one in 6,000 for coal mining and one in 57,000 in the radiation and nuclear industries. Let us take the matter nearer to the mundane. The annual risk of death in the United Kingdom from a common cause, such as smoking 10 cigarettes a day, is one in 200, compared with that exposed to radiation of a worker in a nuclear power station, which is one in 35,000.

What policy should we adopt for the disposal or storage of low-level and intermediate-level nuclear waste? Dumping at sea is not an option at present and the Secretary of State has issued a policy statement on that recently. There is a tendency in the evidence so far to favour disposal rather than storage, but we need to do a great deal more research on that matter. A single deep disposal or storage site appears to be preferable to a proliferation of small storage sites across the country, either at or near existing nuclear locations.

The safety factor is the most important of all and should override the ability to retrieve or recover, but, if a guarantee of safety cannot be given without retrieval, that option should also be considered. The site should not be within an area of dense population and should have an adequate transport infrastructure. The support of local people and councils is essential if the policy is to be adopted smoothly and without too many problems.

We must also set radiological protection criteria. The standards being adopted by the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are extremely tight. They set a target of an annual risk of no more than one in 100,000, but if a single repository is chosen, that target goes up to one in a million.

The Nirex report shows that 30 per cent. of the United Kingdom land area could possibly provide acceptable geological formations. As we have heard today, that includes many sites in East Anglia, the midlands, the north-east, Scotland and Wales. As my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) said, people from my constituency, which borders the Wash, will visit the House next Wednesday to present their petition.

East Anglia does not meet many of the criteria that I mentioned earlier. It is an area of increasingly dense population and, as my hon. Friend said, of outstanding natural beauty. In the case of Sellafield and Dounreay, the two sites on which Nirex is concentrating, there is some local acceptance. Both local councils—Copeland district council and Dounreay district council—have written to Nirex confirming a positive response to further investigation in their areas. There are already nuclear sites at both locations and the geology appears suitable. They have relatively sparse populations and meet the transport criteria.

Although the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) said that she might lie in front of the bulldozer when it arrives in Dounreay, I ask her not to take such severe measures. However, there will be job losses if the fast-breeder reactor at Dounreay closes down, and opportunities for new jobs in a new form of the nuclear industry would be welcome to people in many areas.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the Minister have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mrs. Bottomley: I should like to respond briefly to some of what has been said in this important debate.

The day has been distinguished by fulsome tributes to the Chairman of the Environment Select Committee, and I should like to repeat my appreciation of the way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) introduced the subject on the basis of the Committee's report. We have finished by hearing my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) presenting a balanced review of the subject without emotion. He set out clearly the main points.

[Mrs. Bottomley]

I fear that I must tell the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) that I am not sure that I can imitate his amicable style, but perhaps I may say quietly and courteously that we believe that indefinite storage below ground is safer than risking keeping radioactive waste on the surface. We believe that we should have barriers to the atmosphere to protect all. As the Environment Select Committee and the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities have concluded, safe disposal of radioactive waste can be developed in the United Kingdom. That is why the Government have asked Nirex to make proposals on low-level and intermediate-level waste. In its conclusions, the Environment Select Committee supported the Government's view that early disposal is the right answer. We expect Nirex to make progress as quickly as possible.

For heat-generating waste, the Government's policy is still for disposal deep underground. Research has demonstrated the potential advantages of storing such wastes for at least 50 years to enable a reduction in heat and radioactivity to take place before disposal. Current research is aimed at confirming the applicability to the United Kingdom of findings made in other countries.

Several hon. Members have mentioned Drigg. The Environment Select Committee rightly drew attention to the deficiencies of the waste management arrangements it found there in 1985-86. The Government's response recorded improvements that were already in place two years ago, and since then a new authorisation for the site issued by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution, has helped to secure further progress. The current investment programme by BNFL, amounting to some £20 million, includes capping trenches, improving drainage systems, compaction of Sellafield waste where possible, containerisation of waste and provision of concrete-lined walls. The inspectorate will keep the authorisation under regular review.

The hon. Members for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), for Bootle, for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams), for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) and others have mentioned reprocessing, which recovers valuable uranium and plutonium which can be used again in our AGR and PWR installations, even if we have no fast reactors. That reduces the amount of radioactivity in the waste which requires disposal. The long-term risks associated with disposal of spent fuel could be greater than those associated with disposal of vitrified waste. Since 1976, all United Kingdom contracts for reprocessing overseas spent fuel have contained options for the return of waste. The Government have made it clear that BNFL will be expected to exercise those options.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) drew attention forcefully to the views of her constituents about the proposal for the storage of spent fuel from AGRs prior to reprocessing. Any decision to construct an AGR dry fuel store is a matter for the commercial judgment of the CEGB and the South of Scotland Electricity Board, but they would need to seek formal planning and investment approval before construction can begin. As with any planning application, opportunity for formal objections will be given. Construction will be subject to the formal approval of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, which licenses operations, and any discharges will require authorisation from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution.

I hope that that reassures my hon. Friend. I know that she will come back to me later.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose——*

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend made her point powerfully and I heard it most strongly.

Several hon. Members mentioned the Irish sea. Intensive monitoring around British nuclear sites has shown that levels of radioactivity pose no risk to human health. The latest monitoring results published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food show that marine radioactivity levels, as a result of liquid discharges from Sellafield, are continuing to fall and that radiation exposure to consumers of fish and shellfish throughout the country remains within internationally recommended levels.

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) may like to know that the independent study into the medical effects on the east coast of Northern Ireland have not found any correlation between Sellafield discharges and leukaemia or any other conditions.

Several hon. Members have mentioned the medical aspects. It is an extremely important subject, but it is necessary to see it in the light of the scientific evidence. No analysis so far has shown a clear link between cancer clusters and radiation, but cancer clusters occur in other parts of the country where there are no nuclear installations of any kind. That is a subject for the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment, and is on which we follow closely.

The hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) referred to anxiety in his constituency about reports of increased cancer incidence near the Capper Pass smelter. Discharges were sanctioned because levels were calculated to present no health risk. Inspectors have made a full assessment of the discharges from the smelter, and I understand that neither chemical discharges nor the small quantities of natural radioactivity which are emitted——

It being half-past Two o' clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

AGRICULTURE

Ordered,

That Mr. John Carlisle be discharged from the Agriculture Committee and Mr. Richard Alexander be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

ENERGY

Ordered,

That Mr. Tony Speller be discharged from the Energy Committee and Mr. Malcolm Moss be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

TRANSPORT

Ordered,

That Mr. Derek Conway be discharged from the Transport Committee and Mr. Robert McCrindle be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Motor Rallies

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): Although I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this matter, it is not necessarily the stuff of which tomorrow's headlines are made. I have sought this debate in my capacity as chairman of the rights of way review committee, which is a non-statutory committee composed of all the bodies concerned with public rights of way, such as farmers, landowners, all the different user groups—whether they wish for access to the countryside on foot, on horseback, on cycles or in four-wheeled vehicles—local authorities and representatives of three Government Departments.

The committee existed in its present form since 1981 when, under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), the Under-Secretary of State for Energy, it played a key role in securing agreed changes to part III of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 during its passage through the House.

My purpose in raising the matter is not to ban motor rallies from rights of way, as could possibly be inferred from the title which has been applied to the debate: I simply want to draw attention to an anomaly, contradiction, confusion or lack of clarity in the law. The matter first came to the attention of the rights of way review committee in 1985. It arose out of two incidents. One occurred on a bridleway in Nottinghamshire when members of the Cyclists Touring Club narrowly escaped injury when encountering, entirely without warning, an unauthorised car rally. The other has been a continuing saga in mid-Wales where conflicts have led to a local rambler, who sought to have the law enforced, being obliged to leave his home and move to a secret address following threats and intimidation.

The problem is whether a rally, which is race or trial of speed, can or cannot be authorised on those highways which are public footpaths or bridleways. I do not want to exaggerate the problem, nor do I wish to pillory those who organise or take part in motor rallies. I am happy to acknowledge that the standard of organisation of United Kingdom events is high, with proper regard for safety and the public. Of course, many rallies take place with no practical problem arising.

Nevertheless, the present state of the law has led to trouble, and it may lead to trouble again. I believe that it ought to be put right in a calm atmosphere, unprompted by any fresh incident. The present uncertainty is no good for anyone except hard-pressed Ministers who probably think that other matters affecting safety have higher priority, and I appreciate that.

The relevant legislation where the anomaly occurs is the Road Traffic Act 1972, although provisions in it come from previous legislation, going back as far as the Road Traffic Act 1920. A consolidation measure, presently before the House, will become the Road Traffic Act 1988. The anomaly is transferred almost wholly and completely from one statute to the proposed statute. Therefore, I propose to use the nomenclature of the 1972 Act, as I believe that that is still the extant measure.

There is a conflict between the wording of different sections of that Act. So far, the Department has been unwilling to give guidance on interpretation or to introduce amending legislation. Section 14 of the 1972 Act makes it an offence to promote or take part in a race or trial of speed between motor vehicles on a public highway. Section 15 makes it an offence to promote or take part in a competition other than a trial or race of speed on a public highway, unless the competition or trial is authorised.

The Secretary of State is given power to make regulations governing the authorisation of trials, and I shall come to that. Section 35 makes it an offence to promote or take part in a trial of any description between motor vehicles on a footpath or bridleway, unless the holding of the trial has been authorised by the local authority. Section 36 makes it an offence to drive a motor vehicle on a footpath or bridleway without lawful authority.

The problem of interpretation that has arisen is that section 14 places an absolute ban on races or trials of speed on a "public highway" without making it clear whether the term "public highway" includes footpaths and bridleways. Neither the word "highway" nor the words "public highway" are defined in the Act. Section 35 refers to trials "of any description" without making it clear whether it was intended to exclude races or trials of speed as being prohibited under section 14.

The regulations to which I have referred are made under section 15 and are called the Motor Vehicles (Competitions and Trials) Regulations 1969. In schedule 2 the regulations refer to

"lengths of any public highway which are footpaths or bridleways"

That would seem to suggest that in 1969 the House believed that footpaths and bridleways came within the definition of "public highway".

Section 15 of the Act was first introduced as section 36 of the Road Traffic Act 1962, and the then Minister responsible, Ernest Marples—a name which is no doubt remembered with great affection—appointed a committee under Lord Chesham to advise him on the exercise of his powers under the section. The committee's report led to the framework which was subsequently set out in the 1969 regulations. Paragraph 70 of the report refers to advice given to the committee—one assumes it was given by the then Ministry of Transport—that

"section 36 should be regarded as applying to footpaths and bridleways, because they are public highways."

More recently, an effort to obtain clarification was made in another place when the noble Lord Melchett tabled a question about whether the words "public highway" in section 14 of the 1972 Act included public footpaths and bridleways. In what amounts to an almost Gilbertian passage, my noble Friend Lord Brabazon of Tara admitted in his reply that there was uncertainty about the precise meaning of the term and went on to suggest that bridleways and footpaths were highways but not necessarily public highways. If the Department believes that there is a real distinction, in apparent contradiction of the previous advice given to Lord Chesham, it should say why.

This is not just an academic point of law, although it may seem that way because of the many references that I have had to make to statutes and parts of statutes. Users of the countryside need to know where they stand. At present, the situation is productive of potential danger, even if in most instances common sense and good

[Mr. Alan Haselhurst]

management prevail. I have not come to the House to offer the Minister the precise formula that he should adopt and I am certainly not suggesting the exclusion of any interest from access to the countryside.

It should be obvious from what I have said that a degree of regulation is necessary to ensure that different users have access to the countryside without detriment to others. That cannot be absolutely guaranteed while there is uncertainty in the law. It should be equally obvious that, because an anomaly has been exposed, it should be corrected.

I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to give an assurance that the matter will be tackled at the first convenient opportunity. If he feels that this is a classic matter that should be thrashed out unofficially within the rights of way review committee, I hope that he will say that, if the committee can reach agreement on how the law should unambiguously be written, he will be prepared to adopt such a formula when there is next an opportunity to legislate. This is not an earth-shattering problem, but it would do good if, in a spirit of calm and rationality, it could be resolved once and for all.

2.40 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) for the work that he does on the rights of way review committee and for the way in which he put the argument. When I have finished, he may regard me as Sullivan to my noble Friend's Gilbert, although I shall try to be helpful as well.

I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would pursue his offer of getting the various interests together in his committee or through its good offices to consider what the law might be. I cannot guarantee to adopt any agreed conclusion, but I shall give it serious consideration.

I go around the country praising much of the work of groups within the Department of Transport. I have not yet had an opportunity to praise the work of the lawyers, and I should like to do that now. They are asked to give definitive views or declarations of what the law means. My hon. Friend spelt out plainly that nobody knows what the law means. He will agree that it would be fruitless—unless a case goes to court, when it would necessarily have to make a decision—to try to decide what the law is intended to mean. We must take the various sections of the law and non-definitions and mix them with what has been decided by definition or case law. It is generally agreed that there are no obvious conclusions to which a court could come; it would be a matter of arguing it out, if the case went that far.

The good news is that there are relatively few conflicts. Those concerned about rights of way may want to spell out the position in advance so that conflicts do not arise, but the best that I can do is to echo my hon. Friend's words about common sense and good management at rallies.

A number of issues affect rights of way, footpaths, bridleways, highways and public highways. I am the last person to try to distinguish all the differences between them, but the Department and I, as the Minister for Roads and Traffic, are concerned not only about main trunk roads but about the effects of roads on people's rights of way, footpaths, bridleways and highways. I remember saying at the opening of the Bridport bypass that it was our policy, wherever possible, to ensure that footpaths are not unnecessarily diverted. Pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders prefer the option of going in straight lines or on historic paths without unnecessary disturbance. It is not always possible to arrange that, but it is right to say that we in the Department, although we must cater for the needs of heavy goods vehicles, buses, cars and motorbikes, do all we can to maintain the rights of way that traditionally people have built up.

My hon. Friend mentioned a member of the Ramblers Association. Although 50 years ago it might not have been the most popular of bodies with landowners or the Government, one can pay tribute to the work that it has done to preserve rights of way and footpaths throughout the country. I have had the experience of trying to follow a path that has been available to me for 20 years and to others for generations, only to discover that it has been ploughed up with no provision for people to take the traditional route. In my case, it was distressing because it was the route to church.

My hon. Friend referred to motor rallies. I acknowledge that he has been concerned about them for some time. A small number of motor rallies cause public disquiet, especially when they make use of quiet country paths. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for acknowledging that there is no evidence of a major safety problem. None of the 5,200 road deaths last year happened because of motor rallies on public rights of way. That is not to say that one will not happen this weekend, but the overall pattern shows that there is not a major safety problem at the moment.

The Government's attitude to motor rallies must remain balanced. There are 12,000 rally drivers. Rallies give pleasure to many people. They are a traditional and helpful offshoot for our motor industry. Sometimes rallies provide test conditions, allowing the development of approved vehicle and component design. They should not be organised in ways which cause distress to others or which compromise the safety of either participants or people who are in no way involved. Underlying my hon. Friend's interest, besides the wish to protect rights of way, is the view that those who are not involved should not be put at risk. There is no perfect way of ensuring total safety on the roads, as members of the Cyclists Touring Club acknowledge, but it is important to ensure that unnecessary risks are not added to by the activities of others.

For many years, the Department has appointed the Royal Automobile Club as its agent for acting as the governing body for motor sport under the terms of the Motor Vehicle (Competitions and Trials) Regulations. I pay tribute to the RAC. This is a good example of agency agreement or privatisation, call it what one will. The system has been acknowledged to work well because of the common sense, goodwill and professionalism of those involved.

The Government are satisfied that rallies are organised in a way that minimises disturbance to the public and does not exceed a tolerable level of nuisance. These events are rationed to a maximum level of one night event every three weeks, or a day event every three weeks, with a minimum of three weeks between any two events. In practice, in few areas is this maximum level of activity approached.

Rallies are authorised only after consultation with the local police and, where appropriate, with representatives

of local authorities and national parks. The RAC Motor Sports Association has regional route liaison officers to assist in alleviating any local difficulties. All involved are well aware that events can take place only with the kind co-operation of many residents along the route. Today I met with the RAC-MSA for a photograph with a 1904 French car with which I hope to travel down to Brighton. I was glad to be able to put my chauffeur, Mr. Stan Wyatt, behind the wheel. Although he will not drive to Brighton with me, he has driven me safely around the country over the past four and a half years.

Some minor events are automatically authorised, such as those involving fewer than 12 vehicles. Organisers of those events are made aware of the legislation for running events on public highways. Events are allowed only within the confines of the road traffic law, so, for instance, cars and motor cycles cannot break the speed limits. Rally events are divided into stages. Competitions are judged on merits of regularity. Any improvements to a given time for the stage receive no extra points. There is no incentive to speed.

There is no place for improperly organised rallies. I am pleased to understand that, earlier this year, a Buckinghamshire motor club was found to have contravened the regulations and was banned from organising rallies for three years. My hon. Friend said that one example which prompted this debate was an unauthorised rally.

Rules are important. We recognise that they need to be up to date. Earlier this year we suggested to the RAC that it should review its code of practice to see whether it needs amendment or tightening. The RAC is now discussing its initial conclusions with us.

There is a long-standing question, which prompted the debate, about the legality of authorising motor rallies on footpaths and bridleways. I have before me some words which I would prefer to spin into a sentence of about 180 words so that it cannot be interpreted. I shall leave it because that would take me into a partial interpretation of the law which my hon. Friend has clearly spelt out as being uninterpretable. In other words, I shall stop digging.

There is one final aspect which has not been touched on, but which I trust is important because it relates to safety. Dr. Peter North's major review of road traffic law, published in the spring, recommended that we should consider extending at least some of the main driving offences to driving off the public highway. That is an important point because it would provide additional protection against the rare cases of misconduct that put people at risk. We are currently considering which offences should be more widely applicable and we shall cover this point in the full response to the North review which the Government have promised for early next year.

My hon. Friend has made this a subject for public debate—not just today but on previous occasions; for example, he has referred to questions in the other place. His committee is the right body to decide whether it is possible to agree a conclusion with the various interests concerned. The Government would give interested opinions on the results. If we conclude that this is not the kind of problem in which it would be appropriate to invest much public money during our campaign to cut casualties by one third by the year 2000—to save 1,700 lives and prevent 100,000 injuries a year—we shall say so openly. We shall not expect to be praised for it. On the other hand, if it turns out to be possible not just to provide interpretation of existing law—the Road Traffic Acts of 1930 and 1972 and others—but to incorporate an agreed conclusion in a future Bill, the Government will be prepared to do that. We want to do what is sensible and proportionate, and we shall be interested in any result that my hon. Friend can present to us.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 31 October 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Teaching Unions

2. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met representatives of the teaching unions in Wales; and what matters were discussed.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): I met representatives of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers on 20 October 1988 and representatives of the Secondary Headteachers Association and the Welsh Secondary Schools Association on 21 October 1988. On both occasions a range of matters relating to the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 were discussed.

Dr. Thomas: During those meetings, did the Minister dicuss the work of the Curriculum Council for Wales? Did he tell the unions that he intends that the council should cover the entire range of curricula activities in Wales, that the council is on a par with the Curriculum Council for England, and that its activities will not be limited to certain aspects of Welsh culture or Welsh curriculum content?

Mr. Roberts: The work of the council arose at the meetings. I think the hon. Gentleman realises that its final remit was issued on 12 October. The council's role is to offer advice on all aspects of the school curriculum, including the national curriculum in Wales, to carry out research and curriculum development work and to disseminate information in Wales on all matters to do with the school curriculum. Initially, the council is concentrating on our proposals for mathematics and science. It is preparing early advice on the need for teacher training.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I support the general principle of the Welsh language being a foundation subject in the school curriculum, but will my hon. Friend bear in mind the concern that is being expressed in Pembrokeshire by parents and teachers in schools where there is no tradition of teaching Welsh and no demand for it? If these schools should make a request to be exempt from the teaching of Welsh as part of the core curriculum, will my hon. Friend listen with care and concern and ensure that their considerations are given the highest priority?

Mr. Roberts: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his general support for Welsh being a foundation subject. He will be aware that it is precisely because of the possibility of a situation such as that to which he referred that we have made provision for exemption under the Education Reform Act 1988. We hope that the power of exemption that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has will not been used extensively in Wales.

Mr. Barry Jones: May I tell the Minister of the dismay of teachers unions in Clwyd, and of parents and staff, concerning Ysgol Belmont, a special school where work experience for slow learners is in danger of foundering in the next year because of a lack of only £3,000? Will the Minister use his good offices with the Training Commission and the local education authority so that a valuable scheme that prepares pupils of older age for work after leaving school can survive? Will he be able to find the money to help the scheme?

Mr. Roberts: If the hon. Gentleman will write to me about the matter, as I am sure he will, I shall be happy to examine the details.

Mr. Alan Williams: When the Minister met the teachers, did he discuss the future impact on sixth forms of the preposterous and reactionary document which has been produced by the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science with responsibility for higher education—it was circulated on 25 July—which envisages the end of free higher education and the introduction of higher education vouchers based on examination results instead of ability to pay and need? The document presages the encouragement of universities to charge fees over and above the fees that are refunded by the local authorities and suggests that the shortage of teachers will be met by allowing classes to grow larger, not by training more teachers. It even suggests that there needs to be a cut in the number of youngsters who are training to be doctors, vets and dentists. What status does the document have? I notice that the letter from the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, which led to the production of the document, was addressed precisely to the Minister.

Mr. Roberts: The right hon. Gentleman's interpretation of that document is completely at variance with its actual content. He will not be very surprised to learn that none of the unions that I met raised the subject of that document.

Sir Raymond Gower: Has my hon. Friend noticed the remarkable progress of Welsh-medium schools in Anglicised areas such as parts of my constituency and around Cardiff and Newport? To what extent is that an extra consideration for assisting those schools?

Mr. Roberts: I welcome, with my hon. Friend, the development of Welsh-medium schools. He will be aware that we tried to increase the number of teachers capable of teaching through the medium of Welsh. We are actively engaged in that. That is one positive form of help that those schools appreciate which we are pursuing.

Water Privatisation

3. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next intends meeting representatives of trade unions in the water industry to discuss the privatisation of the Welsh water authority.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): I have received no request to do so.

Mr. Davies: Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that if he receives such a request he will accede to it? If he accepts such a request, will he discuss with the trade unions the recent Public Accounts Committee report, which was critical of the privatisation of the Royal Ordnance factories? Will he give the unions guarantees with regard to water privatisation that we will not witness another spectacle of public assets being sold off at knock-down prices to the private sector? In particular, what guarantees is he prepared to give that Welsh water authority's 100,000 acre holding in Wales, much of which consists of incomparable landscape of great recreational value, will not end up as the private playground of foreign water companies?

Mr. Walker: I am certain that there will be no question of foreign water companies having the kind of interest suggested by the hon. Gentleman. The negotiations on the manner in which it will be sold off and the price that will be paid will be made public. If there are any criticisms of the way in which that is carried out, the hon. Gentleman will be free to express his views. I am certain that the employees in the Welsh water authority will benefit from privatisation.

Mr. Livsey: Does the Secretary of State agree that the Government's proposed privatisation of water is utter folly? Is he not concerned that staff are already being transferred to the proposed National Rivers Authority before a Bill has come before the House? Is that not a cause of great concern? What mechanisms will the right hon. Gentleman provide to prevent foreign water companies taking over Welsh water authorities?

Mr. Walker: The mechanisms will emerge as a result of the detailed proposals that will eventually appear about privatisation. With regard to the hon. Gentleman's point about the National Rivers Authority, I am sure he will rejoice in the fact that a body responsible for the river system will continue with the necessary authority and with professional and skilled staff.

Mr. Rogers: How many times has the Secretary of State for Wales been consulted by the Secretary of State for the Environment about water privatisation, or must he just carry out the diktat of the Secretary of State for the Environment?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman will be relieved and delighted to learn that I was present at all the talks and negotiations and that I played a very active part in them.

Mr. Raffan: Does my right hon. Friend agree with Mr. Gordon Jones, the chairman of the Water Authorities Association, that privatisation should give the water authorities greater freedom to manage the business better? Does he also agree that in Wales the freedom from a whole battery of Government-imposed controls and the freedom to borrow, or not borrow, as the business requires will enable the Welsh water authority to accelerate its capital programme?

Mr. Walker: One of the factors that caused great damage to our river systems was the manner in which a whole range of bodies, many of which were publicly owned, were allowed to pollute the rivers with low-investment programmes. I am glad to say that with heavy investment over recent years the situation has improved. I believe that the freedom to borrow and carry out capital investment programmes free of Government interference will be a great advantage.

Mr. Wigley: Against the background of reports of possible interest from overseas companies in stakes in the water industry, can the Secretary of State give an assurance that he has had discussions with the chairman of the Welsh water authority to try to find a formula to ensure that the control of the authority remains in Wales, even after privatisation?

Mr. Walker: I have had many talks with the chairman of the Welsh water authority, and we are agreed upon the type of formula that will be necessary.

Advance Factory Programme

4. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress of advance factory programmes in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The advance factory programmes of the Welsh Development Agency and Mid-Wales Development are responding well to the sharp upturn in demand for new industrial property. Their ability to do so is a direct consequence of the one third increase in the agencies' property resources that I was able to announce at the beginning of the year.

Mr. Butler: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the success of the Ford factory investment. Does he concur with the Leader of the Opposition when he says that too much of the outside world still believes the fiction of a gloomy and depressed south Wales?

Mr. Walker: Yes, I was very relieved that the Leader of the Opposition made such a splendid pronouncement on how well things are going in Wales. Certainly the amount of factory space that is being built and let tells a remarkable story. I am delighted that at least the Leader of the Opposition is pleased about it.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Does the Secretary of State agree that the investment recently announced by Ford was mainly due to the success of the Ford, Bridgend factory business plan over the past two years, and that that was the major factor?

Mr. Walker: Yes, of course I do. There is no doubt that without the splendid co-operation of the work force and the high productivity there, there would have been no question at all of Ford going to Wales. Of course that is right. I am also delighted that Government action and Government regional aid were able to make a contribution.

Organ Transplants

5. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what responses he has received to the draft circular on the provision of donor organs for transplantation; and if he will state what further action he is contemplating to continue the increase in the numbers of transplant operations.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): The Welsh Office has consulted on the Hoffenberg report and we are keeping in touch with the Department of Health's consideration of its draft circular.

Funds have been made available by the Welsh Office to Lifeline Wales to facilitate the increased identification of potential organ donors.

Mr. Jones: In that case, can my hon. Friend state when the final draft of the circular will be in circulation, and can he confirm that the outcome will be reviewed two years later, as promised by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, so that we may then move to a system of required request as surely the only way to make even more substantial progress in this important matter?

Mr. Grist: My hon. Friend will know that the medical Royal Colleges working party considered that effective procedures as recommended in its report were preferable to the approach envisaged in his Transplant Notification Bill. We undertake to consider legislation if the recommended procedures are not successful.

Higher Education

6. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest figures for the percentage of 16 to 19-year-olds involved in full-time education *(a)* in Dyfed and *(b)* in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Thirty-three per cent. of 16 to 19-year-olds in Dyfed were in full-time education in 1987-88. The figure for Wales was 30 per cent.

Mr. Williams: Has the Minister compared those figures with figures for France, Germany and Japan, which show that 40 per cent. of their 18-year-olds move on to higher education, and that an overwhelming majority of that age group are involved in full-time education? Is it not the truth that young people in Wales and in Britain are getting a raw deal from the Government in terms of poor education opportunities and apprenticeships being cut to one third? They are left only with state training schemes and with hardly any jobs to go to.

Mr. Roberts: First, I would have thought that the hon. Member would appreciate how well Dyfed is doing in relation to the rest of Wales and to the rest of Great Britain. As to the situation in foreign countries, of course we would like a greater proportion of our young people to move on to further education rather than leave school, and we are taking active steps to encourage that.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: Does the Minister accept that one of the problems of providing complete education provision for 16 to 19-year-olds is the lack of proper careers advice in our schools? Does he accept that careers teachers are under tremendous pressure because of the lack of adequate resources? Will the Minister consider ways in which the Welsh Office can ensure that further provision is made available to local authorities, so that proper careers advice is given to children in the age range in question?

Mr. Roberts: I have looked at and paid close attention to the careers service in Wales, and I have given it every possible encouragement during the period that I have had responsibility for education. I would not say that the careers service and careers teaching in Wales is by any means perfect, but we are doing our utmost to improve it.

Homelessness

7. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the present level of homelessness in each district in Wales; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The most recent figures appear to show a significant reduction in the number of cases accepted by local authorities as homeless.

Mr. Anderson: Is the Minister aware of the concern by Welsh housing authorities at the figures released by his press office to the *Western Mail* a few weeks ago, which appear to conflict with their experience? Is he also aware of the puzzlement of those in the voluntary housing sector in Wales at the fact that the Welsh Office figures appear to show that in Wales figures are being reduced, whereas they are increasing in England? Does the Minister, on reflection, still accept the validity of the figures given by his press office?

Mr. Grist: Oddly enough, the figures are those provided by the local authorities themselves. But, because some doubt has been expressed, I have asked local authorities to validate them.

Mr. Murphy: Will the new housing body, Housing for Wales, in any way alleviate the plight of the homeless in the Principality? Is the Minister aware of the grave concern in housing circles in Wales about the way in which the head of that body has been appointed? Is he also aware that Welsh local authorities are the proper providers of housing, not bodies that are accountable only to the Secretary of State?

Mr. Grist: That was a most extraordinary statement by the hon. Gentleman. I would have said that Mr. Allen was a notable man in Welsh life and that he had been widely accepted by local authorities, and by people in housing associations and in the housing business in Wales.

I am astonished. I would expect the hon. Gentleman to understand that the establishment of Housing for Wales has been widely welcomed for the very reason that people see that the body will have a close understanding of the needs of the people of Wales. It was extraordinary that when I announced the establishment of the body in a housing debate it was attacked by Opposition Members and welcomed throughout the Principality.

Privatisation

8. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had on plans for the privatisation of water and electricity in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have received very few representations on either.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Secretary of State recall from the answers that he has given to me in the past that 75 per cent. of bills paid by Welsh water rate payers are the result of direct Government policies? Does he not feel that Welsh people will not take to the prospect of being rooked by having their undertaking handed over at a bargain price to profiteers—and possibly French profiteers at that? Will he tell us how water is to be made competitive? Will we have a selection of taps so that we can pick the best buy—the

loss leader of the day? Will we have three taps, one with hot water, one with cold water and one with Perrier water? Will we have compulsory metering?

Will the Secretary of State and the other Ministers perhaps interrupt for a moment their frenetic campaigns of self-promotion and self-publicity to speak out for the majority of the people of Wales, who see the proposed privatisation of water and electricity as wasteful, foolish and futile?

Mr. Walker: As I said in my original answer, I have received very few representations on either of those privatisations. Of the few that I have received, none have been so absurd as the one just made by the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Presumably the Opposition are trying to show that they are better Socialists than Plaid Cymru.

Is my right hon. Friend aware that the misgivings felt by many of us over the privatisation of water were largely allayed by the creation of the National Rivers Authority? Is he also aware that there remain some misgivings about whether what is proposed for the Central Electricity Generating Board in the privatisation of electricity will take care of the public interest in the same way?

Mr. Walker: I understand the anxiety that is felt along the lines suggested by my hon. Friend, but I hope that such matters will be dealt with when the final details are published.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the Secretary of State give us an assurance that when water is privatised supplies will not be cut off in any circumstances? I am sure he will agree that water is an essential commodity for life and that its non-supply would cause considerable hardship to the young, the elderly and the sick.

Mr. Walker: I am sure that water supplies will not be cut off in different circumstances from those in which they are cut off under the existing system.

Sir Raymond Gower: Is my right hon. Friend able to say whether the horrible circumstances mentioned have arisen in those parts of the British Isles where for many years water undertakings have been run by private companies?

Mr. Walker: About 10 per cent. of our water comes from private companies, and as far as I know there have been no complaints.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan: Is the Secretary of State able to confirm any of the details that were given in recent press coverage about the privatisation of the electricity industry, in particular its impact on Wales, where the two area distribution boards have the characteristic of about 30 per cent. of their total sales going to two customers—Allied Steel and Wire and the British Steel Corporation in the case of the South Wales Electricity Board, and United Engineering Steels at Brymbo and Anglesey Aluminium in the case of the Merseyside and North Wales electricity board? Will he also confirm that until those area boards have a guarantee that those customers will not shop around, contrary to the Government's White Paper, they are virtually unsaleable in the view of the Government's investment advisers? Finally, will he confirm that in the case of both the water and the electricity industries the only way to solve these problems is to turn them, not into privatised companies, but into consumer co-operatives by giving the shares to all their customers, both industrial and domestic?

Mr. Walker: I am glad to say that their customers, unlike what happens under nationalisation, will be able to take advantage of such an opportunity and apply for shares. That may well happen, as it did with gas and other enterprises that we have privatised. The detailed proposals will eventually be announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Hospital Waiting Lists

11. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new proposals he has for reducing the waiting lists for in-patients in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The solution lies in continued action by managers and clinicians in health authorities, supported where appropriate by Welsh Office advice, monitoring and funding. This effort will continue.

Dr. Marek: Does the Minister not realise that the solution lies in his carrying out his promise that by last spring no in-patient would have to wait for more than a month to go into hospital for an urgent operation or for more than a year for a non-urgent operation? When I last asked the Secretary of State for Wales, he said that progress was encouraging. Does the Minister accept that the latest figures show that the waiting list for non-urgent operations has increased? Does he believe that his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is numerate? If he is numerate, does the Secretary of State understand the meaning of the word "encouraging"? If he does, surely he should exercise a little more honesty when he speaks to the House. When will the Minister carry out the promise that he made to the people of Wales well over a year ago?

Mr. Grist: I do not deny that I was perhaps rather rash to repeat the target that my predecessor set in 1986. We cannot achieve these targets overnight, but the hon. Gentleman is a little less than generous. The number of people waiting for more than a month for urgent in-patient treatment fell between March 1987 and March 1988 by almost 30 per cent. That is a rather different figure from those that he quoted.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most important factors in reducing hospital waiting lists in Wales is nurses? If the reports in today's edition of the *Western Mail* are to be believed, the serious problem of nurses pay must be tackled. If the reports are true, the nurses are being treated once again as a political football by the Opposition parties. Is my hon. Friend able to say what is the position on nurses pay in Wales?

Mr. Grist: There has been a huge improvement in the position of nurses compared with what we found when we come to power. Their pay had been cut by one fifth, whereas under our proposals nurses pay will rise by over 40 per cent. My hon. Friend may be interested to know that, following the *Western Mail* article, final details await clarification, but we expect to sort them out shortly. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be in a position to make an announcement later this week. We

are confident that the nurses pay settlement in Wales will be no less generous than that in England, and it is likely to be more generous.

Mr. Alan Williams: If, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) suggests, nurses are being used as a political football, is it not the case that at the moment it is the Government who are putting the boot in? Is it not a fact that in Wales, unlike in Scotland and in England, the Welsh Office is delaying the announcement of the final settlement of the pay review? Is it not clear from the evidence that has been submitted by the health authorities that Welsh nurses have been disadvantaged for many years because a higher proportion of nurses in Wales are undergraded than is the case in England? Why, therefore, must the Welsh Office try to enforce a settlement on the authorities that will match the settlement in England? Is the Welsh Office so impotent that the Treasury can just walk all over it? *[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State laughs. We know that he does not take anything very seriously. Will he explain to the nurses of Wales why, as a result of his intervention, they will not have their back pay by Christmas, whereas their counterparts in England and Scotland will?

Mr. Grist: The right hon. Gentleman has overlooked the fact that nurses are being regraded. It is a most remarkable achievement for the largest employer in Europe to be able to regrade a service of such size for the first time. The right hon. Gentleman must have missed what I was saying—that the settlement is likely to be more generous in Wales than elsewhere.

Home Buyers

12. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from district councils in Wales concerning the problems facing first-time home-seekers.

Mr. Grist: A number of local authorities have made representations on this issue. I believe that Housing for Wales will play an important role in tackling the problems of first-time home-seekers.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Minister aware that house prices in many parts of Wales, including Caernarfon, have doubled this year, making it almost impossible for many young people wishing to buy a house for the first time to hope to compete in that market? Is the Minister further aware that a price of £60,000 may be cheap for somebody who has sold a house for £250,000 in the south-east of England, but that it is far out of the reach of average wage earners in areas such as Gwynedd? When will the Welsh Office intervene in a constructive and positive manner to ensure that such people have some hope of being able to own or rent a house in the foreseeable future?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman must accept that a rise in house prices is common throughout the United Kingdom. He will also know that councils in his area have been allocated funds with which to buy houses for renting or for sale to local people, but have not spent some of that money as yet. They seem to be holding on to it for some reason. Housing for Wales will encourage local authorities, in co-operation with private funding, to go into the business of low-cost housing for those who wish to enter the housing market. That is the area in which we expect activity to take place.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Although the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) has raised a real problem, is there not another side to the medal? Many hundreds of thousands of home owners in Wales are now far better off than they have been for a long time.

Mr. Grist: I agree absolutely with my hon. Friend. He has put his finger on an important matter. Sixty-eight per cent. of people in Wales are home owners, which is a higher proportion than in England. That represents a tremendous capital saving for the people of Wales. Suggestions that property prices should be lower might imply that some people want those who own houses to sell them for a lower price than they would otherwise get.

Mr. Rogers: I assure the Minister that the Opposition understand the great difficulty of his task of providing housing in Wales. We consider it important for him to receive advice from as wide a range of sources as possible. Will he therefore explain why two gentlemen, Mr. John Allen and Colonel Geoffrey Inkin, have between them been vice chairmen of the Land Authority, chairman of the Land Authority, chairman of the Housing for Wales, chairman of Cwmbran development corporation, chairman of Cardiff Bay development corporation, and ex-vice chairman of Cwmbran district council? Why does the Minister not obtain advice from all over Wales, rather than adopt such an incestuous relationship with failed Tory party candidates and Tory placemen?

Mr. Grist: I suppose that the hon. Gentleman would prefer us to talk to Labour-controlled local authorities, which have managed to sit tight over the years with houses that have rotted and which have failed to provide the houses for which the hon. Gentleman now calls. I am sorry that he has attacked such distinguished gentlemen, who are highly acceptable to those with whom they deal, and, I imagine, respected by his hon. Friends on the Front Bench.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: We have in Devon exactly the same problem of people on low incomes needing houses, but no special provision of this kind to enable the housing to be provided. Will my hon. Friend please arrange for the surplus funds which Welsh local authorities do not apparently want to spend to be transferred to district councils in Devon, which could put them to very good use indeed?

Mr. Grist: I think that my hon. Friend can fight his own battles with his own Secretary of State.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister agree that the problem of first-time home seekers in Wales is formidable and represents a great mountain of human misery? There are three separate problems: those affected by cheque-book colonisation in the form of holiday homes, which now affects every part of Wales; rocketing prices, which have pushed homes out of the reach of many first-time buyers; and the slashing of council house building, which has cut choice for many of those in the greatest need. There are three crises and three problems. What are the Minister's three solutions?

Mr. Grist: We have a record build of private housing at the moment—more than 8,000 houses, which is the largest number since 1973. Furthermore, we expect housing associations to start 2,300 houses this year through the Housing Corporation. That is the sort of practical contribution that we are making.

Voluntary Organisations

14. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the value of grants from his Department to voluntary organisations in each of the past three years at constant prices.

Mr. Peter Walker: The figures are £7·31 million in 1985-86, £8·88 million in 1986-87 and £9·34 million in 1987-88.

Mr. Knox: I greatly welcome the increases in grants. Does my right hon. Friend agree that this very cost-effective form of public expenditure should be increased whenever appropriate and possible?

Mr. Walker: Yes. I think that it has had very good results in a whole range of areas, and I welcome what has taken place.

Education Establishments

15. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what visits he has made in the past three months to educational establishments in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: On Monday 26 September I visited two schools—Eglwyswen primary school and Ysgol Gymraeg Melin Gruffydd, both in South Glamorgan.

Mr. Griffiths: Would the Minister care to visit some schools in Mid-Glamorgan where, as was admitted in the HMI report, because stock is very old, and because of the problems of the mining valleys, replacement and maintenance costs are very high? Will the Minister consider giving Mid-Glamorgan extra funds, given that his own inspectors say that it has a problem in dealing with the stock? Let me cite one example from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell). At Nantyffyllon, the Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg TyDerwen school needed £150,000 to repair its boundary walls. Will the Minister provide extra money for the councils?

Mr. Roberts: We have increased capital allocations for local authorities, but the hon. Gentleman will know that we cannot direct the authorities to spend that capital on schools. It is for the local authorities to decide what their priorities are, but, like the hon. Gentleman, I should certainly like them to spend more of their capital allocations on school buildings.

Health Authorities

16. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to make extra funds available to the health authorities of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend hopes to announce additional funding to meet the estimated costs of the nurses clinical regrading exercise in the next few days. This will result in an expected real terms increase in nurses pay of more than 40 per cent. since 1979.

Mr. Jones: Can the Minister say whether the consultants' report on whether north Walian people should have a satellite radiotherapy cancer treatment centre will appear in the near future? Will he bear in mind that many north Walian people have to undertake long journeys to Manchester and Liverpool for cancer treatment? No doubt the Minister will agree that if such journeys can occasionally be shortened a great deal of good will be done. We need a satellite centre at least in north Wales.

Mr. Grist: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. We are carrying out the investigation as fast as we can. We certainly have no desire to hold it up.

Mr. Raffan: Is the Welsh Office yet in a position to provide brokerage funding to Clwyd health authority so that phase 2 of Glan Clwyd hospital—the scheme to relocate obstetric, gynaecology and special care baby services at the hospital—can be brought forward to the next financial year?

Mr. Grist: No. I cannot give my hon. Friend that undertaking.

Valleys Initiative

18. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many additional houses will be built as a result of his Valleys initiative.

Mr. Peter Walker: During the three years of the Valleys programme I expect 10,000 new homes to be built and 32,000 to be improved.

Mr. Livsey: Will the Secretary of State take account of what has been said this afternoon about local people being able to live in their own communities, particularly in the valleys, where there has been a great increase in the number of people who have come in, a great rise in house prices and a great scarcity of houses to rent? Will the right hon. Gentleman invoke planning powers so that local authorities there can cater specifically for local people?

Mr. Walker: There are several ways in which local authorities can and do assist with housing local people, and I am sure that they will continue to do that. The work of the new Housing Corporation, under its excellent new chairman and board, will do the same. The figures that I have just given—10,000 new homes and 32,000 properties to be improved—represent a fairly substantial programme.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Ordination of Women

30. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what total sum he now estimates will be required to compensate clergymen and bishops expected to leave their orders in the event of the ordination of women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners): The estimated cost per 100 men of financial provision under the proposed legislation, as at present drafted, is some £3 million spread over five years. The legislation will shortly be considered by a revision committee of the General Synod. It is too early to make any realistic estimate of how many bishops and clergy might ultimately resign.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the suggested compensation of £30,000 per head is very low for a young man early in his orders? Does he also agree that respect for the law is basic to the Christian faith? Does he therefore agree that back-door women priests and their congregations who break the law on premises run or owned by the Church Commissioners are simply waiting for the law to be changed?

Mr. Alison: The costs of compensation, to which I have referred, are estimates and remain subject to further revision, although there is a limit to what the Church of England and the commissioners could afford in this context. It is unlawful for a woman priest to minister the sacraments in a Church of England building, and I understand that any who do so may be prosecuted under canon law, which has the force of statute law.

Mr. Frank Field: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the aim is to get the reform through in such a way that people do not wish to leave the Church? In that respect, are not the guarantees that were first outlined crucial to reassuring people who are hesitant about the change? Does the right hon. Gentleman therefore deplore the House of Bishops' move in its latest report to undermine some of those guarantees?

Mr. Alison: I take careful note of what the hon. Gentleman has said. I believe that the provisions made for payments of the type under discussion are constructive and reasonable, although the legislation that underpins them is still far from close to enactment, and there has to be a further election to the General Synod before the Measure can be introduced in this House.

Mr. Stanbrook: Has the Church got this round the wrong way? Is it not the duty of those who want a different sort of Church to leave it, not to drive out those who wish it to stay as it is?

Mr. Alison: That is a general observation which, as my hon. Friend has stated it, has some validity. There is, however, a lot to be said for staying inside an institution which one wishes to change and trying to reform it in the direction that one prefers.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) spoke about breaking the law. If ecclesiastical law is changed and women priests are ordained so that they can minister the Communion, by what right should any reactionary elements in the Church expect to receive any compensation? Surely they should obey the law. I do not see why these reactionary old buggers should expect anything.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member will withdraw that remark.

Mr. Banks: These reactionary people should not expect anything.

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to demonstrate whether he is reactionary or progressive when the Measure comes before the House. He will understand that, although the law may be legally enacted in the House, it can be considered oppressive by some people. For them, in those circumstances, to resign and be offered ex-gratia compensation by their fellow Christians in the Church of England is a perfectly wholesome and acceptable alternative.

Mr. Harris: Does my right hon. Friend agree with the point made by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) that the aim in making such a big change, if it comes about, must be to ensure that as few people as possible leave the Church and thereby keep the compensation down? With that aim in mind, will he heartily endorse the views of the Archbishop of York at the weekend, which are certainly supported by many of us who wish to see the ordination of women priests; and does he agree that the events in London at the weekend certainly did not help the situation?

Mr. Alison: I agree with my hon. Friend. He will have noted that the lady or ladies concerned did not seek to minister in a consecrated church. Had they done so, they would have been liable to prosecution. I am sure that the Archbishop of York's views on trying to keep within the law until the law is changed must be the right and proper advice.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Church Commissioners will need all the resources that they can get, including diocesan quotas, not only for this reason, but for many others? If they pursue a policy of irritating parishioners by selling off local parsonages adjacent to churches so that the churches have to be locked to prevent vandalism, people will not support the church financially, diocesan quotas will not be paid and they will not have the resources for this or any other purpose.

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend has referred to the practice of selling old vicarages and parsonage residences adjacent to churches, which obviously bears upon some local phenomonen which is worrying him. I should be obliged if he would let me have details, which I shall certainly look at. He will understand that the resources of the Church Commissioners, to which he referred, depend to some extent on rationalising their property ownership and selling off old large houses so that modern vicarages can be constructed in their place.

Stipends and Pensions

31. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what is the amount and proportion of the commissioners' expenditure allocated to clergy stipends and pensions in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Alison: In 1987 the commissioners spent £38·7 million on stipends and £39 million on pensions. This was 66 per cent. of their investment income.

Mr. Chapman: I welcome the fact that two thirds of the commissioners' income is allocated to clergy stipends and pensions, but does my right hon. Friend agree that it is essential to encourage the commissioners to maximise the

interest that they can receive on their assets? Does he also agree that they are doing that very successfully and that they now have a very healthy stake in capitalism?

Mr. Alison: Yes. The commissioners' handling of their investment portfolio is exemplary and way ahead of the field in yield for their various investments. One principal beneficiary of that judicious and sound investment policy is the very reasonable level of clergy pensions which are now paid, with prospects of yet further improvements to come.

Mr. Skinner: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that earlier this year at the Union of Democratic Mineworkers annual conference at Weymouth it was reported that some churchmen, who said that their stipends were too low, had joined the bosses' union—the UDM? At that conference, there were four clergymen and a rabbi. Led by one from the old ASTMS, they said that they were looking for industrial action, but Roy Lynk said, "We are not having any of that here." What other advice has the right hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Alison: In view of the level of clergy stipends and pensions, I could suggest that Mr. Arthur Scargill or even Mr. Clive Jenkins might seek ordination in the Church of England.

WALES

Welsh Language Board

19. **Mr. John:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to receive the first report from the new Welsh Language Board.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): The Welsh Language Board will pass on its findings to my right hon. Friend as they emerge.

Mr. John: Given the discussions on the new Welsh Language Act and the wide consensus on what it should contain, will the Secretary of State place a six-month limit on the time in which the Welsh Language Board will report? Would it not be regarded as offensive if it were to continue indefinitely when the matters have already been discussed?

Mr. Roberts: I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman. He will know that the board is the outcome of a recommendation made by myself as head of a ministerial group which looked into the problem of legislation in connection with the language as well as other matters. As a result of that, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State set up the board. The board, in turn, has set up specialist sub-committees to look into different areas and issues related to the promotion and development of the language. One of the sub-committees, under the chairmanship of Winston Roddick QC, is looking at the legislative aspect.

Older Housing

20. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what fresh proposals he has to tackle the problems of older housing in Wales; and what new resources are available.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): We are continuing to encourage local authorities to adopt a strategic approach to housing renewal. I am pleased to say that the Cynon Valley borough council is increasingly doing so and is making good use of the sharply increased resources we have made available to it.

Mrs. Clwyd: Is the Minister aware that the Cynon Valley has some of the worst housing in Britain and that it will cost about £64 million to bring housing up to modern levels? Is he further aware that at the present level of Government investment in housing it will take until at least the year 2,000 before the people in the Cynon Valley can live in decent housing? Why are Welsh Office Ministers condemning the people of the Cynon Valley to live in continuing deprivation and bad housing?

Mr. Grist: It is extraordinary. In past years I have heard the hon. Lady ask similar questions, only to have it explained that her council was not spending the funds available to it on housing. Now that authority has been given as many resources as it considers it can spend during the current financial year. I do not think that we can do much more.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

European Directives

35. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make it his policy to ensure that the directives recommended for debate by the Select Committee on European Legislation are debated within a reasonable period; and if he will make a statement.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Yes, Sir. This remains our objective.

Mr. Taylor: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a major constitution worry is that most of the regulations, directives, letters and proposals from the EC are never discussed by Parliament? Is he aware that in the most recent report of the Select Committee there were 100 such documents which had been recommended for debate but for which time had not been found? Is he further aware that in addition we have a major problem in that some of the vital directives, such as that on mergers and the six documents on health and safety, have not been discussed at all? Would my right hon. Friend be willing to look at the issue to see whether there is some way in which we could more successfully handle parliamentary matters from the Common Market so that the measures affecting our constituents are properly discussed and not simply referred to briefly at 11.30 at night?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my hon. Friend's interest and concern in this matter. I do not think that the figures are quite as he said. As I understand it, 88 documents have not yet been debated. Of those, 38 are not at present under active consideration and nine are awaiting further documents. Of the remaining 41, several have been linked by the Select Committee and it is expected that they will require 20 debates. I am doing my best to arrange those. The position on mergers is that the documents recommended for debate early last year and before have been overtaken by a new document entitled "Control of concentrations between undertakings", No. 5963/88, which was considered by the Committee last week and

recommended for debate. The Committee has now withdrawn its recommendation for debate on the earlier documents. To have debated the earlier documents would not have been the most effective use of the House's valuable time. My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will now be considering the most appropriate time for debate on the new document.

Mr. Aitken: As the cascade of controversial and unpopular EC directives increasingly threatens our sovereignty, with even British institutions such as the pound, the ounce, the mile and the pint in danger of being swept away, surely my right hon. Friend recognises the importance of effective and vigilant parliamentary machinery to stop 1992 from becoming a 1066. Will he consider beefing up the Select Committee on European Legislation to give it proper funding, more Sub-Committees and specialist advisers and, above all, regular debates in the House in prime time?

Mr. Wakeham: It is difficult to arrange debates in prime time as my hon. Friend would like, because there are many other issues that we must debate. I should have thought that the recent speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister would be of some comfort to my hon. Friend. The Select Committee on European Legislation already has wide-ranging powers to consider documents published for submission to the Council of Ministers or the European Council and to take evidence as appropriate. It is open to the Committee to examine the issues involved more widely within its terms of reference. I advise a cautious approach to changing its terms of reference at this stage, which includes the need to look carefully at the effect of our scrutiny procedures brought about by the Single European Act.

Palace of Westminster (Facilities)

36. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will take steps to initiate an inquiry into what extra facilities might be desirable in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Wakeham: I am pleased to be able to inform my hon. Friend that the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee of the Services Committee passed a resolution on 25 July this year to initiate an exercise, in consultation with the New Building Sub-Committee, to prepare a practical set of proposals to improve hon. Members' amenities and facilities. I am sure that, in the preparation of these proposals, right hon. and hon. Members' views will be taken into account.

Mr. Butler: I welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement, but will hon. Members be consulted individually by questionnaire on this matter?

Mr. Wakeham: That is a matter for the appropriate Committees to consider. I am sure that any views that hon. Members wish to put forward will be considered.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Leader of the House say when the Property Services Agency report on the replacement of the annunciator system will finally get off the Minister's desk so that hon. Members can see it? It is getting on for two years since it was asked to produce a report. If we are to have a modern electronic system, with possible access to Library information, and with information going to offices through the replacement for the annunciator system, it is about time some decisions were taken.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman has raised this matter with me before, and I shall be in touch with him as soon as I have any news.

Working Practices

37. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what recent representations he has received about working practices in the House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: I have received only one letter about this matter, from my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham).

Mr. Thurnham: Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the press reports of last summer making allegations of abuses and inefficiency are properly investigated? Does he think that more privatisation would improve the efficiency of services in the House and reduce abuses?

Mr. Wakeham: The second part of my hon. Friend's question goes wider than the original question. While there may be validity in the argument, I shall not be drawn on it. The matter concerning my hon. Friend was considered by the Catering Sub-Committee, which reached a conclusion only at its meeting last week. I shall reply to my hon. Friend's letter later this week.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does not the election of Chairmen of Select Committees constitute a working practice of the House? Is it not quite wrong that the Chairman of a Select Committee—and indeed the Chairman of the Select Committee on Selection—should be directors of or consultants to lobbying companies? Does the right hon. Gentleman not understand the unease that this has created throughout the lobbying and public relations industry? What will be done about it? Will it be stopped, and will the right hon. Gentleman recommend that it be stopped?

Mr. Wakeham: The membership of Select Committees is for the Selection Committee. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that if he has any serious allegations to make, there is a proper way of doing so to the Select Committee on Members' Interests. I suggest that he does that, and he should know better.

Members' Passes

38. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the total number of passes issued to hon. Members in respect of their personal staff; what was the figure for 1979; and how many hon. Members have two, three, four, five or more passes.

Mr. Wakeham: The latest Pass Office figures show that a total of 1,186 photo-identity passes are on issue to hon. Members' personal staff. I regret that comparable figures for 1979 are not available. The latest figures show that 149 hon. Members employ two photo-pass holders, 75 hon. Members employ three photo-pass holders, 43 hon. Members employ four photo-pass holders and 38 hon. Members employ five or more photo-pass holders.

Mr. Bennett: Is it not astonishing that 38 hon. Members need five or more staff to assist them in their role as hon. Members? Will my right hon. Friend consider putting a limit on the number of passes issued to individual hon. Members and draw to their attention the fact that perhaps one of the most effective Back Benchers this century—the right hon. J. Enoch Powell—was able to do his own research?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is right. The Services Committee's second report, "Access to the Precincts of the House," which was published in July, is on this subject. I intend that it should be debated in the near future.

Westminster Hall

39. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any plans to seek to widen the use made of Westminster Hall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: No, Sir. Any proposal to widen the use of Westminster Hall would require the agreement of the Lord Great Chamberlain, the Lord Chancellor and Mr. Speaker, in whom responsibility is vested for the use to which the Hall may be put.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is wrong for the large and spacious Westminster Hall to be unused for such long periods? Will he get together with the parties to whom he has referred and consider whether a swimming pool can be put in there to improve the fitness of Members—and perhaps a few could be thrown in at the deep end?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot agree with my hon. Friend. In fact, I do not think that I can better the answer that was given by my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who said:

"I think that one of the great attractions of Westminster hall is how little it is used."—[*Official Report*, 19 February 1987; Vol. 110, c. 1082.]

Orders of the Day

Rate Support Grants Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

3.30 pm

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill provides the basis for an orderly transition from the existing system of grants to the new system which will operate from April 1990.

Amongst all the arguments about the replacement of domestic rates and the competing alternative, the important role of the rate support grant has received relatively little attention. The Bill gives us the opportunity to focus on that grant system which does, after all, account for about half of local authorities' expenditure. The decision in principle has been made. Parliament passed the Local Government Finance Act in July. That Act abolished rate support grant after next year and provided for the introduction of a new grant system, which is intended to be simpler and more accountable than the old. One particular feature is that, unlike the present system, the amount of grant paid to each authority will not depend on its expenditure. It will depend only on the assessed need of each area, taking account of the local characteristics.

My problem is that we call that the revenue support grant, so we move from RSG to RSG. I intend to call it the needs grant so that at least I can understand about which one we are talking. I hope that the Opposition will not see anything difficult in that. *[Interruption.]* We are dealing with a matter which is not the easiest in the world. I was told by one civil servant when I moved from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the Department of the Environment that, as I appeared to have understood the common agricultural policy, I would have done at least the warm-up for trying to understand the rate support grant.

Under both Governments there has been a tendency throughout the country to believe that this is a matter to be left to the experts—those who are forced to understand RSG rather than those who choose to do so. I cannot believe that that is a sensible way to run local government or a proper way to arrange for taxation. I made a motto, in which I have continued to believe, that there should be no taxation without comprehension. It is important that we at least try to make this system as satisfactory as possible. One advantage of this system is that it has been widely welcomed by local authorities of differing political persuasions. I do not think that the concept of moving from this direction is a subject of controversy on either side of the House.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Although councillors of all political complexions would welcome simplification—this is recognised by both sides of the House—councillors in many areas are unhappy that the Government are basing their change on the estimated figures as opposed to the final outturn figures for 1987-88. In many instances, the final outturn figures are lower than the estimates, because of slippage and so on. Can the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that any money that is clawed back by the Government as a result of those differences will be recycled, that local authorities will not lose in total and that this money may be available in the following financial year?

Mr. Gummer: I think that that point will be covered as I proceed. I was referring to the new system, not to the interim system proposed in the Bill. The purpose of the Bill is to close down the old system before moving to the new. My remarks about simplicity related to the new system. Today's discussion, however, centres on whether the interim system in the Bill is the best way to move from the old system to the new. The hon. Gentleman has raised a reasonable point. That concern is shared by many authorities of differing political persuasions and I shall try to cover it when dealing with the new system.

If we continue with a system that is understood by so few, it is entirely understandable that people throughout the country will be unable to make a proper assessment of the efficacy of their local authorities. It is hard to decide whether a local authority is doing its job properly if one does not understand such a major element as the contribution made by the Government, and hence by the taxpayer, in terms of grant.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): My constituents have been asking about possible arrangements between local authorities under the new system in terms of moving housing expenditure around. There is a proposal in Ealing for houses to be built with payment by that local authority for three years less a day, then to move to Brent authority, then to Hounslow and then to yet another Labour-controlled authority. That is highly confusing and unsatisfactory for my constituents. Will the Bill do anything about that?

Mr. Gummer: The Bill is designed specifically to deal with the change from the present system to the new system. We shall be introducing a further Bill to deal with capital and the kind of arrangement to which my hon. Friend refers will be important in that context. That legislation will provide for the control of capital expenditure and for local aithorities to have a wider discretion in the choices that they make. However, that is really a matter for the next Bill in the new Session of Parliament as it relates to the new system rather than to the transitional arrangements under consideration today.

The transitional arrangements have been produced for two basic reasons. The first is certainty. If we allowed the old system simply to run into the buffers of the new, it would be a long time before anyone knew the final outturn of the last year of the old system. Next spring, for instance, we shall be making the final grant adjustments for 1985-86, so if we allowed the old system to continue to the end of its present run without any change we should be discussing the old system well after the new system had come into operation. Local authorities would thus not know where they stood. I am pleased to say that for that reason most authorities have recognised that special arrangements need to be made. I do not think that there is any disagreement on the principle that it is a good idea to have a stocktaking end to the old system. The question is whether the Bill constitutes the best way to do this. I am happy to accept that views will differ on that, but I hope that there is no disagreement on the principle that we should bring the old system to a close before beginning the new so that people will know where they stand.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I welcome the Minister to his new box of nails. The new system is uacceptable to many hon. Members. As a result of the cut-off in the Bill, some authorities will lose. Will there be any flexibility to allow the Government to compensate authorities which can show that they have lost badly under the new provisions?

Mr. Gummer: On the hon. Gentleman's second point, if he remains in the Chamber for the debate I am sure that he will follow my argument. I am certainly facing that issue, not ignoring it. Although some hon. Members may not like the new system, the fact is that the House has introduced it and it will operate. It would be foolish to re-argue something on which we have already agreed. Perhaps in this debate at least we can argue the issues raised by the Bill rather than a Bill that we have already discussed. I know that the hon. Gentleman takes a different view from me on the community charge, which is quite reasonable. He is in favour of having two taxes. However, we have made our decision, and we must stick to that and get on with discussing this Bill.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Can my right hon. Friend tell the House—it has always been a bit of a mystery to many of us—how those needs will be calculated? In particular, can he tell us why needs seem to be rather greater in Labour local authority areas than in Conservative local authority areas? A formula that gives more money to those with the greatest need is actually a formula for moving money from Conservative parts of the country to those maladministered parts that are appallingly run by the Labour party.

Mr. Gummer: That was true of the previous system where the needs element was mixed up with the expenditure element. An historically high-spending local authority would, even though its needs may have been similar to another sensibly run authority, obtain greater grant because of the attraction arrangements for expenditure. That will not happen under the new system because the expenditure level is no longer part of the argument, which will now be based entirely upon needs. They are already assessed under a complicated system with many different indices, many of them hardly fought over by different branches of local authority representation. We hope that there will be a much simpler and clearer method under the new system. We shall consult the local authorities, which will no doubt put their various points to us. I think that the House will be content with some of our suggestions because they take into account the real needs of communities. Of course, those real needs do not always coincide with the supposed needs of those elected to represent the communities. It is necessary to try to meet the real needs.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I understand the Minister to be saying that it is a good principle for local authorities to operate on a basis of certainty and to know what will happen as a result of particular actions. Does he accept that many local authorities, especially Cardiff city council and South Glamorgan county council, acted on the basis of statements to the House by Ministers and, as a result, found that a retrospective decision took £3·5 million away from them? Without looking at the faults of the past, on which the Minister may have a reasonable case, and without looking to the future, which is another matter, does the right hon. Gentleman accept that there are flaws in the Bill because it does not fill exactly the criteria that he has stated in respect of 1987-88?

Mr. Gummer: I hope that when I come to discuss those matters the hon. Gentleman will think my case reasonable. I recognise that Cardiff may not wholeheartedly agree with it—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman knows that I am on a raw point when he discusses whether Cardiff is reasonable. There is a real problem because, wherever the stocktaking line is drawn, people will say, "If only you pushed it another few weeks, or if only you would take into account this, that and the other, it would be much fairer." Whatever we do, people will always say that——

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Will my right hon. Friend give away?

Mr. Gummer: I must continue or we shall not make progress. I will give way to my hon. Friend later.

Another reason why it is important to do this is not just to create certainty, but it is said that, if local authorities knew that whatever they did this year would not attract penalty or pay-back next year, they would be prepared to go in for creative accounting techniques, which they would not otherwise do. I am sure that the House will understand that the matter does not involve all local authorities, or a majority of local authorities, but it is sufficiently important for it to be concerned with it.

If one can reduce one's total expenditure in the current year under consideration and thereby attract extra grant, that is OK if the reduction of the current expenditure is real; but, if it is not real, one will attract extra grant to which one is not entitled. I understand that many Opposition Members in particular would say that there should be more money for local authorities, that money should be shared out more generously and that, therefore, it is not unreasonable for them to grab what they can. That argument is not acceptable, because, in the end, all Governments must be responsible for local authorities' total spending, both capital and revenue. Therefore, if, as a matter of economic policy, the Government decide that we should not spend——

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Why?

Mr. Gummer: If the hon. Gentleman were in office, which is unlikely to happen, he would have to do the same. Anybody running a sensible economic policy would have to take into account local authority spending.

Dr. Cunningham: Garbage.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman says "Garbage". That is a good reason for the people of Britain to recognise that to elect a Government who do not think that it is important to restrict and control total public sector spending means that they would elect a Government who do not think that the conquest of inflation is important. It means also that they would elect a Government who would get us into precisely the same problems as we had before.

Dr. Cunningham: The Minister is right to say that any Government would want rigorously to control their share of local government finance—what is provided through

the Exchequer and the taxpayer. Will he tell us the macro-economic arguments for controlling local authorities' expenditure from their own resources?

Mr. Gummer: Certainly. If the hon. Gentleman does not recognise that the money that is spent by the public sector is different from that which is available for enterprise in the private sector, he does not realise why Britain is now growing so much faster and why we are providing the jobs that we are providing. If the hon. Gentleman says that we should allow local authorities or national authorities to spend money that should be for the expansion of other aspects of the economy, he has not learnt anything since his party's defeat in 1979. That defeat will continue until that basic economic fact is learnt.

We have to face the problem because some local authorities have decided to do certain things that the House as a whole would agree to be unacceptable. Let me give one example. A certain local authority decides to sell off to City institutions the future receipts from its sales of council housing. It happens to be a local authority that does not believe in selling council houses, but, on this occasion, it decides to do so. Let us suppose that it raises £20 million. It would then be able to put that £20 million into the bank and take the interest from it, and thereby——

Mr. Tony Banks: What is wrong with that?

Mr. Gummer: I shall explain to the hon. Gentleman what is wrong with that. It would then pay that money back in four or five years. In the meantime, it would have technically reduced its own spending to attract to itself what might have been £3 million of extra grant.

Mr. Tony Banks: What is wrong with that?

Mr. Gummer: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman what is wrong with that. It would attract £3 million of general taxpayers' money to which it was not entitled and which could have been spent on the National Health Service, for example. It would mean that that local authority had tried to cheat on the system and remove from others who needed it money to which it was not entitled. Of course, as far as the ratepayer is concerned, it would be perfectly reasonable to do that if it were smoothing out spending year on year, but it would be reasonable only if the person who paid the bill at the end was the same person who incurred it at the beginning. If a local authority decides to shift £3 million of its spending from itself, as it were, to the general taxpayer, the authority is seeking to use the system to its advantage and to ignore the spirit of the system that we operate.

Historically, local authorities would not have acted in this way. They would have eschewed that obvious cheating of the system. They would have said, "That would not be acceptable in a public authority." There are many authorities, controlled either by the Labour or the Conservative parties, or the alliance, that would not take such a step. The idea of not closing the gap for the authorities that would do what most would consider to be wrong would be unacceptable. Those who would treat the public purse in such a cavalier manner must not be allowed to get away with it when many other authorities of similar political persuasion would not dream of acting in such a way. That is why we think it necessary to close the loophole.

Mr. Tony Banks: I know that the Minister is new to his present position, but surely he must appreciate that the creative accounting, as it is called, in which a number of authorities get themselves involved, is not done because authorities want to take such a course. They do it because the penalties and the regime imposed upon them from Marsham street are such that, if they want to defend jobs and services in their area, perforce they have to do this sort of thing. The Minister is wrong to suggest that they are cheats. If authorities have problems, they have a duty to deal with them in the best way that they can. They go in for so-called creative accounting to mitigate the effect of Government policies upon their spending programmes.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman cannot get away with that. The Government had to make these arrangements because local authorities were precepting upon the taxpayer to pay inflated staffs, to run services which were not properly run or costed, and to implement many arrangements that should not have been paid for by the taxpayer. If the hon. Gentleman runs through some of the services that are provided by the authority from which he draws his representation, he will come across many items that could be cut. The resultant savings could be spent on the real needs of his area of London.

Mr. Tony Banks: Name them.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman chooses to shout at me. Does he think, for example, that the plethora of committees that deal with race, women's issues, gay issues and the rest are doing any good for women, racial minorities or gay people? They do much to delay matters and to create the need for greater expenditure. The money that they cause to be spent could be much better spent in the deprived area of the hon. Gentleman's borough. Those of us who live in boroughs that act in that way and that treat the ratepayers in that way—I have experience of this, as I live in Ealing—understand that large sums could be properly spent if only money were not spent unnecessarily.

We are discussing—the hon. Member for Newham North-West (Mr. Banks) has sought to discuss something else—whether we should have a system which enables local authorities to determine what national spending should be, or whether we should have a system whereby the Government determine national spending and individual local authorities abide by the rules that apply to the sharing out. I think that it would be wrong if individual local authorities were in a position to buck the rules. It would be wrong if authorities could adopt creative accounting and thereby make themselves better off at the taxpayers' cost while other authorities which behaved properly, obeyed the rules and kept to the spirit of them —authorities controlled by whatever party—found themselves less well off.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gummer: No, I shall not.

Mr. Haynes: Why not?

Mr. Gummer: I would be delighted to give way to the hon. Gentleman, but he will accept that I have already given way many times. Therefore, I shall continue with my speech.

Mr. Haynes: Go on, give way.

Mr. Gummer: The House will recognise——

Mr. Haynes: Why is the Minister frightened?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that the Minister is not frightened, and he is not giving way.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman and I have crossed swords on many occasions in the past.

Mr. Haynes: I want to cross swords again.

Mr. Gummer: I shall be happy to give the hon. Gentleman an opportunity later in my speech to cross swords with me again. For the moment I must get on with the argument.

There is another argument that we must face. When we come to the end of one system and move to a new one, there is an additional encouragement for people to bend the rules. Normally, when creative accounting is carried out in one year, it must be paid for the following year. If the new system is enforced and there is no penalty for creative accounting in the first year, a particular local authority will receive grant at the taxpayers' expense. The authority will never have to pay the price. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce this legislation.

We could have taken a different route and I must tell Opposition Members that there is a different route. We could have said that we expected local authorities to behave in that way and that we expected them to operate on the edge of the law. Therefore, we could have cut back the settlement to take that into account. Had we done that, we would have destroyed our credibility with local authorities. That would have meant that we expected all authorities to behave like a small minority whose behaviour we have always attacked. It would also have meant that some authorities, unable or unwilling to behave in that way, would have been extremely harshly penalised by the very tough settlement which would have followed. I do not believe that that would have been a proper way to deal with the matter.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gummer: I am certain that the hon. Gentleman will find an opportunity to intervene later.

We decided to introduce arrangements so that future changes in total expenditure would not affect grant entitlements. We announced that in July along with the initial proposals for next year's RSG settlements in England and Wales so that authorities could be clear on what basis the settlement was to operate. We have followed that up quickly with the legislation so that authorities will have certainty about those issues before they make their budgets for 1989-90.

The Bill provides that grant for the remaining years of the old system—in practice, that means 1985-86 to 1989-90—should be based on the spending figures available to us before the new arrangements were announced on 7 July. That is our stocktaking date. Any new information received after that date will not be taken into account.

Mr. Tony Banks: Why?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman asks why. If it was an open-ended date, it would allow precisely the kind of changes in retrospect about which I have spoken. Local authorities, this year and in successive years, going back as they can now over years, could change their total expenditure figures because the books are not closed. They could change the figures, not in reality—it would not mean that they had spent less—but merely through creative accounting. That must mean that less money would be available for spending in other areas even if that is not seen as a means of taking less in taxation. There would be less available for spending in other areas if local authorities acted in that way. That clearly would be unfair.

Mr. Michael: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gummer: I will give way in a moment.

I will give the hon. Member for Newham, North-West another reason. I thought I had said before that the authorities would not know where they were for years to come because the final settlement and closure of the books would go on year after year as it does today.

Clause 1 deals with grant calculations for the years 1985-86 to 1988-89 in England and 1986-87 to 1988-89 in Wales. Wales has caught up a little on us and has already closed 1985-86. The clause provides that, instead of final outturn total expenditure, we should use an expenditure figure, which we will call the relevant amount, derived from the rules set out. The figures that we will use are the figures provided by local authorities in the official forms which arrive before 7 July.

That is already a very generous date. The authorities were supposed to produce figures before the end of March. That provides a pretty large gap. Each of the figures is signed by the chief financial officer as the best figure available. Therefore, we know that they are official figures on the official form. All local authorities, bar two, have provided us with the figures and I will consider the exceptions shortly.

Those two authorities were telephoned and were asked again and again to produce their figures by the required date. Unfortunately, they have not done so. I do not imagine that any right hon. Member would object to the argument that people ought to fulfil their obligations under the law. It is the law that local authorities should make such returns, and therefore we have had to calculate the figures in that way.

The rules are designed to provide an unambiguous figure for every authority and for every year. We have sought all the way along to stick to that stocktaking rule. However carefully Opposition Members may examine the system, they will not be able to suggest that it disadvantages some political parties rather than others. Clearly, different local authorities of different political persuasions would like different dates, because they are all in the position of trying to maximise their advantage. I do not blame them for that, but whatever date one applies, and whatever deadline one imposes, there are bound to be some authorities which fall on one side rather than the other. It seems more sensible to fix on the date that has been decided; it is not unfair, and it is applied equally, right across the board.

Clause 2 deals only with 1985-86, which was the last year for which expenditure targets were issued. People say to me, "We are surprised that that year is still being dealt with", and certainly that was the first comment that I made as somebody new to the subject. The fact remains that seven local authorities still have not closed their books for 1985-86. One of the great drawbacks of the current system is that we are left lacking right along the line.

Dr. Cunningham: Can the right hon. Gentleman tell the House why?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) must accept that I have stated—I hope it will be thought perfectly honourably—that I am not talking just about systems derived from a Labour Administration but also those produced under a Conservative Government. I shall not argue why that is so. Some of us would say that it is in response to action by authorities that behaved in outrageous ways, while others would not. I did not intend to enter into an argument about why change is required, but it would be foolish not to admit that the present system needs a fundamental overhaul—and that is what we propose.

Mr. Michael: Is it not reasonable for the Minister to accept that, while trying to improve the system in the way that he mentions, local authorities should be able to depend on statements that have been made by Cabinet Ministers to the House, and that those local authorities that have depended on such statements should not face the risk of having them contradicted retrospectively, as is the case with this Bill?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Member should accept that in changing from one system to another, one must close off the possibility that people will change their figures retrospectively to gain an advantage at the expense of others. At the same time, if one imposes a fixed date, one must implement it in the same way for everyone. One cannot make exceptions for Cardiff or for Suffolk—and I use those two examples of local authorities of different political persuasions as they affect both the hon. Gentleman and myself. Exactly the same comment has been made to me by the Suffolk authority, saying, "If you change the rules a bit, you will meet the problem that we have." But wherever one draws the line, it must be drawn in the same place for everybody; it is not possible to make exceptions.

Clause 3 deals with 1989-90. Naturally, for this year we have no information as yet about individual authorities' likely total expenditure. In that respect we were faced with a real problem. If one were to allow the existing system to continue in respect of the current year, it would enable all kinds of creative accounting to take place, because there will never be any bill to pay later. Therefore, it seems reasonable to make a special arrangement for the next year. We have set out a formula for deriving the basic figure upon which each authority's total expenditure is calculated.

I shall say this very carefully, particularly for the benefit of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West because I believe that it refers specifically to his local authority. For the seven authorities selected for rate capping in 1989-90, their expenditure will be assumed to be equal to their "expenditure limit" announced on 7 July. However, for most authorities the figure is calculated by taking their expenditure in 1988-89 using the rules in schedule 1 and projecting forward. In other words, there is a fixed stocktaking date on 7 July and one then projects that figure forward for the following year, so that there is a transitional period for introducing the new system.

There will be two adjustments for English authorities. I have told Opposition Members that it would be unfair to make any special arrangements, but I hope that these will be seen as sensible adjustments. First, there will be an adjustment for education authorities because local authorities will no longer be responsible for funding polytechnics after April 1989. Secondly, London boroughs and district councils will incur extra expenditure in preparing for the community charge. Part of those costs will be met by specific grants that have already been announced, but the remaining part will be reflected in the formula for the total expenditure next year, because that will be covered by the normal block grant arrangements. If we had not made that provision, the authorities in question could not have been given extra help and allocation for the community charge. I feel sure that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House would have found that unacceptable.

For Welsh authorities, there is an adjustment for the community charge but no adjustment for polytechnics. Additionally, there is one particular adjustment reflecting the transfer of responsibility for public libraries from Gwent county council to Newport district council. All that is done to meet promises that have been made as to future spending.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister probably does not know London very well, but I come from the London borough of Newham. It is a Tory-free zone, with 59 Labour councillors and one representing the SDP—and we are working on that. The Minister ought to understand that Newham is not rate-capped for next year, but the arrangement that he has just announced represents a further unfair burden on rate-capped councils in London.

Mr. Gummer: I am sorry if I misunderstood the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, but he made several important points about rate capping and I thought it proper to refer to him in that context. I apologise if I was wrong to do so. I thought that the hon. Gentleman had drawn particular attention to the way in which rate capping worked, and I apologise if I misunderstood him.

The 1988-89 expenditure figures will be increased by a factor that will be set out in the rate support grant report. I am trying very hard to make the system as simple as possible. This is the one area where I have failed to achieve that, but I shall try to describe it as clearly as possible. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Copeland laughs. I know that he is very comfortable, being in the position that he will never have to assume this responsibility himself. That makes it possible for him to laugh. We must try to make the system acceptable to people, and that means expressing it in language that most of us can understand. I realise that the hon. Member for Copeland is so clever that he has always been able to understand these matters, but others do not.

The Secretary of State has already proposed that the provision for current expenditure in England for 1989-90 should be an increase of 4·8 per cent. over 1988-89 budgets, after allowing for the polytechnics adjustment. This factor, which is defined in the Bill as the Z factor, will be consistent with 4·8 per cent. but not identical, because of technical adjustments between current and total expenditure.

I have now described that part of the Bill that I could not find a better way of describing more simply but still accurately. It is important to recognise that we seek to uprate the amount that is based on figures provided by local authorities by a sufficient amount to cover expected extra expenditure by local authorities.

[Mr. Gummer]

Clause 4 deals with consultation. This autumn we shall be making the RSG settlement for 1989-90 and four supplementary reports for earlier years—which shows how much is still on the go—and consultation will take place then. There is a substantial volume of material for local authority associations and individual authorities to consider, and we had to discuss whether it was fair not to start the consultation until the passage of the Bill was completed. If we did that, we would be cramming the consultation period into what we considered far too short a time; on the other hand, if we extended the period, we could not make the RSG announcements early enough for local authorities to take the action that they wished to take. In clause 4 we are taking powers to enable us to start consultation before the Bill receives Royal Assent, as that seemed the better of the two alternatives. I hope that the House agrees.

About 60 authorities have written arguing that the Bill will result in their receiving less grant for some earlier years than they would otherwise have been entitled to receive. That point was raised by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael). They have argued that the rules that we have set up in the Bill could be modified to allow them to benefit from reductions in expenditure between the time when they made the last return to the Department and 7 July. They have said, "We made our expenditure returns rather early. Cannot we have a supplementary grant between the two dates?" Initially, I thought the proposition not unreasonable, and I am attracted by any suggestion that might make the system fairer.

Mr. Tony Banks: But . . .

Mr. Gummer: I was going to say "but", because I must explain why I decided that 7 July was a better date. If local authorities were able to do that, we would have to try to make a distinction between authorities that had already made such decisions and authorities that were saying that they were about to make them, that they had done so but it had not happened to get through to the right committee at the time, or that they had done so but that no auditing had been done.

I have come to believe that one cannot make a proper decision: whatever date was decided upon, there would be an argument for some other date. If there is to be a change from one system to another, there is bound to be a "stocktaking" date. Rather than a continual and protracted argument over a long period, with auditors being brought in in an attempt to claim that "this is in" and "this is out", there should be a direct answer. The agony should not be extended.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman a number of times.

The rules provide that we should take into account only information about total expenditure submitted by local authorities and received by the Secretary of State before 7 July. The timing does not seem unreasonable, and the system is based on what the chief finance officer of each authority said was the best information available. The problem is that sometimes later information would obtain a better result for a local authority, but the only better information that we would hear would be information that obtained a better result. Although information might be more accurate later, if it obtained a worse result we should never hear it.

The problem is the same with any accounting system. A single date would at least avoid the argument that we would hear everything that was of benefit to a local authority and nothing that was not—even in the case of the same authority—and that an authority would be able to say that this, that and the other had changed the position for its benefit but we would hear nothing of other matters that had been changed to its disadvantage.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I have given way to other hon. Gentlemen, but I have not given way to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) as I promised that I would. I therefore do so now.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Does the Minister accept that he is making these decisions because he believes that some local authorities may use the rules to their advantage—rules that I must emphasise were drawn up by the present Government and which they now choose to change? Is it not wrong to penalise local authorities that try to use those rules to the best advantage of their local electors and ratepayers?

Mr. Gummer: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not defending the concept that I mentioned earlier of selling future receipts from local authority housing sales to a City institution, using the money artificially—in other words, lyingly—to reduce this year's expenditure, and obtaining money from the taxpayer that is never paid back later. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not saying that, because I have great respect for him. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) has not been present for all of the debate, but he is now shouting from a seated position. He has not been here to follow the argument—which has so far been conducted in a perfectly reasonable and rational way. I do not intend to change that simply because the hon. Gentleman has entered the Chamber.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke) *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: This really must be the last time that I give way.

Mr. Bennett: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way, and for explaining so well a Bill that seems as complex as the Schleswig-Holstein question. Can he explain the position of local authorities whose expenditure has increased because their income has fallen, because they are not operating their housing revenue account properly or collecting the rates properly? I am thinking particularly of Brent, where nine Labour councillors owe £11,000 in rates and rent. Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that the taxpayer will not be subsidising the authority?

Mr. Tony Banks: What about the City of Westminster?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman must allow me to answer. I have given way to him several times.

Mr. Banks I was trying to help.

Mr. Gummer: That is not the answer that I would have given my hon. Friend.

One of the sadnesses in local authority finance is that many local authorities that could act to improve the conditions of the people whom they are supposed to represent do not do so but instead blame the Government and the RSG system for faults within their own control. I can give an example from a debate last week. An hon. Member complained that the Government had not yet given permission for the building of council accommodation for the homeless, because it was still in the pipeline. I had to point out that the authority—which was run by the alliance—had thousands of empty properties that could have been taken into account before that stage was reached. His argument was undermined by the authority's failure to do all that could be done locally before whingeing about what the Government were doing.

I accept that for past years, when final outturn has traditionally been slightly below earlier estimates, authorities in aggregate will receive less grant than would otherwise have been the case. I am not disagreeing with what the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth says, in general as well as in particular. I am making an admission, and I shall admit one or two other things about which I hope that he will be pleased.

As I have explained, authorities can be certain that there will be no grant left unclaimed next year. There will be no penalties either: that is another aspect that local authorities can take seriously. In the past two years substantial amounts of grant have gone unclaimed authorities' expenditure has been higher than was assumed for the purposes of the settlement. That cannot happen in 1989-90. The amount of grant available for 1989-90 will be 9 per cent.—£1·1 billion—higher than the amount likely to be paid out this year, an increase considerably above the rate of inflation.

Taken as a whole, the proposals are very fair to local government. It will not be possible for several years—until we have final outturn expenditure for all the years concerned—to work out whether the Bill has resulted in more or less grant being paid than would otherwise have been the case. But it is symptomatic of the fact that we do not expect the Exchequer to gain out of this that we are bringing forward a money Bill so that extra moneys can be spent if necessary.

Whatever may be the date of the stocktaking, some will benefit from it more than others; they will feel that another date would be better. We have attempted to produce an answer that means that neither taxpayers nor the Treasury are natural gainers from the system. That is not our intention. We are taking powers to ensure that if we are losers we shall be able to pay out the extra money.

Many people in local government, of all parties, believe that a measure of this kind is necessary. Some favour a different method of reaching the close-down date, but they welcome the certainty that it will provide about grant entitlement. They welcome particularly the fact that it guarantees that the amount of grant available for 1989-90 will be paid in full, and many have been sensible enough to welcome the increase in the total amount of grant that will be paid.

The Bill has been brought forward in the interests of good and orderly administration. It is designed to protect the Exchequer against the risk of unjustified grant claims resulting from creative accounting, to provide authorities with certainty as they prepare for the new system, and to provide for an orderly close down to the existing system. A change was made imperative by the switch to the new grant system in 1990. The proposals in the Bill are designed to give a clear and unambiguous set of rules for achieving these objectives. It defines the position so that both local authorities and the Secretary of State know exactly where they stand.

On that basis, I hope that we shall be able to proceed sensibly and reasonably to the new, much fairer system of local government finance. It will enable local government from year to year to become much more accountable and much more able to see where it stands. It would not be possible sensibly to introduce that system if there were not a measure such as this. I hope that the House will accept that this is a sensible Bill and that it will give certainty to local authorities that this system of local government finance will be much simpler to understand, much fairer to all and much more local in its implementation.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise for delaying the start of the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), but it is not true for the Minister to say that I was not here for his speech. I missed only five minutes of it. I am not sorry that I missed those five minutes.

4.22 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): It is a fair time since the Minister stood up to present the Bill to the House. It has been a constant source of amazement to me over the years that Tory Ministers have come to the House of Commons and spoken such gibberish. The Minister admitted that this is an extremely complicated matter. Nobody denies that the Bill must be given a Second Reading and that there will have to be, albeit briefly, detailed consideration of it. The Bill involves considerable sums of local and central Government expenditure that will affect the citizens of this country.

When a Bill is introduced in this way, there is inevitably bound to be a blend of half truth, loads of jargon, choice abuse of one's political opponents in local government, and expressions of distaste for local government and local democracy if it does not deliver what the political party in power desires. It is a shabby form of government when such large sums of money are involved. It protects this Minister and other Ministers from having to face the reality and the consequences of their legislation.

One cannot be certain about the effects of the Bill, because of the number of years involved. Money that local government could reasonably have expected to receive in 1988-89 will be down by £500 million. The Minister referred to the assistance that is to be given to introduce the poll tax, but the so-called extra cash that is to be given for its introduction is not extra cash at all. Some of it is bound to be offset by what local authorities are to lose. A cut to pay for a grant is dishonest. The Government are giving with one hand and taking away with the other, but this is not the first time that that has happened.

Some local authorities will end up with windfall gains. Others will face unexpected, and in some cases unprecedented, losses. It is all being done in such a rush. We are three weeks away—two weeks if certain authorities in the House have their way—from the end of what will have been the longest Session of this Parliament. I am not surprised by this Government's contempt for the House and its procedures, but that is no reason for hon. Members to acquiesce silently. Why the rush? Why can we not wait

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

until the new Session when the Bill could be properly debated and scrutinised in detail? I accept that we were told in July that the Bill would be pushed through this Session. It could have been published before the summer recess. It is not without precedent for the Government to introduce Bills during the spill-over. They can introduce Bills whenever they like. However, it is not normal for Bills to be introduced during the spill-over.

I have found—more correctly, I asked and the Library found—just two Bills that have been introduced in the spill-over period during the nearly 15 years that I have served in the House. The first was introduced on 21 October 1975 at 11.56 pm. The Minister then moved the Second Reading of the Cinematographic Films Bill. It was welcomed by the then Opposition in the form of the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby). That Bill was not contested and there was no Division. A Labour Government were in power in 1975. Conservative Ministers thrive on the basis that everything that is wrong today, after 10 years of Tory rule, is the fault of past Labour Governments. One therefore has to take the wise precaution of checking precedents.

The other Bill was introduced on 28 October 1980. The then Home Secretary introduced the Imprisonment (Temporary Provisions) Bill. Such a measure was urgent because of the industrial action that was being taken by prison officers. The Bill went through all its stages in one day. The Opposition did not divide on Second Reading; nevertheless, they divided on certain amendments to the Bill.

One of those Bills was not contested and was dealt with as a fill-in late at night. The other Bill was urgently required. This Bill does not fit into either of those categories. There is no earthly reason why this Bill should not be introduced in the new Session. The Bill does not have all-party support. There is no question of the Opposition not dividing the House on Second Reading or in Committee.

I accept that the Minister could not mention everything during his 50-minute speech, but he concentrated exclusively on local authorities. However, the police—another area of public service—are affected by the Bill. The suggestion that there has been a decline in crime is absolute nonsense. Last year sex crimes and crimes of violence increased by 16 and 17 per cent. respectively. I agree that burglaries went down by 6 per cent., but compared with the position 10 years ago there has been a massive increase in crime, resulting in considerable pressure on police resources.

The Government are creating a society that is based on greed and on "To hell with tomorrow." *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members do not like to hear it, but that is the reality of the society that the Government are creating. Their policies are leading to violent crime, burglaries, generally loutish behaviour and to the white collar crime that is taking place on the stock exchange. It would be possible for police forces in London, the metropolitan areas and Northumbria to lose £18 million as a direct result of the Bill. Shire county forces will also potentially lose, but, because the figures are subsumed in figures for the county councils as a whole, it is not possible to express that information separately.

What greater encouragement can there be to vigilantes to take to the streets than a higher crime rate and a further squeeze on police budgets? In recent days, in my constituency and in London, imported American vigilantes have been attempting to patrol the streets and the London underground. In Birmingham such activities have been supported by at least one Conservative councillor. I read yesterday that in Tyne and Wear, where some neighbourhoods have called in private security firms to patrol their streets, the Northumbria police authority is pressing the Home Office for an extra 500 officers, whereas the Bill potentially cuts the authority's grant by £668,000. I can account for £400,000 of that, which is itemised in detail in complaints that that authority has made as a result of the statement by the Secretary of State in July.

Other police authorities, such as South Yorkshire, will be affected. I am not talking about local government or local councils. As far as I know, the police authorities have not been accused of ripping off the system by creative accounting. Nevertheless, they stand to lose considerable sums. The West Midlands authority has made a request for a further 350 officers, which would add about 2p to the rate precept. The Bill cuts £1·8 million from the expected grant entitlement of the West Midlands police authority.

It is no wonder that no Minister has yet moved to control the vigilante patrols or the private security firms in Washington. It is no wonder that Ministers have not taken firm action to control the foreigners who encourage people to set up private amateur vigilante patrols on our streets. If there is to be more of a squeeze on the police budget, the obvious way out is to privatise the service. It is the thin end of the wedge. Such a development is dishonest and dishonourable, and if the Government cannot see that it is dangerous now, they will never see it.

Why are the police authorities covered by the Bill? Why will the police authorities potentially lose such substantial sums? I have cited the West Midlands. The Metropolitan police authority stands to lose £11·5 million in grant entitlement. Greater Manchester stands to lose £1·7 million, West Yorkshire just over £1 million, and Merseyside and South Yorkshire about £750,000 each. Someone must give us some answers about a side effect of the Bill to which the Minister did not once refer.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): I find the hon. Gentleman's criticism surprising, given that the Government have allowed record numbers of policemen to be recruited and appointed, and given also that they have voted money for record pay settlements, which the police deserve. Given the hon. Gentleman's concern and respect for law and order, what does he have to say to those Labour Members and those members of the Labour party in Scotland who have urged people not to pay the community charge, whose implementation has been duly approved by the Parliament of the United Kingdom on a majority vote?

Mr. Rooker: That has nothing whatever to do with the police, and anyway that is not Labour party policy.

Mr. Heffer: I entirely agree with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). The case that he is making is first class. Is he aware that a Tory Member who once lived in a city in the United States of America—in Miami, I think—said that the whole area was controlled by the Mafia? There was no local petty crime and residents paid a certain amount to

the Mafia. If anybody committed a petty crime he was quickly seen off, no doubt with leaded boots. Is that the sort of thing that we want in this country?

Mr. Rooker: My hon. Friend is right. So far, no Minister has discouraged or expressed much concern about such activities. Everyone must know that vigilante patrols, however well organised, are nothing more than large-scale corruption-protection rackets by which money is taken from people who pay their taxes and who should be getting a proper service from a properly trained police force. That is what people want. They certainly do not want encouragement to be given to the setting up of vigilante patrols. The potential effect of the Bill on the police and the police budget must be made clear and the case answered.

The Minister went out of his way to imply that local authorities of different political complexions would be covered by the Bill. That is absolutely right. Under the Bill, because of the legitimisation of what is technically known as the hold-back system, £500 million or thereabouts of expected grant entitlement may not be paid. According to our best estimates, Conservative-controlled authorities will obtain £134 million less than they had reason to expect. For Labour-controlled authorities the amount will be £157 million; for authorities controlled by what I shall call the minor party the figure will be £4 million. Those controlled by independents will lose £3 million, and the substantial number of authorities in which there is no overall control will lose £210 million. Those figures are separate from the figures for the joint boards affecting the police and transport. Those figures cut right across the spectrum of public services, and the sum involved is substantial. Conservative Members are bound to receive representations from their local authorities.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Is the information that the hon. Gentleman is giving based on his calculations, or on official figures with which he has been provided?

Mr. Rooker: They are the best estimates available to the Opposition of the traditional grant that would be due in 1988-89, although the Minister relied principally on the figures for 1989-90, and I understand the reason for that. I was referring to the additional grant due in 1988-89 if there were no hold back. When the Secretary of State introduced the rate support grant order he referred to the "generous settlement" of £13·775 million. His remarks were reported at column 465 of *Hansard* for 9 December 1987. One must exclude from that sum specific and supplementary grants and domestic rate relief, giving the block grant figure of £9·471 million which was referred to in the local government finance order approved by the House. The local authorities could reasonably have expected to receive that money. I shall not go through the whole list of authorities, as hundreds are involved. I have made it clear that authorities controlled by either party and by no party are affected. All sectors of local government will be affected.

Mr. Gummer: The figure of £500 million could be arrived at only if every local authority reduced its expenditure to the amount that it was allowed. As that has never happened, the hon. Gentleman is postulating a figure much larger than could arise in any known circumstances. Because outturn is usually lower than estimated earlier in the year, the hon. Gentleman is right to say that some grant that might have been paid will not now be paid under the Bill. The hon. Gentleman ought also to consider the amount of grant that will be available.

Mr. Rooker: I have gone out of my way to talk of the amount that is potentially available to local government when talking about the £500 million—£512 million to be precise. I accept what the Minister said, so I shall meet him half way. Perhaps we can split the difference and settle for £250 million. In that case, all the figures that I shall give henceforth should be halved. I think that local government would accept that. The metropolitan authorities and the shire counties and districts would be prepared to meet the Minister half way and say, "We understand the problems, so let us talk about £250 million coming to local government."

If the Minister is prepared to meet local government half way, all the figures that I shall give can be halved. For Kent county council, a potential £15·3 million could be available. It heads the list of affected Tory shires. Berkshire could have an extra £10·5 million, Surrey an extra £9·4 million. West Sussex could have an extra £8·2 million. It must be remembered that West Sussex has to share the massive security costs of the Conservative party conference. It and East Sussex must dip into the budget to find £1·4 million for it. Bradford could have an extra £3·7 million. The Prime Minister's local authority of Barnet could have an extra £3·4 million. The Minister's local authority of Suffolk, Coastal could have an extra £112,000. Epping Forest, where there is to be a by-election soon, could have an extra £95,000.

My own city of Birmingham heads the list of Labour-controlled losers. It could have an extra £13 million. Staffordshire could have an extra £10 million, Nottinghamshire an extra £9·8 million, Manchester an extra £5 million, Sheffield £4·8 million and Coventry £3 million. The tale of what local government had good reason to expect but will not get is pretty sorry.

Essex county council heads the list of losers where there is no overall control. It could have an extra £18·7 million. Hampshire, where there is due to be a by-election for the European Parliament soon, could have an extra £17·4 million. Lancashire could have an extra £11·5 million, Cheshire £10·9 million and East Sussex, which with West Sussex makes up the Sussex constabulary and must find the £1·4 million needed for security at the Conservative party conference, stands to lose £8 million. Warwickshire could have an extra £5·5 million.

Those are substantial sums, which could affect the quality of life and the taxes paid by our constituents. Local authorities are required to deal with and finance many unexpected items for which, with the best will in the world, no budget can cater. I should like to give just one example of that, and I do not apologise for its being from the city of Birmingham.

In late July the then Secretary of State for Social Services received a letter from Councillor Barton, who chairs the Birmingham social services committee. The letter arose because Birmingham's director of social services had reported to the committee her action in agreeing to the long-term placement at a named youth treatment centre of a child in care. The placement—of a 14-year-old boy—was considered essential and the centre is the only one that meets the youngster's needs.

[Mr. Rooker]

I do not propose to go into the details, but the director drew the matter to the social services committee's attention because the annual cost of the placement to Birmingham's ratepayers was £72,000 a year. That is close to £200 a day. Councillor Barton said that the cost of protecting society from the youngster should not fall wholly on the local authority. The cost of the placement is equivalent to 10 day care places for people with mental handicap, five fully trained social workers, or 10 home helps.

Councillor Barton, whose concerns I supported in a letter to the Minister, received a response from the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) as Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the effect of which was "Tough". She said that if the young man was in Birmingham's care the cost would fall on Birmingham, and that the nature of the placement did not affect that.

If the youngster had committed some of the offences that it was feared he might commit, the Home Office would have had to meet the bill. The Minister said that there are lots of youngsters in places that cost more than £40,000 a year. That is but one example, but it shows that budgets cannot take account of everything. That is what local government is all about—coping with unforeseen problems as they rise as efficiently and sensibly as possible. Local authorities must act in the best interests of the community as a whole and of the individual concerned. In such a case, no help is forthcoming to Birmingham or any other council, although it is a wholly unexpected impost on the budget.

There is one Conservative Member who insists that there is no such thing as the poll tax but, like the poll tax, the changes in rate support grant or revenue support grant —if the Minister can get the name changed to needs grant that will be fine, but I suspect that the Department still likes to use the jargon expression RSG—are designed to undermine rather than to underpin democratic local government.

Coupled with the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Bill and other legislation to come will free Ministers to manipulate Government funding to local government and business rates and to fix the poll tax. Unfortunately, from the Government's point of view, local government does not run scared of the Prime Minister as she operates her agenda to emasculate it. We did not hear much from the Minister about the purpose and function of local government. The idea is abroad in the speeches and comments of many Conservative Members that local government is simply an agency that provides services dictated by the centre. I reject that view, as should all democrats.

We live in a unitary state, and if we do not have genuine, local, democratic government, we cannot divide political power—it will all reside at the centre. We need genuine, democratic, local government to increase political participation and emancipation and to provide responsive, appropriate local services based on local needs, locally assessed. I am pleased to see that the Minister approves that latter point.

It was written a long time ago that a unitary state will end up a dictatorship if there is no freedom in the localities. If there is no freedom in the localities, it naturally follows that all power goes to the centre. Dictatorship is the inevitable consequence. It follows the suppression of local freedoms and initiative and the curtailment of local responsibility and opportunity.

As Opposition Members said in Committee when considering the Local Government Finance Bill, the political liberty of British citizens demands a system of local government that commands confidence. It must have the confidence and power to operate in our pluralistic society, not as a challenge to Parliament or to the Government, but as a clear challenge to Whitehall obtaining all the power, and to scrutinise other agencies at work within the state. That is an important role for local government.

As the poll tax legislation comes into operation—and there is much more still to come to the House—Ministers will realise that in the past local authorities have been intermediaries, a buffer between central power and what has been termed the ultimately unmeetable pressures of a mass democracy by Dr. Ken Young, formerly of the Policy Studies Institute, in one of his essays. In other words, good quality, democratically accountable local government has protected Ministers from the demands of a mass democracy. It has buttressed them and put a fence around them, because, as they know, many of the pressures are unmeetable, and local democracy was one way of assisting that part of a political process. That has been an advantage to Ministers, and as people increasingly realise that it is not worth bothering with local government—I question why people will want to become councillors in future—the buck will stop at the door of the Ministers. It will be no good their telling people to go back to their local authorities because, generally speaking, the local authorities will be in no position to deal with the matter.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I followed very closely my hon. Friend's comments about dictatorship from the centre. Does he agree that on occasion Conservative councils have been prepared to stand up to a Conservative Government and point out the error of their ways? Is it not a matter of regret that the Government have a greater tendency towards dictatorship from the centre, particularly in Bradford, where Tory councillors are being manipulated by the centre to impose cuts and sackings to further the political ambitions of a clique in the leadership?

Mr. Rooker: My hon. Friend is right. I suspect that later today right hon. and hon. Members will quite rightly hear a lot more about what is happening in Bradford. I am not an expert on Bradford, but I understand that at one time there was a move to replace the lord mayor with an elected chairman of the council, and that that move came from my own party, but the Tories in Bradford said, "You cannot do that. You will bring the chief citizen of the city into political arguments day after day." The Tories used that argument when we wanted an elected chairman, but if we look at what is happening in Bradford today, it is clear that the mayor is taking all the decisions.

Mr. Patnick: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. The lord mayor of Sheffield has been in the Labour party for the past six years and looks like staying there for ever more.

Mr. Rooker: The hon. Gentleman can make his own speech.

The Minister did not mention one aspect of local government, and that is that quality local government, and confident local government, enlarges the power that people have over their own lives. We have to make the point again and again. Whether it is putting pressure on the Government—a legitimate activity so far as I am aware —working with local employers, or expresaing local concerns, it is providing an infrastructure for our lives and dividing power so that it is shared more equally than it would be if it resided at the centre.

Although it is on record that the Prime Minister wants to snuff out a political party that happens to have a greater share of local power in our unitary state than the central governing party—she is on record as wishing to snuff out the Labour party and she has made that quite clear—I am not sure whether the Cabinet is aware of the profound constitutional dangers in further weakening local government.

Whether we have local government or local agencies, we cannot all have a library in our home, we cannot build and maintain the road outside our home, and we cannot all be personal fire fighters, teachers, home helps, drain cleaners, plumbers and refuse collectors. However, we can do all those vital activities as a community or, dare I say, as a society. We do not need all the services all the time. The key is to make the connection between benefit to the individual and the family so that it is there when required and should not be dependent upon being rich, which is what the Government are setting out to achieve. We are a much healthier and much richer society when we club together to provide what we could not achieve as individuals.

Contrary to what Ministers say, local government is about local differences—the difference between a Lakeland district and a London borough, the difference between rural villages and urban villages. Such differences in our society have to be taken into account.

To Ministers, accountability means doing what they say, but accountability should reside at the ballot box, not in ministerial declarations. I regret that there are two snags. First, the new Minister for Local Government considers the right to vote as being purchased by taxation. He sees no alternative to the point that he made in a speech in Norfolk earlier this month—I do not usually use these words, but I shall quote him—when he said:

"The community charge will provide a 'ready reckoner' so that when each charge payer votes in local elections he will cast that vote not only responsibly"

—he emphasised "responsibly"—

"because he is making a contribution towards the cost of local services".

In other words, if one does not make a contribution towards the cost of local services, one's vote cannot be a responsible vote. I do not think that such an attitude should be expressed by a Minister for Local Government.

Mr. Gummer: If I had said that the hon. Gentleman would be quite right, but he failed to quote the rest of the speech. I said that every individual should be given the means to pay the community charge, that 9 million people —a quarter of the electorate—would be given that means and that that was why the Labour party hated calling it a community charge and insisted upon mis-calling it a poll tax. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to quote, he must quote correctly.

Mr. Rooker: I quoted word for word the beginning of the paragraph on the last page of the Department of the Environment's press release on 7 October. The rest of it was packed full of half truths about the poll tax, as I said in a speech in Croydon recently, where they believed me to such an extent that in the by-election in the Bensham Manor ward last week, in which the poll tax was the key issue, Labour not only gained 65 per cent. of the votes, but there was a 12 per cent. swing to Labour, after the voters had been told the other half of the truth.

My second point about accountability is more important than the Minister's speech, because the ballot box is more important. Our rightful complaint is that the Government have deprived the constituents of my hon. Friends and of one or two Conservative hon. Members in the metropolitan districts of the right to vote in 1989. It will be a vote-free year because the Government have refused to return to the big cities the annual vote that they lost by the abolition of the metropolitan counties. We vote every year in the big cities. It is a much more effective form of democracy than to vote every four years, whether it be in London or the shire counties. We are prepared to live or die politically by the ballot box. The Government do not believe in that, or they would have restored the right of the people in Bradford, Birmingham and other large cities to vote for or against their council in 1989. They would also have introduced annual elections in London—something that they have avoided.

When the Bill was published the Minister spent some time dealing with creative accountancy. We should note that he did not call it illegal accounting, but creative accounting, the Government's term. People would think that that was exclusive to Labour-controlled local authorities. That is not the case. I saw the leader of a Conservative council being interviewed on television and he was boasting about a project and admitted that it had been carried out legally by accountancy techniques used in industry every day.

The more we learn about what happens in the local council in which the House of Commons resides, the less we are willing to take lectures from Tory Ministers. The freehold of the Conservative party's headquarters was purchased from Westminster council in 1981 for £1·3 million and was sold in 1983 for £3·7 million, against the advice of the director of property of Westminster council. It was sold at a profit to the Tory party of £2·4 million and a loss to the ratepayers of £2·4 million. I do not know whether the sale took place early in 1983 or later in the year when the Minister was the chairman of the Conservative party. I know that the Conservative party and Westminster council conspired to deprive the ratepayers of Westminster of £2·4 million, and for that reason we will take no lectures on accounting from the Government.

5.2 pm

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) made an interesting speech.

The Bill is divided into four parts—the rate support closedown, how the closedown will take place, the control of creative accounting and the rate support grant settlement for 1989-90. The Bill details all that and I am pleased to see that the aggregate Exchequer grant for 1989-90 has been set at £13·575 billion. That is a £1·1

[Mr. Irvine Patnick]

billion increase on the grant being paid for 1988-89. It allows for the change in the funding for polytechnics and is a 9 per cent. increase in the amount of grant to be paid out this year. I am also pleased to see that £110 million is being provided in respect of the extra cost that the local authorities will incur in preparing for the community charge. That is in line with the estimate of the cost involved by Price Waterhouse and is consistent with the figures put forward by the local authorities.

I was distressed that my right hon. Friend the Minister would not let me bear gifts. I understand that the 7 July deadline, which gave three months' notice to local authorities, was met by all local authorities, except two.

I listened to the challenge to my right hon. Friend the Minister by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). I shall read the litany of Newham. The

"Labour councillor, Mr. John Wilson, has resigned from the Council. He claimed that free speech in the all-Labour council was stifled, and compared his colleagues' behaviour to 'Hitler's Fascist State.'"

That was reported in the *Newham Recorder* on 18 December 1986.

Mr. Cryer: What about Sheffield?

Mr. Patnick: I shall come to Sheffield.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patnick: I am sorry but I will not. The hon. Member for Perry Barr gave way to me only once and has refused to give way before.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman has made it clear that he does not intend to give way at this time.

Mr. Patnick: I will give way when I finish the litany of hate. It continues:

"The Council has refused to run an advertisement for the Metropolitan Police's major anti-racial harassment campaign on the grounds that it was 'patronising' and a 'cosmetic gesture.'"

That was reported in *The Daily Telegraph* on 16 January and the *Newham Recorder* on 15 January 1987.

"The Council has added 'Count Zeppelin' to a list of approved names for local buildings and streets. East London suffered badly from bombs dropped by Zeppelins in the First World War."

That was reported in the *Evening Standard* in February 1987.

Newham's auditors, the same auditors who found the £110 million that will be used to implement the community charge—Arthur Young International—

"have called for urgent action to stop 'needless' waste of cash in Newham's education system. Two years ago the auditors said that the council was wasting £250,000 each year by failing to reorganise senior schools in order to match the places available with the lower level of demand. The report states: 'Continued delays in matching provision to need are giving rise to additional and needless cost while also leading to under-achievement.'"

That was reported in the *Newham Recorder* in February 1987.

"A Government report shows that Newham has the second highest percentage of empty council homes in the country. 2,420 council homes are empty, 7·8 per cent. of the stock."

That was reported in the *Newham Recorder* in February 1987.

Mr. Heffer: Why?

Mr. Patnick: On 12 February 1987 the *Newham Recorder* said:

"The Labour Council leader, Councillor Fred Jones, has called the Newham Chamber of Commerce 'fifth columnists' for allegedly undermining the Council's campaign against ratecapping. Councillor Jones has written to the Chamber 'we have been repaid by betrayal' and presumably he is referring to last year's 13 per cent. rate increase, the highest in London."

Mr. Heffer: Why does the hon. Gentleman not talk about the other side of the fence?

Mr. Patnick: Does the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) wish to intervene?

Mr. Heffer: Yes. The hon. Gentleman spoke about what is happening to repairs and so on in Newham. It can apply to Liverpool or elsewhere. Government Front Bench spokesmen have admitted that the Government have taken millions of pounds away from local authorities. That is why local authorities are in that position. The hon. Gentleman does not give that side of the story—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Patnick: The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) enjoys making seated interventions, but it is very rare for him to stand and make his comments.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough) *rose*——

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Patnick: I will not give way.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) giving way to anyone at this time?

Mr. Patnick: I will give way when I have finished dealing with Newham.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman said that he will give way when he has finished this section of his speech.

Mr. Patnick: Thank you for your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker.

On 7 September 1987 the *Evening Standard* said that the

"Residents of a Council block were refused a £200 grant by the Council because the tenants' account is banked with Barclays Bank."

In December 1987 *The Guardian* reported:

"The council advertised last December for a Senior Women's Equality Officer at a salary of £15,000. The job involves working within the Women's Equality Unit, 'raising the profile of women's equality' and 'encouraging and supporting women's groups and activities.'"

I apologise to the House for this list. I ceased being a member of Sheffield city council in May this year. Until the beginning of January these little snippets of information allowed me to place the antics of Sheffield in the scale of what I would call the oddball things that happen. In that regard, Newham was always ahead of Sheffield by an average that I could never work out.

I shall give a quotation from the bible of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks)—*The Guardian* of 20 January 1988. It states:

"Newham council has advertised for a Race Equality Research Officer who must have 'a knowledge of racial disadvantage in housing' and for a Central Race Equality Officer who must display 'a knowledge of discrimination and racial harassment'. Both posts carry salaries in excess of £22,000 a year."

Mr. Tony Banks: I cannot understand why the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) is spending so much of his speech talking about the London borough of Newham when he should be concerning himself with Sheffield. I am touched that he should show so much concern, but inadvertently he has misled the House a number of times and has hardly been quoting from impartial sources. I cannot answer all his points because I do not have sufficient time in this intervention, but I shall write to the hon. Gentleman. I shall have to consider carefully my involvement with the Newham chamber of commerce—I am having dinner there next week—and perhaps I should not have gone to Barclays bank to open the business centre. If Newham council is so bad, why does the hon. Gentleman think that there are 59 Labour councillors and one Social Democratic party councillor? It is a Tory-free zone. Last week, the Labour party won two by-elections. The Tories do not stand a chance in Newham, yet the Labour party receives massive support. If what the hon. Gentleman says is true—he must know that it is not—why does he think that the people of Newham give the Labour party so much support?

Mr. Patnick: The hon. Member for Newham, North-West is quite wrong. I am giving examples of what Newham council has done. I do not recollect hearing any retraction concerning these allegations since I have been in the House.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman has traduced Sheffield city council. He belongs to a minority party in Sheffield, which is routed and defeated every year. It held power only once, in 1926. The hon. Gentleman fought its transport policy tooth and nail, but every year the Labour party's vote increased. The hon. Gentleman has a nerve denouncing his own council when his party is defeated every year.

Mr. Patnick: I wonder whether the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) could be given a hearing aid. I have been reciting the litany of Newham council's activities; I have not mentioned Sheffield, Bradford or any other areas. I thank the hon. Member for Hillsborough for his help and assistance.

The 1986 manifesto of Sheffield district Labour party, which is larger than the Conservative party manifesto about which everyone keeps arguing——

Mr. Heffer: Read it out.

Mr. Patnick: I shall do so, if hon. Members wish.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Patnick: Thank you for your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr will have heard before the quotation that I am about to give from the manifesto, but, sadly, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) is not present. The front page of the manifesto says:

"The best local government is superb and private enterprise could never improve on it, with Sheffield a shining example."

John Banham made those remarks, and in Sheffield city council's inimitable manner it gives him as the chairman of the Audit Commission in 1985.

It is worthy of note that some local authorities have indulged in creative accounting and other activities. Some decided to fund a Left-wing newspaper, the *News on Sunday*. Manchester city council gave it £268,000, Southwark £250,000, Brent £250,000, Islington £250,000 and Derbyshire council also contributed. Ratepayers' cash was given to an enterprise that failed completely.

Rent arrears in those wonderfully run organisations are running high. Manchester city council's rent arrears are £5 million—10 per cent. of its rents are uncollected. For Haringey, the figure is 28 per cent., or £5·6 million, for Southwark it is £24 million, for Islington it is £6 million and for Camden it is £7 million.

My right hon. Friend the Minister referred to deferred loans. Manchester city council has £100 million of deferred loans, Islington has £74 million, Camden has £100 million and, for the benefit of the hon. Member for Hillsborough, let me say that Sheffield has £110 million. Its repayments were due to start three years from the start of the loan, which was for seven years. The cost of repaying that loan is £175 million. The bank that is involved is the Banque

Bradford city council spends money on things that I can describe only as odd. Mr. Pickles—everybody seems to think that he arrived on the scene yesterday afternoon—has been chairman of Bradford education committee for some time. The hon. Member for Hillsborough remarked on the fares policy. When I sought advice about that policy from the Conservative party, it was not forthcoming, as, I imagine, advice has not been forthcoming for the leader of Bradford city council. Bradford city council told the electorate what it intended to do and has implemented its policy. I remind those who have the temerity and cheek to remark on the lord mayor using his casting vote of the time when the Labour party and Conservative party had parity on Sheffield city council.

Mr. Flannery: When was that?

Mr. Patnick: It was in 1968, comrade. At that time, the lord mayor of Sheffield city council had a casting vote. The hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) was chief whip of the Labour group. It operated the ultimate fiddle to maintain control of that council. The city had 27 aldermen, but if the Conservatives had been given the correct number of aldermen it would have remained in control of the city. The hon. Member for Bassetlaw did a fantastic job by granting the Tories three aldermen, and keeping the remaining 24 for the Labour party.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. This is all very interesting, but it does not relate to the Bill. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman could relate his remarks to the Bill.

Mr. Patnick: With respect, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is related to the Bill because we are discussing creative accounting——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not getting into an argument with the hon. Gentleman. He is not relating his remarks to the Bill, and I am asking him to do so.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) should put his notes away and get on with his speech.

Mr. Patnick: That is more than the hon. Member for Hillsborough has done since I have been in Parliament.

Under the community charge, more than half the households will be better off, four out of five single pensioners will be better off and nearly nine out of 10 one-parent families will be better off. Almost everybody pays. That means that the poorest can pay less. Four million people will pay only 20 per cent., and even get help with that, and 5 million more people will pay a reduced charge. More than one quarter of local voters will get help with their bills. They will all contribute something to the cost of their local council, so everyone will know how well this money is spent. On every community charge bill they will see how much they have to pay, and next to it what they could pay if there was a sensible council providing a reasonable service. People will know whether they are properly governed. There will be accountable councils and responsible voters.

I have referred to the Labour party's 1986 manifesto for Sheffield. The council summons for the business to be debated on Wednesday contains a notice of motion, which states:

"That, in view of the continuing hardship and distress caused to Sheffield tenants and home owners by the backlog, delays and errors in administering housing benefit"

the council will have to take certain action.

Money would be available if Sheffield city council made savings. I shall quote the report by the district auditor—believe it or not—which was issued on 31 December 1987.

Mr. Tony Banks: Oh, no.

Mr. Patnick: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman knows that I served my time in the guerilla trenches of south Yorkshire and Sheffield. His remarks do not worry me. I shall make the speech that I intended to make.

The district auditor's report said that a saving of £600,000 a year could be made on the cleaning and caretaking of schools. Referring to the cost of £12 million for heating and lighting the council's premises, the district auditor said that, despite the savings achieved, further savings were possible and that, using a 25 per cent. national figure, the council could save £1 million. He told the council to reduce its stockholding by £500,000 and to save £150,000 on overheads.

The works department spends £40 million a year on supplies and its running costs exceed £1 million. The district auditor said that vehicle fleet management could be improved and a saving of £400,000 made and that the fleet size could be reduced by six vehicles. On maintenance, the council was over target by 50 per cent. and could save £90,000. An amount of £125 million was collected in rates income, and the auditor identified possible savings of £1·75 million on rates collection, mortgage advances and off-street parking. On the sundries deficit of £37 million, the auditor identified room for a saving of £50,000 and possibly a further saving of £180,000.

Why is Sheffield city council involved in skip hire, window cleaning and municipal funeral services? *[Interruption.]* It is all very well for the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) to create a diversion, but those are the savings that Sheffield could make, without creative accountancy.

Sheffield city council always screams about Government grants. On 44 claims with a total grant of £100 million, the council could have saved £323,000 if the claims had been submitted within 60 days of the period to which they related. The direct labour organisation gets £10 million for housing repairs, yet there was an overpayment of bonus costs of £200,000 a year, with 15 per cent. overclaimed in housing costs.

The authority's magazine says that it is worried about sickness and absence, which costs £1 million a year. If this were controlled, £400,000 a year could be saved. If the council could restore levels of performance to those of two years ago, a saving of £300,000 on incentive bonuses could be made. The council's manpower has increased by 2,500 full-time workers, or 12 per cent. and by 1,500 part-time workers, or 15 per cent.

When the report was published, the works department said that it revealed a total loss of £1·2 million last year. The report gave this warning:

"Severe financial and competitive pressure in the department has been caused by a combination of legislation, forcing the department to compete for tender with the private sector."

Rent arrears were £9·1 million in March 1985 and £8·5 million in July 1987. This cost the city £900,000 in interest.

The district auditor—not Conservative central office—identified possible savings of £6·793 million. But all was not lost. Sheffield city council's treasurer issued to the council a report on revenue budgets. That was a new approach for 1988-89, which was approved by the council. The Treasurer said that he would set a cash limit on the council's total expenditure for each of the next three years in advance of the preparation of detailed budgets. He said that he would give each committee a cash allocation for 1988-89, together with guideline allocations for 1989-90 and 1990-91, which would require the committees to absorb inflation and growth.

The treasurer introduced an incentive procedure whereby committees could find ways of increasing their cash limits and reinvest the money in service provision. He said:

"The impact in future years will be important and subsequent cash limits must not be exceeded."

The treasurer introduced a holdback procedure whereby a sum of money over and above the cash limits to which he had already referred would be set aside each year and distributed to committees. He introduced a direct link between the service delivery plans and the revenue budgets, with a built-in process of review, and gave the opportunity to introduce activity budgets linked to spending. We call that rate capping. The treasurer turned the system round and said, "This is what Sheffield intends to do."

My litany is not one just of gloom. In Sheffield there is now £1·3 billion of private enterprise investment and a development is taking place which will be the pride of England. The Opposition say that no savings can be made in local government.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): Who said that?

Mr. Patnick: The hon. Member for Perry Barr said it. He pointed out where the South Yorkshire police authority was short of money. Sheffield city council is short of £3·7 million. There is still fat on the bones of

Sheffield city council, despite all the hard work it has done to come into the 20th century. I am proud to have been a member of Sheffield city council. Despite the comments by the hon. Member for Hillsborough, I am proud to have been a member of South Yorkshire county council. It is a matter of record that that council collected £1 billion from ratepayers and spent £500 million on fare subsidies. The police were short of accommodation and highways were disintegrating. Spending by other services was needed and could have been achieved if the council had not otherwise used the money.

I am proud to have been a member of Sheffield city council for 20 years. Sheffield is a great place in which to live and I recommend it to anyone.

Mr. Cryer: It is under Labour control.

Mr. Patnick: It is under Labour control, as the MEP for Sheffield keeps reminding us. I often wonder what the people of Sheffield are getting out of Europe when the hon. Gentleman is sitting in this Chamber. Nevertheless, he wears two hats, one representing Bradford and the other Sheffield, but I suppose that both places are in the north of England.

I repeat that I am proud to have been a Sheffield city councillor for 20 years. Sheffield is a wonderful place to live and for people to come to, but economies could be made in the council's budget, as the district auditor has made clear—and if those economies can be made in Sheffield, they can also be made elsewhere.

5.30 pm

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): When I spoke in the debate on rate support grant at the beginning of December last year I used a quotation from Howard Davies, controller of the Audit Commission, pointing out that if all the Government's privatisation plans affecting local government were put into operation it would mean a reduction in local government expenditure of approximately one third and a loss of jobs in local government which I put at about 500,000 and Howard Davies estimated at more than 700,000, at least 50 per cent. of whom would not get their jobs back in the private firms taking over services from local authorities. Even a month ago I did not expect to come here today with such a graphic example of that, but Bradford council is now attempting to carry out—on the basis of the mayor's casting vote, known as "one person, two votes"—a programme that has in no sense been put to the people of Bradford and which will mean devastation not just for employment but for services in the city.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch) *rose*——

Mr. Wall: I shall not give way at this stage.

That programme includes the announcement of 9,000 redundancies. We are told that it means only 2,600 full-time jobs but for the employees involved it means 9,000 jobs—in a city with 25,000 unemployed people and staff shortages at benefit offices and DHSS offices dealing with existing cases. Cuts of £2·6 million are planned for next year, and cuts of £5·8 million in total, with a £687,000 cut in environmental employment, and there are plans to close the benefit shops in Bradford, which deal with 55,000 cases per year. The excuse is that the council cannot deal with DHSS queries, but only people who have never been unemployed and have never tried to fill up a DHSS form claiming benefit could be unaware of the enormous difficulty that many people have in filling up such forms and appealing against decisions. In Bradford, 55,000 people come to the benefit shops every year, to say nothing of those who consult Members of Parliament, councillors and voluntary organisations in the city.

The council is talking about increasing charges for car parking and cemeteries, and cutting standby road gritting. Cuts of £3½ million are proposed, in education, with school meals going up by one third to 80p, and creches being cut or scrapped. There will also be cuts in teaching jobs and in school repairs, although a third of our schools were built before 1906 and we have one of the worst backlogs in school repairs of any city in Britain. Moreover, unlike most cities that have falling school rolls, the number of children entering our schools is increasing. There are calls for the scrapping of special books and equipment for inner city schools, although Bradford is one of Britain's most deprived cities, with a large immigrant population, and, like Leeds, historically has had one of the worst capitation figures in Britain for expenditure on books.

The council is taking £367,000 out of museums and libraries, increasing charges at sports centres and swimming baths and cutting jobs in outdoor recreation. Sports centres are being sold off, as is the historic and beautiful St. Ives estate, which was given to the people of Bingley by the Ferrands family in the 1920s for community and public use. There are to be cuts of £832,000 in social services, and 15 old people's homes are to be sold off. How can any Tory Member maintain that services will be better than those provided by local authorites when the people taking over have to make a profit, which can be achieved only by cuts in services to the old people or reductions in staff wages?

Sir Marcus Fox (Shipley) *rose*——

Mr. Wall: I see that the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) has arrived. He knows the result of that process in relation to hospital cleaning. As a result of privatisation, the lowest paid in our community, many of them battling against enormous social problems, had to bargain down their pitiful wages to get their own jobs back. Let no one talk about morality, decency and family life in that situation.

Sir Marcus Fox: Will the hon. Gentleman give way as he has mentioned me?

Mr. Wall: I shall sit down in a minute. The hon. Gentleman has only just come in.

Bolton house was renovated by the ratepayers of Bradford at a cost of nearly £1 million—a heart-warming example of renovation and refurbishment for residents and staff—but it is now being put up for sale to private interests. A £1 home help charge is being introduced, and meals on wheels are going up from 49p to 60p. There are to be further cuts in housing and the environment of £170,000, cuts in emergency accommodation for the homeless and cuts in action against employers under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act. All those measures will directly hit working people, the young homeless and other problems in the city. In central administration, £380,000 is being saved by cutting 109 jobs immediately.

Sir Marcus Fox: If the Labour party had remained in control in Bradford, the 15 homes that the hon. Gentleman says should not be privatised would have

[Sir Marcus Fox]

required between £10 million and £15 million expenditure to bring them up to standard. What would the hon. Gentleman have done about that?

Mr. Wall: The standards in a privatised home in London were reported in the newspapers recently—40 residents got two chickens between them and one and a half sprouts each. That is how the savings are made. In fact, the Labour council in Bradford had plans to refurbish two more old people's homes this year as part of a rolling programme, and if the results are half as good as they were at Bolton house and Peel house they will be a proud memorial to the Labour council and good for the old people of the city.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) has reservations about the subject. In our local newspaper he rightly expressed concern about old people who are to be sold off lock, stock and barrel like so many cattle to profiteering friends of the Conservative party. The hon. Gentleman is trying to ride two horses at once—locally he expresses concern about the deplorable standards caused by private exploitation and ownership, but here in the House he tries to make out that everything will be all right.

Mr. Wall: I support my hon. Friend's views. I could refer to privatised homes not that far from the constituency of the hon. Member for Shipley, but this debate is about local government expenditure and services.

The leader of Bradford council has a rather mysterious job. No one knows where he is employed, who employs him or what his legal qualifications are. Rumours have abounded during the past three or four weeks. One was that the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) was in town last Tuesday when the council was about to debate the cuts package. Although, unfortunately, the Conservative proposals were agreed to at that meeting, the right hon. Member for Chingford actually got no further than Leeds, where he was signing copies of his book. That seems to be a priority activity for far too many politicians.

It is unfortunate that the right hon. Gentleman found time to appear on television and refer to Bradford. He said:

"Councils cannot be an employer of people just because they are there."

He also said:

"Bradford people deserve to get their services at the right price and they should not be rooked by people who have been rooking them for years."

I have been careful to get the quotes correct. I even looked at the video of the television programme this morning. The right hon. Gentleman has interfered in Bradford matters before. During the general election I and my fellow Labour candidates in Bradford found our pictures on Conservative advertisements. The House will remember that the right hon. Gentleman was chairman of the Conservative party at that time. The advertisements attributed to me a quote that not only did not belong to me, but was a summary of someone's views as reported by the *Journalist*, that someone being my opponent in a debate. I am being careful to quote correctly the right hon. Gentleman's words, whereas he was not so careful about the quotes that he used during the general election campaign.

Mr. Patnick: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. During my speech you ruled that I was straying from the subject matter and I immediately returned to it. I do not think that the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) has yet come anywhere near the subject matter.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman was straying for some time before I called him to order.

Mr. Wall: The right hon. Member for Chingford implied that lower prices for Bradford people would result from privatisation, but what has actually happened? There has been an average increase of £3 in council house rents, with further increases to come in March. Are not council tenants the people of Bradford? There are increased costs for users of sports centres, swimming pools and leisure facilities. Are not those users the people of Bradford? Schoolchildren will have to pay another one third for school meals. Are they not part of the population of Bradford? Old people will have to pay more for meals on wheels, and the sick and the disabled more for home helps. Are they not the people of Bradford?

The crux of the matter is that the Bill is designed to cut expenditure and to put a burden on the backs of the poor, the children, the council house tenant and the young people who wish to use art, sport and leisure facilities. As the late Earl of Stockton said, we are selling off the family silver to amass capital to reduce the poll tax charge. It is a political move that will benefit the wealthier sections of Bradford at the expense of the poorest in our community.

The right hon. Member for Chingford implied that people have no right to be employed. A deprived town needs more services. What is wrong with the Government's local government policy, especially the poll tax, is that Government expenditure is calculated on a capitation basis. The problems of East Anglia and the Thames valley are nowhere near as great as those of Glasgow, Newcastle, Birmingham, Liverpool and Bradford. The people who supply the services in our cities are necessary, but they are easy targets for the Conservative party. People working in local government, the Inland Revenue and the DHSS have families, just as we have families. They live next door to us, go to the supermarket and the church with us and have a drink with us at the local pub. Their children play football with our children. Those 9,000 jobs in Bradford, even if most of them are part time, are important. Unemployment is just as real for them as it was for the textile and engineering workers who lost their jobs in tens of thousands after 1975 because of the recessions in Bradford.

Part of the Government's so-called economic miracle is the movement of large numbers of people to part-time employment. Their jobs are important to them and form part of their standard of living. The loss of their jobs will be devastating for them. The Labour party must support the part-time workers so that they can have proportional rates of pay with full-time employees and full employment, pension, health and welfare rights. Their jobs are just as important as full-time jobs.

Bradford is a proud town, but it has real problems. There is a £130 million backlog in housing repair. Bradford has the worst health record in Britain, with the highest rate of infant mortality. A girl born in Bradford has two years less life expectancy than average, and a middle-aged man has three times more chance of a heart attack than someone living in the more prosperous

south-east. There are 10,000 people on the housing waiting list, and it has the lowest wage rates of any town in Britain. Bradford needs services; it does not need to be attacked by its Conservative council. Was a £3 rent increase outlined in its Conservative manifesto? Were cuts of £5 million included? Did it refer to the sacking of 9,000 people? What about the additional charges for meals on wheels? Was that contained in the manifesto? Of course none of those was in the manifesto. They form part of a secret manifesto brought from Smith square by the Tory party's messenger boy who parades as leader of the city council.

There has been a great deal of talk from Conservatives about trendy, lunatic Lefties in local councils. I can only say that neither I nor my hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) have been accused of being trendy, either sartorially, socially or politically—although we have been accused of many other things. I have spoken politically and publicly against the danger of developing a positive discrimination that makes working men feel that, somehow, they are responsible for all the horrors of the British empire, colonialism and the slave trade.

There are real problems. Some people's small excesses do not deny the real problems. Three quarters of the people in this country who are underpaid according to the Common Market's level of decent wages are women. Women are poorly represented at any of the higher levels of society, including Parliament. Our wives, daughters and sisters do not have the same opportunities as men. Therefore, local authorities are quite right to make efforts to find a better life and position for women in general.

In Bradford, where about one quarter of the population are Asian, we have special language and social deprivation problems that need to be tackled by the council. One of the most shameful things that has happened in Bradford is that grants to 25 local organisations have been cut. After public pressure, the council managed to find enough money for 22 of them until March of next year. The three organisations that were left out were one Pakistani organisation and two Bengali organisations. Bradford is composed of Bangladeshis.

A few weeks ago I had a small housing surgery with the Bangladeshi Youth Organisation. Seven people came in. They were denied improvement grants by the city of Bradford during the freeze that was carried out by the Conservative administration. Those people did not want fancy bathrooms or kitchens. They had holes in their roofs, collapsed ceilings, doors that did not fasten, and windows that let the wind and rain pour through. They were denied grants. That shows the meanness, spitefulness and anti-working class approach of the Bradford council.

In conclusion, I thank Eric Pickles. I spent 20 years trying to revitalise Bradford's enormous radical tradition as a pioneering town. We are the town of education, of Foster and Margaret Macmillan. We are the town that saw the early birth and development of the trade union movement. We are the city in which the independent Labour party was founded—the forerunner of the modern Labour party. In some ways we have strayed from those traditions, but after the mass demonstration outside Bradford town hall, the enormous upheaval of community spirit, and the demand for community action, we shall come to praise Eric Pickles for refounding Bradford as a centre not only of pioneering in the past but of Socialism today.

5.52 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): When I first jotted down some thoughts about the Bill, I noted that it offers an almost irresistible temptation to redebate local government finance. Having listened to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) and, just a moment ago, the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall), I find that I need not have put the word "almost" in front of the word "irresistible". It has been amply demonstrated that the temptation is totally irresistible. I can understand why that is so, as the Bill relates to the winding-up of the current rate support grant system.

It is perfectly possible for anybody who has ever been connected with local government to wish the current system a fond farewell. I do not believe that anybody, whatever their party politics, will lament the end of an uncertain system or the end of uncertainty about the amount of money that they will get until several years after they spent it. They will not lament that they will no longer have a formula that they probably do not understand, and, even if they do understand it, that will be changed before it is put into effect. It is also perfectly possible to have such a debate about the new rate support grant system.

As the Bill paves the way towards that new RSG system —I was horrified to know that "RSG" will probably lurk with us even longer and mean something different, but perhaps we can debate that another time—it is perfectly possible to extol the virtues of paying grant as the basis of assessment of need rather than on the basis of somebody's expenditure. I can also understand why we could use the Bill as a means of debating all over again why it has become necessary to overhaul local government finance. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hallam said, it would enable all of us to deplore the tactics of the loony Left in local government and the fact that it has forced central Government to do what has been done. It could even force us, as the hon. Member for Bradford, North has done, to have a long discussion about Bradford, but I shall resist that temptation, except to point out that several things were omitted from his catalogue.

When the hon. Gentleman referred to the number of staff in Bradford who were no longer required, he did not point out that the overwhelming majority of the 2,500 jobs that will be lost will occur through natural wastage or redeployment. That is different from what is going on in Brent, where staff are simply being got rid off. There was no reference to the fact that some of the staff who are leaving Bradford are peace officers and anti-nuclear people —and the quicker they go the better. No reference was made to some of the so-called services that are to be affected. The fact that the women's committee will disappear is a good thing, not something that we should regret. We should applaud the fact that peace studies are likely to be scrapped. It is not something about which we should wring our hands. The fact that no longer will £15,000 be spent on anti-apartheid weeks in Bradford must be a good thing, and not a loss of services. No longer will Bradford fly terrorist flags in the shape of SWAPO and ANC flags. That is not something that the people of Bradford will regret.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): In recent days the hon. Gentleman has taken a keen interest in Bradford. He

[Mr. Max Madden]

has tabled an amendment to that which was tabled by my hon. Friend's the Members for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). In his list of committees that have been abolished, he omitted reference to the health advisory committee and the race relations committee. Does he commend the abolition of such committees with the same enthusiasm with which he supports the abolition of other committees?

Mr. Wilshire: I have no doubt that Opposition Members and Conservative Members will produce their own lists. I have produced my list. The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) will make his speech later. Hon. Members have demonstrated that there is almost endless scope for a political kick-about based on the Bill. It will probably come as a great relief to those Opposition Members whose blood pressure usually goes up when I speak about local government to know that most of what I shall say will not be at that level.

On an occasion such as this, we could usefully take the facts of local government life as read and, for a moment or two as we discuss the Bill, accept that the old RSG system is operating whether we like it or not. We should equally accept that the Local Government Finance Act is with us and will be implemented. Given those facts of life, we must now wind up one system and make it possible to introduce the other.

We must say whether the Bill is the best way of achieving that transition. To answer that question, we must first establish whether we know exactly what a good, smooth transition period needs. Before 1990, we need a simple system—a system that is certain and, therefore, will not divert the time of officers and councillors in racking their brains about what to do in the years leading up to 1990 but will allow them to concentrate on bringing in the new system. For the next few years, we need a clear-cut system. We cannot possibly contemplate a system that will drag on for two, three, or four years after 1990, as the current system does, so that officers and councillors will not only try to appraise the effect of the new method of collecting money but will agonise about whether they have got the figures for the previous years right.

Above all else, any transitional system must make it sure that neither side—neither central Government nor local government—can manipulate what goes on, as that would divert people from what they need to do. The current RSG system fails that test in every respect. If we continued with anything remotely like it, we would still have a complex system leading up to 1990. If we continued with what we have, we would have a highly variable system. For this year and next, we probably would not know where we stood until it was too late. If major changes are not made now, we will probably have to take retrospective action for years after 1990.

Not to put too fine a point on it, central Government of both political colours, and over many years, have a record of tinkering regularly with the rate support grant. When the Bill is enacted, there will no longer be that temptation. Local authorities of all political persuasions, not only Labour-controlled authorities, have a legendary reputation for creative accounting. The current system cannot be continued for the final two years. We must opt for an entirely different approach in bringing the transition into effect.

How does the Bill pass the various tests and how does it match the requirements that will lead to the easiest possible transition? Above all, the Bill will break the link, once and for all, between grant and spending. That must be the best news of all. The Bill proposes a system that will be simple, although it might be seen as slightly arbitrary. It proposes a system that will be certain for this year and for next. It proposes amounts that can be fixed so that central Government cannot tinker with them. The Bill's provisions block any possibility of local government entering into creative accounting to try to take advantage of the transitional period.

The Bill passes the relevant tests extremely well. Therefore, it has my entire support. However, I wish to draw attention to a number of issues that arise from the transitional period. In closing off the years 1985 to 1988 and taking 7 July as the relevant date, it seems that the Government might be taking a fairly arbitrary approach. I accept, of course, that some date had to be taken, and I judge that ample notice was given. That the proposal is reasonable is borne out by the fact that all but two councils have found it possible to co-operate. None of the councils affected by the proposals has complained especially vigorously.

I am concerned that some councils, in having to settle for interim figures, will face a potential loss of grant. That loss is likely to be at its maximum during 1987-88. Outturn figures are often the lowest of all figures when it comes to assessing grant over a number of years. However, we can live with that potential loss of grant because there is scope in what will follow to claw back some of the potential loss. The House will appreciate that there could be an over-assessment.

The issue arising in the current year—the year in which local government now finds itself—equates mainly with good news. The use of budget figures must be the best news in the current year. It means that for this year there will be no penalty for overspending. There will be no likelihood of a reduction in grant when there are variations in expenditure. The absence of penalties and any possibility of clawback will go a long way to offset any losses and any criticism that is directed to the years before the current one.

I have a personal concern which I hope my hon. Friend the Minister will comment upon when she replies. In all settlement assessments made by the Department of the Environment and local government at the earliest stages, there is always a great risk that some of the assumptions will be wrong. Later adjustments have always been the mechanism for putting right the assumptions. If it transpires that there is something tremendously wrong and that a real clanger has been dropped that no one could have foreseen, will the Minister be willing at some stage to address that? If experience teaches us something that is horrible, will the Government be prepared to take action?

The issues are especially relevant for the final year of the system, which will be 1988-89. To use the current budget and then to adjust it and uprate it by inflation plus is the fairest possible way of handling the problem. The way in which the budget will be uprated, by what will amount to 9 per cent., seems extremely fair. It should mean that local government can go through the last year of the current financial regime without all the time having to rack its brains about the current year. It will thus be able to spend the maximum amount of time looking to the future. The proposed approach to uprating will provide a further

chance for any council which has lost out through its accounts having been closed off too soon—as a result, it would have lost money in the previous years—to recoup moneys that might have been lost.

I accept that the adjustment that is being made for the introduction of the community charge seems to be sensible, for the amount is in line with what the Association of District Councils suggested. It is in line also with independent research and its findings. The formula, which means that half of the amount is arrived at by special calculation, meets the real worry of authorities that will have to introduce the charge in areas of high mobility. That formula has been devised in good faith in advance, but if certain councils find that the fairly rough-and-ready formula of taking the number of rented properties in the area as the only available measure to determine how mobile is the population has not been the best method of arriving at a conclusion and that an awful wrong has been committed, will the Government, in the light of experience, be prepared to consider making some adjustments to what they have proposed for the moment?

The House would do well to resist all the temptations that are before it and to refrain from mixing it politically, as it were. It would not be profitable to go over issues that we have argued about for hour upon hour on previous occasions. Let us accept the fact that the Local Government Finance Act 1988 is with us and that it will produce benefits for the entire country by 1990. I urge the House to keep its eye firmly on the practical issues that are raised by the Bill. If it does, it will be able to determine whether the Bill is the best way to handle the transition and whether it will produce the simplest and smoothest mechanism and the maximum time to prepare for the future. If the House takes local government as it is, I believe that it will be supporting a measure that will minimise hassle and produce the easiest possible way of introducing the changes that must be made. In that context, I urge Opposition Members, who normally bridle at such things, to swallow hard and to give the Bill a unanimous Second Reading.

6.8 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I cannot but start my comments by saying that I join those who have expressed regret that we should be debating the Bill during the parliamentary spill-over period. It is not an urgent Bill, nor is it uncontroversial. I regret that the Government have taken an almost unprecedented decision by introducing it to the House at this stage. It would have been better to have had a lengthier and more informed debate at the beginning of the new Session rather than a necessarily restricted debate during the brief interim period that we are passing through. Nevertheless, we are here and we have heard what the Minister has to say in trying to refute many of the criticisms of those who are concerned about the effect that the Bill will have on certain councils.

The Minister repeatedly told the House about what he saw as the deplorable cash management and mismanagement of a few councillors and councils throughout the country. He justified the impact of the Bill in those terms. I cannot believe that the Minister would say that the only councils to be hit by the Bill will be those which have mismanaged or have used their funds—ratepayers' funds—in what he would term a deplorable way. Surely he realises that many well-managed, honest and upright councils representing all political complexions will be hit by the rigidities of the proposed mechanism that he is introducing.

As the Minister said, it is helpful to know in advance exactly how much money will be received by a local authority. Unfortunately, many councils that have planned their budgets carefully will be jeopardised by the new method of setting the RSG because of the rigidities within the proposed mechanism and the way in which it will be introduced.

The Minister was right to criticise the present system. There is no party dispute about that and we all agree that the present complications cause great difficulties. However, simply to pick a random month in the summer and to project forward from then is no solution. It is merely yet another arbitrary decision on top of many other such decisions which have caused the present complications with the RSG.

The proposal takes away an element of flexibility and local control, and that is particularly damaging. I want to cite a local example of that. As many hon. Members will be aware, my district council, Carrick district council, had to deal with the problems caused by flooding a few weeks ago. No budget was set aside to cover that, but councillors locally and in Truro decided to put money aside to deal with the problem. By supplying drying machines to people who were terribly affected by the floods, they had to put aside money for which no allowance had been made. Under the proposed system as I understand it, the flexibility to take such local decisions will be greatly reduced because the financial impact of taking them will be increased greatly.

The position is made worse by the poll tax, because those elements of extra spending will hit the ratepayer four times harder than they might otherwise have done. If there is no possibility of RSG contributing towards that as it is adjusted in the light of councils' experience of natural disasters, for example, we will reduce councillors' abilities to respond to that type of local difficulty.

Mr. Gummer: I do not follow the hon. Gentleman. If the expenditure was greater than the expected budget, there might have been a penalty previously. Under the arrangements that we have presented now, that penalty will not take place. The hon. Gentleman's local authority in those circumstances, if they are as he presented them, should be better off. Taking one year with another across the board, we have tried to meet the concerns. However, the hon. Gentleman's worry is imagined.

Mr. Taylor: I do not believe that the Minister is correct in the case that I have cited. He misses the point that previously the council could have expected to get part of that money back through the rate support grant system in future years as the actual expenditure was accounted for. Under the poll tax, more of that expenditure which the council must deal with locally will multiply into poll tax and so hit the local ratepayer harder and harder.

Mr. Gummer: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman has got that quite right. If his local authority is sensible, as I am sure he thinks it is, he will find that, because of the new needs basis for grant, instead of it being penalised because other authorities have been big spenders and attracted more grant proportionately than perhaps they should have, his council will get a grant based on its needs.

[Mr. Gummer]

If the hon. Gentleman is talking about real needs, he will find that the grant meets those needs. The community charge can be charged at a standard rate around the country. I think that he will find that, under the community charge, because it is a community charge and not a poll tax—that is why I always argue the case—the effect is exactly the opposite. He should look at this again because it is important that we argue about things about which we disagree rather than about something upon which in the end he will agree with me.

Mr. Taylor: Obviously we cannot finalise the argument now. Perhaps we can take it up in correspondence. However, where councils have to deal with unexpected events and put aside money which was not planned for or could not have been planned for, councils will be hit harder in future rather than hit less hard, as the Minister suggests.

There is no dispute that some local authorities will be hit by the proposal and others will be windfall gainers. The explanatory memorandum to the Bill shows that the Government are not certain which way it will go. It states:

"As a result the aggregate amount of block grant payable for the years 1985-86 to 1989-90 may be more or less than if block grant entitlements were based on total expenditure."

As that is a move away from flexibility which would allow local decision makers a say in their budgeting, it is an interesting irony that there are changes happening at the moment in Bradford. There have been substantial changes in Bradford's policy over the past few days.

On 7 July 1988 Bradford was controlled by the Labour party. The Tories inherited the expenditure levels as of 7 July 1988, but are now undertaking massive changes of policy to make drastic cuts. The straitjacket that the Government are imposing, whatever the Tories in Bradford do from now on, however many cuts they make and whatever savings they make, means that they will receive the same amount of RSG. They will not receive back the RSG taken from them for previous overspending. They will be affected like some other councils about which we have already heard which will lose the advantages of previous expenditure cuts. In other words, Bradford will be penalised permanently by this Government for the Labour administration's decisions on expenditure, whatever cuts are made.

A noticeable part of this legislation is the increase in revenue that will accrue back to the Treasury. We have heard different figures for that. The Minister claimed that the reason for parts of the money aspects of the Bill was that the Government are afraid that they might not get money back and actually might put out more money. The fear remains—and this is the strong belief of people in local government to whom I have spoken—that, in effect, there will be a net outflow from local authorities of cash which has been built up over the years which they might expect to receive, but with the Treasury benefiting when the local authorities must accept extra costs associated with Government legislation, including the poll tax. Some local authorities could have expected reduced expenditure to bring back some of the extra grant that they have lost.

Both Wolverhampton and Merton reduced expenditure and believed that they would receive additional grants as a result. They have been two-timed by the Government. Wolverhampton expected £2 million additional grant from expenditure reductions in 1987-88 and 1988-89 which are now lost. Merton's final accounts incorporate expenditure reductions of £15 million for which no additional grant will be forthcoming.

Those are the kinds of problems and unfairnesses inflicted by the Bill's rigidity. Were the Government to have introduced this Bill after the Queen's Speech, we might have had more time to consult to ensure that such problems did not arise.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Will the hon. Gentleman explain how tenants of GLC retirement homes were two-timed by the Liberal-controlled borough council which played politics rather than making progress and looking after people by turning its face against the purchase of GLC retirement homes on the Isle of Wight? As a result, those houses now belong to North British Housing Association and the rents are increasing considerably. Many Conservative-controlled district councils negotiated with the GLC and bought in the local GLC homes to the considerable advantage of the local population.

Mr. Taylor: I am amazed that the hon. Gentleman used GLC homes as an example of how the Government's policy is right. There are GLC homes in my constituency. The hon. Gentleman said that houses had been bought by a housing association. The pensioners in those properties are now suffering the consequences of massive rent increases. Had those homes stayed in the public sector, and had the London Residuary Body not sold them, that would not have happened. I receive a constant flow of pensioners who are bitter about the way in which the Government have let them down. They are bitter because the Government abolished the GLC, maintaining that that was power to the people as it would help them. Those pensioners now have to pick up the tab.

Mr. Madden: There have been many references made in this debate to Bradford. Does the hon. Gentleman know that Tories there are now saying to council tenants on the Lower Grange estate that they can have no hope of new council homes being built on that estate, which is something that they have been promised for many years? Those tenants have been given an ultimatum that they must either co-operate with a housing association in developing that estate or the houses will be allowed to become derelict and the land sold to private developers. That is the kind of Tory democracy that is now confronting tenants of a Bradford council estate: "Either you co-operate with a housing association or you will not have a new home in the foreseeable future."

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Member gives a good example of the way in which tenants are frightened by the implications of the Bill in terms of rent and the development of their properties. Those councils that would like to act are hamstrung by the kind of expenditure controls we are debating today.

Some authorities will lose while others will gain. The outcome will be arbitrary because the Bill's provisions are not sufficiently flexible and cannot meet local needs in the way that local authorities can respond to them. The Minister repeatedly defended his actions by giving the example of a small number of councils that were not exercising proper management. The Bill itself is not exercising proper management in Government terms in

respect of the vast majority of councils that will be affected. Some of them will be hit by these proposals, while others may gain in an arbitrary way simply because those councils that have tried to work the Government system, to manage matters sensibly, to look to the future and create some stability, are having the rug pulled from under their feet now that a different system is being imposed upon them.

When the Secretary of State for the Environment made his announcement on 7 July, he stated that he proposed to set a level of 4·7 per cent. for next year's settlement for England. He said:

"That increase is slightly above the anticipated level of inflation."—[*Official Report*, 7 July 1988; Vol. 136, c. 1200.]

The country's "anticipated level of inflation" is rapidly changing and I understand that the Chancellor of the Exchequer may be coming to the House tomorrow to give the House an update. I use the word "update" advisedly. May the House be given a guarantee by Ministers that a degree of flexibility will be exercised by the Government in matching the needs of councils under a changing inflation rate?

What special efforts will the Government make in respect of the extra costs that central Government often impose on local authorities, which in turn increase their costs above the general rate of inflation? If account is not taken of that aspect, the Government's promise that the new system will be more helpful to local authorities, will more closely match their needs, and will give them a long-term ability to plan will not be fulfilled.

I look forward with interest to hearing the Minister's response at the end of this debate.

6.22 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): I begin by apologising to my own and the Opposition Front Bench if I am slightly delayed in returning to hear the closing speeches. If I miss the beginning of them, I shall read those speeches in *Hansard*, and certainly my hon. Friend the Minister can be assured that I shall be joining her in the Lobby in support of the Government.

I welcome, however belatedly, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning to these rather arcane matters. I believe that this is his first local government Bill. He may well hope that it is his only local government Bill. Many of his predecessors thought the same, but over the years they found in practice a substantial chunk of legislation being introduced. I speak as someone who has served on not a few of the Standing Committees.

This is a promising measure. It is not as large as its putative dad—the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980—but it bears reasonable comparison with the Local Government Finance Act 1982, to which I shall also refer, because it has certain family links.

A wave of nostalgia started to come over me when I heard my right hon. Friend imply that this is a simple little measure. I turned immediately to page 14, schedule 2 to the Bill, where, in paragraph 4(3), the formula for arriving at expenditure levels is given:

"In the case of an authority which is a charging authority but is not an education authority the appropriate formula is—

$$(TE \times Z) + CC."$$

As experts in this kind of debate, we can all tell my right hon. Friend that we know such things off by heart, and that it is only the world outside which wrongly finds them a fraction confusing.

That was not the only element of nostalgia. For one moment in my right hon. Friend's speech, I thought that I detected phrases such as, "This is going to be a better system," and "This system will measure need as never before." I believe my right hon. Friend and that it will do so. However, I must utter a solemn warning. The last time that I can remember almost those exact words being uttered in this Chamber was when the then Secretary of State for the Environment introduced what became the local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, when we were also told that it would "measure need as never before." I invite other right hon. and hon. Members to say whether it did. In case my right hon. Friend the Minister does not recall who the Secretary of State was, I can tell him that it was my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). There must be a warning there for all of us.

As to block grants, which were at the heart of the 1980 Act, I have a confession to make, at least to newer Members of the House, because my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) and I were the only Conservative Members who voted against that measure.

Mr. Redwood: Tut, tut.

Mr. Squire: I shall pretend that I did not hear that noise from my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood).

If these are not the last rites, then this is the semi-final stage in recognising that the percipience shown by my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak and myself in 1980 is receiving its due reward and that a system that was never likely to stand up to the strains that we were bound to place upon it is now admitted to be a fallible and failing system that needs to be removed. I have no regrets about the disappearance of block grants.

The Bill in general is a fairly ordinary transitional measure, although, as right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House have pointed out, there is bound to be an element of rough justice when one says that, after a fixed date, one will work to a slightly different system. That would be memorable and worthy of comment only if it could be said that the present system has, by and large, delivered other than rough justice over the past eight years. Most of my hon. Friends and a number of Opposition Members would undoubtedly claim that the system has neither rewarded virtue nor necessarily penalised vice—if only we could say that it had—but the element of rough justice has been there from the very beginning, and it is certainly continued in this Bill.

I cannot complain about that, but I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will bear in mind the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), that if, as a consequence of the Bill, one or more authorities obviously suffer financially in a major way, he will give that matter his consideration. At present, nobody knows what the outturn will be in two to three years' time, but it must be right in principle that local authorities are answerable more to their electorate and less to the Government.

I welcome the statement that the Bill should also reduce the scope for creative accountancy. It may be claimed that it will remove such scope; I prefer the word "reduce." Speaking as a former local authority finance chairman back in the mid-1970s, in the days when one could still

[Mr. Squire]

discuss in public the fact that one proposed leasing the odd item or two, I am sorry that some of the flexibility that used to attend local authority funding is no longer there. None the less, the system has been tightened up for a number of reasons, the main one being that a very small number of authorities are going way beyond what we might reasonably have accepted as being the ordinary to-ing and fro-ing between parties, which has provoked the inevitable response.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman is very learned and wise in the ways of local government. It is a pity that his Front-Bench colleagues did not listen to him more often in the past. If they had done so, they might not have made so many mistakes.

The hon. Gentleman was a finance chair in the mid-1970s. Does he agree that at that time central Government interfered far less in the financial affairs of local authorities, and that made it unnecessary for local authorities to become involved in creative accounting?

Mr. Squire: Some marvellous suggestions are being put to me. First, I should upset some of my colleagues if I did not say that I was a chairman rather than a chair.

Let me turn to the hon. Gentleman's substantive point. According to my memory of 1975-76, the doors came down with a dirty great clang and every local authority suffered as a result of IMF borrowing. The hon. Gentleman may be right in saying that the details of control between central Government and local authorities were very different—and, of course, there was a very different financial system—but the impact of that Labour Government and the cuts required in one year were way beyond anything contemplated either under the present Government or—as it seems to be the flavour of the night—by Bradford council.

My next point concerns the abolition of certainty of grant entitlement. The key benefit of the system to local authorities will be that before each financial year they will know the exact amount of their grant. That, too, sets certain bells ringing in my long memory. Some people will remember a little measure called the Local Government Finance Act 1982. Its centrepiece at one stage was to be something called "mid-term holdback". I suspect that my right hon. Friend's advisers in the Civil Service will have been kind to him in his first few months and will not yet have tried to bounce mid-term holdback on him. If they have not, he will find, if he looks again at the record of our past discussions, that there was an attempt to ensure that local authorities would not be able to know at the beginning of each year how much income they would receive. That was scheduled to be part of the 1982 measure, but it fell among thieves in Committee. I speak as one of the aforementioned offenders. When the Act emerged that provision was no longer part of it. I am delighted that we recognise the importance of local authorities being able to plan ahead and being certain about their budgets.

I do not wish to say too much about Bradford, because it might then become the flavour of the year. I do not, of course, object to hon. Members who represent the area putting their case as forcefully as they can. But, as a former finance chairman and leader of the council, I must say that if cuts of 1 or 2 per cent. are being discussed—I shall give way if the figure is dramatically different—that is something less than catastrophe. It is very much less than the cuts imposed across the board by the Labour Government in 1976. Let me also make the obvious point that if Bradford council's actions turn out in practice to be as unpopular as was suggested by the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), the political consequences will be plain. My own feeling from what I have read so far is that they may turn out to be surprisingly popular among the majority of the electorate.

Let me conclude my—I hope—shortish speech by reaffirming my belief in local government, whether we are talking about Bradford or about local authorities in general. That bears some resemblance to the sentiments of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), who rightly said that independent local government is an essential part of the structure of government. By that I mean a council that is able to determine its own priorities—they must not be imposed on it—and is able to raise a substantial chunk, if not all, of its revenue from the local people to whom it must ultimately be accountable.

With those words, I give the Bill my best wishes and commend it to the House.

6.34 pm

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): We have heard several references to the needs of various authorities, and the assessment of those needs. I find it rather bewildering, because I could not assess the needs of Sheffield, Bradford or Newham. I have always thought that that is what local authorities are there to do—to assess the needs of their areas. I can give my views on an area that I know—Manchester.

Let us look at the history of Manchester, which is a core city. Since 1961 there has been a rapid drop in its population. The younger and more able, the more professional and probably the more affluent have moved to the suburbs, the green belt and the new towns. With the advent of more cars, they are now able to commute into the city. In 1961 the population was 657,000; in 1987 it was 450,000.

People are still leaving the city, but for different reasons. They are now leaving in search of jobs. In desperation, some are even emigrating. Left behind are the less skilled, the disabled, the elderly—all of them dependent on the welfare services provided by the local authority. On top of that Manchester must still provide for the funding of its libraries, its art centres, the Hallé orchestra, its theatres and all the amenities expected of a major city.

In the past few years, however, there have been vicious rate cutbacks, on central Government's assessment. The only people who are really affected are the ordinary people of Manchester, the very same people who were dealt a humiliating blow as manufacturing industry shed thousands of workers, and closures brought in their wake family breakups, more medical referrals and even suicides. But the most tragic expression of deprivation is the high premature death rate.

Deprivation in the inner city meant more demand for local authority welfare services, but those services were diminishing because of the lack of Government support. Then along came the cuts in benefits, and we now have the problem of a poll tax. The effect is manifest in the present

poverty in Manchester. A recent report highlighted the number of people who lack or are even denied resources that should be accepted as essential—resources for heating, indoor toilets, damp-free homes, beds for everyone in the household, clothing and nutritious food. Those are hardly the luxuries of life.

A recent survey shows that about 30,000 people in Manchester live in homes without essential heating; about 20,000 homes are affected by damp; about 80,000 people do not sit down to a roast joint or its equivalent once a week because they cannot afford it; approximately 20,000 households contain at least one person who lacks a warm waterproof coat; and nearly half Manchester's residents are unable to afford a week's holiday away from home other than by staying with relatives.

Those are real needs and they should be assessed by the local authorities. If a local authority wishes to raise revenue to meet those needs, it should be able to do so. The democratic procedure is already there. If the rates are put up and the voters do not like it, they have something called a ballot box. They can kick out any councillor or Member of Parliament, if they so wish.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Is it not true that in Manchester only 25 per cent. of the voters pay rates?

Mr. Litherland: I do not know where the hon. Gentleman gets that figure from. He probably thinks that council tenants do not pay rates, but that is a red herring. The notion that one section of the community keeps another section is wrong. The truth is completely different.

The survey was based on "Breadline Britain." It set out the minimum standards of living that are considered to be acceptable and a list of the necessities that provide a reasonable standard of living. One of the criteria was whether people are able to afford the basic necessities of life or whether they have to go without. The survey found that 54 per cent. of households with at least one person unemployed in the household cannot afford three or four of the necessities of life, that one-parent families are particularly at risk and that one half of black and Asian householders go without three or more essential items because they cannot afford them. It also found that 29 per cent. of pensioners living alone are poor, that a high proportion of them are in deep poverty and that they cannot afford five or more essential items.

The survey found that 40 per cent. of households that include a person with a disability or long-standing health problems are living in poverty, that council tenants are three times more likely to be living in poverty than owner-occupiers and that large families are especially vulnerable. It found that in Manchester 36 per cent. of large families are poor. Most of these people are accumulating big debts. They are falling victim to the loan sharks. That is job creation; the Government probably regard it as private enterprise. To be in debt, however, and in the hands of unscrupulous individuals only compounds the misery of the people of Manchester.

The lives of the majority of the people of Manchester are drab and fall far below average expectations. Mancunians, however, are independent. All they ask is to be treated as members of a civilised society. They have not developed a dependency culture. All that they want to do is to work so that they can obtain the necessities of life that will give back to them the dignity that they enjoyed years ago.

The Government could assist by providing realistic funding for local authority activities, just to help to ease the inequalities of life. However, if it is a Labour-controlled local authority the Government say that its activities must be curbed. The Conservatives sell off cemeteries for peanuts, buy them back with ratepayers' money and nothing is said. That is creative accountancy, but Labour local authority power or trade union power has to be crushed. That is the kind of sinister centralisation that is going on now. I used to be a Manchester councillor. I would not want to be a councillor now, because in future councils will be central Government agencies.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Litherland: No. The hon. Gentleman has only just walked into the Chamber. I have been here since 3.30 pm.

My hon. Friends have referred to the inequalities of life. There is a report in *The Guardian* today of a London insurance broker who makes £5,500 a day. It says:

"Mr. Bill Brown, chairman of Walsham Brothers insurance brokers, earns more than £2 million a year."

What sort of society can accept that standard of living while it stands by and sees the elderly dying of hypothermia and children going without proper meals? That is a sick society—greedy and lacking in compassion. Only a sick Government would heap more injustices on ordinary people. I can refer only to the people of Manchester, but I am sure that every Opposition Member could refer to what he sees and hears in his local authority's advice bureau and would reach the same conclusion.

6.44 pm

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): I welcome the transitional system that is outlined in the Bill and the new system to which my right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning referred in his opening speech. I hope that the new system will define need fairly simply and that it will relate it to the number of people in different age categories. I hope that it will also take into account the fact that, while some councils are experiencing a constant migration of people, as we have just heard is happening in Manchester, and feel that their needs are special, other councils that are attracting enterprise, prosperity and new business have to spend money on providing the infrastructure and services that are necessary to receive those people and provide homes, roads and other facilities for them. I hope that their needs will also be taken into account.

When my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State replies to the debate, I hope that she will answer one question that I could not work out from the statement. If a relatively low-spending council is none the less over grant-related expenditure and therefore out of grant, will it be eligible under the transitional arrangements for some of the money that is to be provided towards the cost of the community charge? All councils will have to face that cost, whatever their position may be in relation to GRE. Some of the councils that are out of grant have run their affairs prudently. If other pressures are reflected in their budgets, that does not mean that they have been feckless with ratepayers' money.

I hope that the transitional system will continue to take into account the way in which some councils have been squandering their cash. Reference has already been made

[Mr. John Redwood]

to some of the excesses. Not many years ago the Leader of the Opposition felt that he had to intervene in the then state of Labour local government and castigate one of the great bastions or fortresses of Socialist local government, Liverpool. He reminded Liverpool council that it did not become it well if councillors were seen scuttling around in taxis paying out redundancy money to staff who had been recruited not very long ago during the council's great spending splurge.

To those of us who hoped that that might represent the nadir of Labour local government, it is ironical that we should now be witnessing events in Brent where things seem to have come to an even sorrier pass than they did in Liverpool only a few years ago. When grants and rate capping are looked at again by Ministers, I hope that they will ask Brent council hard questions. I hope that they will ask why rubbish is uncollected and lying in the streets and why ratepayers are not being given even the basic standard of service that they have a right to expect from that local authority, even though the spending seems to be going on at an ever-increasing rate.

Mr. Tony Banks: If the hon. Gentleman considers the impact of this Bill on the London borough of Brent, he will see that it is to be one of the major losers. The Bill means that it will lose £9 million.

Mr. Redwood: I am glad that the Minister has already heard my point. Brent deserves to lose money because it has been wasting it profligately.

To turn to the flavour of this debate, Bradford council, we see what happens when there is a change of control, albeit by a very slender majority that upsets the opposition. A large number of savings were immediately identified and budget plans were changed. What are to go? Not essential services—the collection of rubbish or housing repairs—but the unnecessary excesses of a large number of committees. The awful waste on the women's committee and the equal opportunities committee will go; so will the racial officers—things for which the public are not clamouring. They want their basic local government services to be delivered well. It is high time that Labour councils recognised that fact.

Mr. Cryer: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the picture he has painted of Bradford is completely distorted and inaccurate? The so-called savings by the Tory clique, marginally in office by the lord mayor's casting vote, include £3 million on education and community centres where elderly people meet socially in the afternoon. There has been widespread pressure from ordinary people to keep community centres, but they have been attacked by the Tory council. It is not a question of just a few committees. The budget savings are a massive attack on the people of Bradford.

Mr. Redwood: I am not sure that the people of Bradford will agree. The Conservative administration has said that it will provide the basic services that are needed and will provide services of a better quality and standard for less cash. All Conservative Members welcome that.

I should like to make a plea to Ministers when they come to consider, yet again, the system of capital expenditure and controls on it. Conservative Members —and possibly others—want to encourage councils to continue the sale of unwanted assets, such as houses and flats, to those who want to buy them and who are now being given the opportunity to do so at prices that they can afford. Councils that have done that but that have not run up big bills which result in large debts should be free to spend a reasonable proportion of those capital receipts. Ministers should consider introducing an external financial limit which would hit and penalise spendthrift local authorities which overborrow, but would leave incentives for well-run authorities that receive capital from receipts, particularly from the sale of houses.

I welcome the transitional arrangements. Anything that can be done to make local government genuinely accountable and to make local authorities concentrate on the high quality services that they should provide at a low cost is be welcomed.

6.52 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I want to persuade the Minister that at least one element of the Bill is improper and should be withdrawn. The Bill has been introduced in an atmosphere of rush and panic and is being pushed through with inordinate haste. It is supported by Conservative Members who are of the rabid Right and who show no respect for local government.

By contrast, I, too, have been the chairman of a local authority finance committee, and I agreed with the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) when he regretted the degree to which freedom of operation has been taken away from local authorities. The apparent simplicity of the Bill is open to question, in view of the Government's record of mindless attacks on local government. However, none of that is my target tonight.

I want to challenge the Minister on the constitutional impropriety in the Bill, which I urge him to correct. My speech could be ended now by an offer from the Minister or the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales —who, I regret to say, is not here, but whose constituency, like mine, will be affected by the theft of £3·5 million from Cardiff city council and South Glamorgan county council. I was chairman of the finance committee of Cardiff city council, and I believe that we should aim for a system that meets the slogan of "no taxation without comprehension", as the Minister suggested. That is an excellent aim, but fairness is also essential and cannot include the moving of goalposts long after the game is over.

In his introduction, the Minister made great play of the offer of certainty for the future. Another biblical quotation that will probably not be understood by "She who must be obeyed" is,

"by their fruits, ye shall know them".

I hope that Ministers will listen with care to my evidence. I welcome the Secretary of State for Wales to the experience of hearing that evidence, and hope that he and other Ministers will change their minds on this point at least, if only so that Ministers are seen to keep faith with the House.

Clause 1(8)(b) of the Bill refers to the retrospective operation of arrangements in Wales. Paragraph 3 of schedule 1 relates to arrangements for 1987-88. Paragraph 4(2) refers to the relevant amount in terms of the calculation of the final grant as being "the amount submitted", which in that paragraph refers to estimated rather than actual expenditure. That contrasts starkly with the statements made in March 1987 by the then Secretary

of State for Wales and by the Secretary of State for the Environment, that what mattered was a local authority's actual expenditure.

I refer to their statements of 13 March 1987 and 16 March 1987, respectively. What was said to the House —not just in correspondence—was that ultimately the grant paid to a local authority in respect of the year would depend on what the authority actually spent. That is perfectly simple and clear. It is without ambiguity, and it should be adhered to. The rule has nothing to do with estimates, as the Minister tried to suggest earlier in response to my intervention; it has to do with the money spent.

The July statement to the House changed the rule without notice. In case Ministers are in any doubt about it, let me underline the incontrovertible evidence on this point. The Secretary of State for Wales has been told of Cardiff city council's profound dismay regarding the implications of the statement to the House on 7 July whose terms are incorporated in the Bill. The March 1987 report said:

"Essentially relevant expenditure is the total of revenue expenditure properly debited by a local authority to the general rate fund revenue account."

The Secretary of State told Parliament that he intended that the settlement for 1987-88 should give the further certainty of ensuring that each authority's grant entitlement would depend "solely"—I emphasise that—on its own spending decisions and would not be affected by decisions taken by other authorities. Are the ministerial statements about certainty made earlier today as dependable as that statement? If so, they are not worth the air into which they were spoken.

Cardiff city council accepted those statements in good faith as made by the Secretary of State to Parliament in accordance with the law. As a result, substantial reductions were made in the council's expenditure. There were reductions in staffing levels; staff were retired early and departments were amalgamated. As a result of the economies by the council actual expenditure in 1987-88 was reduced to some £1·3 million below the Government's own guideline figures. Those reductions in expenditure were made in the full knowledge and expectation that they would attract substantial extra grant from central Government. They were measures of substance, and in some instances affected the services provided by the city council. They involved no superficial accounting measures such as transfers from funds or other measures of short-term expediency. In other words, they involved none of the expedients to which the Minister referred in response to my earlier intervention. They were reductions in costs within the spirit and the letter of the announcement by the Secretary of State.

There was astonishment and anger on the part of everyone concerned when it was learnt that the Secretary of State proposed arbitrarily and retrospectively that the grant calculations would be made on the basis of information with the Welsh Office by midnight on the day preceding the July statement. The statement was made despite the fact that the relevant forms seeking information about actual expenditure in 1987-88 were not received from the Welsh Office until 29 June, and those forms stated that information should be submitted by 31 July. Those clearly defined goalposts were moved in the statement.

I emphasise that the city council's financial accounts for 1987-88 were closed early in June, and the final position reported to the finance committee on 16 June—three weeks before the announcement by the Secretary of State. If he had requested the information even a day or two in advance of the statement, it could have been provided. If a reasonable deadline had been given, it would have been met. It will be unfair to the citizens of Cardiff if the statement in July is interpreted as it appears to have been interpreted in the Bill. I repeat what I said before the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales entered the Chamber: his constituency, like mine, will be affected by the decisions, which constitute a theft of £3·5 million from the ratepayers of Cardiff.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Is my hon. Friend aware that many constituencies in other parts of the country will be similarly affected? For example, Newport in Gwent, which is a good authority, with a fine reputation for providing good services at good value prices, reduced its expenditure by £600,000, but now finds itself in precisely the same position as Cardiff city council. It is about to be cheated by the Government.

Mr. Michael: I agree; and I know that Newport has been efficient. Ministers should accept that, when decisions are taken efficiently and in good faith, the Government should respect them and their outcome.

The arguments that I have advanced were put to the Welsh Office, which suggested that Cardiff city council could have reported the level of outturn. Such figures could have been provided earlier, but a target is not an achievement. It is nonsense to insist on targets being the measure. Secondly, the level of outturn was not what the Government said would be the test. The test that the Government laid down was the total of actual expenditure. It is clear that past practice was to calculate grant on the basis of returns in the forms which show the revenue outturn. Those forms were not sent out until 29 June, and their return by 1 August was requested.

If Welsh Office Ministers wanted those outturn figures by midnight on 6 July, it would have been open to them to have said so when the forms were sent out. I am certain that that requirement could and would have been met.

If Ministers now say that what matters for calculating grant is estimated outturn rather than actual outturn, presumably it would have been open to a local authority to have grossly underestimated likely expenditure, to claim substantially extra grant on the basis of it, and still to overspend without suffering any penalty. That seems the logical consequence of what the Minister said, but it would have been complete nonsense and a travesty of justice.

In any event, our local authorities did not resort to such subterfuges. They simply provided the correct information in the form in which the Government requested it. In his statement of 29 July, when he wrote to the Welsh Office, the city treasurer said:

"the Council's reduction in costs did not involve transfers from funds or other such financial expediencies, and . . . the Council would be happy for the District Auditor to check that that is true."

What better safeguard is there? Since July, efforts have been made to put the simple facts before officials in the Welsh Office. I hope that Ministers will take account of the representations and evidence that is being presented to them and, during the Bill's passage through Parliament, change at least this element in the Bill.

[Mr. Michael]

When the Secretary of State announced the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement, he drew attention to the fact that, by reducing expenditure, local authorities could earn extra grant. We must say that the Secretary of State is going back on that undertaking. That is unacceptable and highly questionable.

The problem is that the conclusive calculation of grant will be based not on authorities' actual spending and decisions—which Conservative Members have told us for the past hour or two is how it should be calculated—but on an artificial basis. The outturn has tended previously to be below revised estimates, so the Government could have expected to have to disburse extra grant. Is this a calculated attempt to avoid being fair and to avoid following accepted practice? Surely not.

Authorities may take decisions in good faith which affect their expenditure and block grant entitlement. Some authorities could have undertaken interim valuations on superannuation funds or taken account of reduced employers' contributions in their revised estimates. Others may have decided not to take them into account until the law was clearer, but have done so when closing their accounts. Why should authorities be dealt with differently because they are more prudent when drawing conclusions on figures?

If the Minister wants to pursue his stated purpose without unfairness and without constitutional impropriety, he is being offered a way out. First, when an authority has, by 7 July, already approved its accounts as minuted by a meeting of the full council or the appropriate committee or sub-committee, grant entitlement should be based on total expenditure as contained in the approved accounts and certified by the external auditor. Secondly, when an authority has not approved its final accounts by 7 July, grant entitlement should be based on final expenditure as certified by the external auditor. Either course could exclude the effects of changes in capital financing policies, in accounting practice and of transfers from funds, so all the points that the Minister made earlier in response to my intervention could be met.

I shall not go into futher detail, but I am convinced that the council's case is overwhelming. If Ministers are unable to respond now, they should read the details with fair minds. I am sure that they will be convinced. The Minister referred several times to the figures received by 7 July and said that if the period was open ended it would allow changes to be made in retrospect. It is the Government who, if they push the Bill through unamended, will be guilty of such practice. The Minister failed to deal with the unfair penalty put on councils, which will have depended on the assurance of Cabinet Ministers that it is actual expenditure that counts.

In his introduction today the Minister said that we should have certainty about the results of certain actions but, in its present form, the Bill tells local authorities, "Do not trust Ministers, even when they come bearing an offer of certainty." Certainty was offered, but it is being stolen by the Bill. There is every likelihood of a legal challenge to the Government because moving the goalposts in this way is so questionable. We are used to the Government moving the goalposts in the middle of the match, which is bad enough, but in this case the posts have been moved long after the match has ended. Moreover, the goal scorers, who have left the field, are being told that their win has been redefined as a defeat.

I am distressed at the Government's onslaught, which has gone on for several years, on local authorities. The Bill takes money from local authorities once again, but my criticism goes much deeper than that. I question the constitutional propriety of the Bill in its present form. I criticise a Bill which seems to legitimise a retrospective adjustment, despite promises made in the House by Cabinet Ministers. I object to a Bill that steals from local authorities assurances that have been given by Cabinet Ministers. I resent a Bill that takes money from local authorities that have observed, met and even done better than the Government's own targets and requirements.

I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Wales will recognise and support my description of Cardiff city council and South Glamorgan county council. It is accurate. I appeal to Ministers to withdraw from the Bill the element on which I have concentrated and to restore at least a modicum of fairness and propriety. I ask Ministers to recognise the simplicity, logic and justice of my plea. If they fail to deal with it today, I ask them at least to concede the point and to amend the Bill during its passage through Parliament.

7.8 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I welcome the Bill, which my right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning introduced so excellently. I absolutely reject the criticisms made of it by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). He criticised the Government for introducing a Bill in the spill-over session and said that he had analysed other Bills that were introduced in the spill-over.

I cannot think of a better time for the Government to introduce such a Bill as it deals with the problem of spill-over—the spill-over of expense and the use of creative accounting to allow councils to distort their spending pattern and make it appear as though they qualify for a larger grant. It is important to introduce a Bill such as this now so that we can ensure an orderly transition to the community charge. The Bill will stop some of the games of deferring expenditure. If companies use creative accounting, it catches up with them in the following financial year, if not in the same one. With councils, however, there was obviously an opportunity to try to dodge the issue until the community charge came into operation.

The great advantage of the community charge is that it is so much simpler, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) said. I have never been able to understand the rate support grant system. I understand that it had to be worked out on a computer in America, because no computer in this country was big enough and fast enough to calculate all the complexities of the present system. Everyone, whether or not they understand the system, must be very glad to see the end of it and the introduction of the new system which is based on an assessment of needs. That must be the right and proper method, carried out in a simple way so that each local authority throughout the country charged exactly the same community charge of approximately £200 per head if spending were on a level basis.

Bolton council is calculated to have a figure of £228 for 1988-89—£26 above the national average. I hope that the

council will introduce greater efficiencies now, and not wait until 1990 when the full impact of additional expenses will be clear and the community charge for each local authority can be compared.

The new system is much fairer. What could be fairer than everybody paying the same? Obviously, when the system is changed there will be some gainers and some losers, and the losers will not see it in that way. I point out to those who feel that they will be paying more that the alternative would have involved a revaluation. Independent surveys have shown that those who would lose most would include the owners of small terraced properties in the north and those houses which have had central heating fitted since 1973. The notion that how much one should py towards a local authority depends upon how many radiators one has in one's house shows the absurdity of the current system. When it is put in those terms, everyone must agree that the change to a fairer system must be right and proper, and that the old rating system will look as absurd as the window tax in the days when people had to block up their windows. I hope that anyone who has delayed installing central heating in his house will now feel that he can do so.

There will be gainers in the areas where the business rate will fall. I am glad to note that in Bolton there will be an 8 per cent. reduction in the business rate and a £17 million gain to the council from the new way in which the business rate will be shared nationally. Therefore, the new sytem can be seen as a benefit to the north at the expense of the south and should be welcomed by hon. Members representing the north.

There is the prospect of very exciting changes and developments in Bradford. I very much hope that many more councils will follow the route taken by Bradford in choosing a Conservative council which will bring in much-needed efficiencies and economies, a whole new way of running the council and a wholesale transfer of departments to the private sector wherever possible.

The greatest change for councils when the full pressure of the community charge is brought to bear will be that they will have to be more efficient and conduct their businesses in much the same way as private firms have operated because they are in competition and cannot afford the inefficiencies which a local authority monopoly has allowed to build up over the years. There is enormous scope for improvement in Bradford. It is absolute nonsense to suggest that the people of Bradford will suffer. They will benefit from the changes. I am quite sure that at the next elections in Bradford there will be no need for the mayor to cast his vote because there will be a substantially increased Conservative majority. I hope that there will be the same increase in the Conservative vote in all councils in the country.

7.14 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I would be very pleased indeed if there were an opportunity to put the claims made by the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) to the test in an election in Bradford, say next year. However, the truth is that the Government robbed the people of Bradford and other cities of an election when they abolished the metropolitan county councils in the major industrial conurbations in London and other major cities. If they give us an election next year, I guarantee that Labour will sweep the board in Bradford and elsewhere.

The Tories have sent a shockwave through the people of Bradford, because the Tory group has been taken over by a handful of political extremists who are now putting forward their politically noxious notions in a way that was never revealed to the voters in May or in the two recent by-elections. There was no mandate for the massive cuts that they propose. That was shown very strongly when 5,000 people demonstrated outside the city hall in Bradford against the proposed cuts. The local evening paper did a service for the community by comparing the proposals of the Tory clique with the claims in the Tory candidate's manifesto at the last by-election which slipped the Tories into power. It reached the conclusion that there was no hint, except in the most general, platitudinous, meaningless terms, of the massive cuts which the Tories are proposing.

The Bill is about preparation for the poll tax. The actions of the Tories on Bradford council are in preparation for the poll tax. We are talking about a city in which there are more than 22,000 people on the dole and a total of 1,700 vacancies. The Tories propose to add 9,000 full-time and part-time jobs, but to create mass redundancies through cuts in education and community provision. A Conservative Member spoke about a narrow handful of committees. However, the three Labour Members representing Bradford have been inundated with requests from ordinary people who feel that their community centres are now hanging on a thread, subject to extinction and being kicked into the dust by the ruthless Tory clique on the local authority.

Mr. Wilshire: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cryer: No. I do not have the time, because I want to give my hon. Friends time to take part in the debate. Unlike the Tory Whips, we have not had to go round getting speakers. We have plenty to say.

The Tories in Bradford are talking about cuts in education and in community provision. They are shoving up council rents by £3 a week and closing benefit shops that give advice to more than 50,000 people a year. I can give the House an example of what has happened. At a recent social security tribunal, two elderly men were represented in separate cases, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. One of the members of the tribunal told me that the 87-year-old man who wanted to improve his claim from the DHSS for payment to the private enterprise nursing home in which he had lived for more than 10 years because when his £500 savings had gone he would be thrown out could not possibly have represented his case without the benefit advice worker. Between the morning and afternoon cases, the benefit advice worker who had represented that case so proficiently was told that she would be made redundant as a result of the Bradford Tory cuts. That is the practical application of those ruthless measures. There will be charges for home helps, after such charges were removed by the Labour-controlled council. School meals are almost doubling in price, because one of the last decisions of the Labour council was to reduce school meal prices to the second lowest in the country.

Bradford needs an injection of money from the Government. As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) pointed out, the

[Mr. Cryer]

legislation will mean a denial of £3·7 million to Bradford, yet again. Already local government officials from Bradford have pointed out that because of Government cuts over three years and the working of the multiplier Bradford has been denied £38 million. That sort of money would have helped to put Bradford on its feet. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) said in a debate on 9 December 1987 —and the position has not changed—

"More than 30 per cent. of Bradford's schools were built before 1906. Forty per cent. of Bradford's sewers are more than 100 years old and we have constant problems of collapsing sewers which require renovation or renewal. Our backlog of housing repairs amounts to some £130 million, representing the sum that we would receive in 10 years from the total housing investment programme for our city."—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1987; Vol.124, c. 513.]

That is the scale of the problem. Cutting back will do nothing to alleviate it. In fact, it will worsen the problem and worsen the economic crisis in which Bradford finds itself.

The Tories, instead of cutting back and acting as puppets of Thatcherism and Conservative Central Office, should be standing up to the pressure from the Government and arguing for more money for Bradford. An old industrial city needs a higher level of investment. For example, there are 500 temporary classrooms in our education system. We have expanding school rolls, unlike most major cities in our country. Money that has been allocated for increasing permanent accommodation has now to be used to repair temporary classrooms because they have been temporary for so long that they are sustaining damage that was never intended. That is the sort of problem that needs to be solved in Bradford.

The Tories have written their death knell by the extremism of their views. The majority of Bradford people will never forgive them for their attack on the citizens and the fabric of a proud industrial city. As soon as there is an election we will run them out and put Labour back in control.

7.23 pm

Sir Marcus Fox (Shipley): I was intrigued by the speech of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). He should be careful when he talks about Labour winning back local government seats. With his wafer-thin majority, he will be hard pressed to win his seat in Parliament at the next election. I remember when the hon. Gentleman was my neighbour in Keighley. It is a shame that his views have not changed since he left there. I welcomed his departure to Europe. In one way it is a shame that he is not still there. One would have thought that with his experience in the House over past years he would have a new message to give. That is not the case. He has learned nothing.

I support the Bill. The present rate support grant system has outlived its usefulness and has to go. I welcome the orderly transition that is intended. It may be difficult because it is not based on actual spending. The Opposition love actual spending, not spending needs. I welcome the fact that, if our councils are prudent, they will know exactly where they stand.

I hope that you will forgive me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I spend some time talking about Bradford. I have represented the area for longer than anyone in the House. The biggest problems I have to face are the hon. Members for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall), for Bradford, South and for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). They have done little to restore the fortunes of Bradford. Their policies have done the reverse. It is interesting that they still talk as if we have not had nine years of growth and expansion and as if things in the city were not considerably better than when their party was in government.

I wish to mention another "moderate", the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). He has seen fit to draw the attention of the House to a conflict between my outside interests and my chairmanship of the Committee of Selection. I take great exception to that. I fulfill the duties placed on me by the House and declare all my interests. I find it objectionable that it has been suggested that after four years I cannot carry out the job for which I was elected. It is all supposition. If anyone wishes to raise a question about anything I do on that Committee, he is entitled to do so. It is within the power of the House to remove me.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Does this have anything to do with the Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): This is a Second Reading debate and, conventionally, such debates are wide. However, the hon. Gentleman might be pressing matters a little.

Sir Marcus Fox: The hon. Member for Workington raised the matter in the House again today and that is why I have referred to it.

Mr. Cryer: Will the hon. Gentleman relate his comments to the Bill by telling us how much he receives from his 12 directorships and parliamentary consultancies to enable him to pay the poll tax in comparison with one of the employees of the privatised cleaning services company of which he is a director?

Sir Marcus Fox: If the House, in its wisdom, decides that we should fill in our emoluments, I will do so. The companies in which I am involved provide thousands of jobs to enable people to pay the community charge. How many jobs has the hon. Gentleman provided outside?

Mr. Hind: My hon. Friend knows that for eight years I went to school on the fringes of Bradford and for 10 years I worked in Bradford on many occasions. No doubt he will agree that the people who run down a community and constantly repeat what is wrong with it—I faced that problem with the Labour party in Skelmersdale—do that community no service.

Sir Marcus Fox: I agree with my hon. Friend. The hon. Member for Bradford, South emphasised the point I am trying to make. It is the Labour party's antagonism to the private sector that I find objectionable. Labour Members know that the majority of their constituents work in the private sector, but they still have that attitude. That applies to local government and is why they are opposed to the Bill. They do not believe that the private sector can do anything to provide a better service for the ratepayers or community charge payers.

The game is up for the Labour party in Bradford. It was rumbled. The money had run out and it had had years to do something about it. All ended in failure. The Labour party bought votes because 26,000 people are now employed by Bradford metropolitan council. Councillor

Pickles and his brave friends—I believe that they are brave —are talking about 2,500 job losses in five years through voluntary retirement and non-recruitment. How can that be said to be impossible? It is not impossible. We do a great disservice to people who have to pay the bill if we pretend that the number of job losses is larger than that, as some Labour Members have suggested. I have heard the figure of 9,000 mentioned. It is not correct.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Does my hon. Friend agree that the burgeoning tourist industry in Bradford—I have been on a tour of the Bronte country which included Bradford—might absorb some of those people? The older citizens of Bradford who might be made redundant could act as guides to the interesting sights in and around the city.

Sir Marcus Fox: I congratulate my hon. Friend on her sense. Of all the tourist attractions in the United Kingdom, Bradford is the fourth most popular. Labour Members say that things will not get better, but we have had a Conservative Government for some time and they will improve. The change of control in Bradford is long overdue.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South mentioned extremists. He must have forgotten the people who have been ruling Bradford for the past few years. Indeed, one or two of his old friends from Keighley have been doing so, and by no manner of means could they be said to be supporters of the Leader of the Opposition. The hon. Gentleman is the last person who should speak of extremism.

As I have said, the change of control in Bradford is welcome, but what did people expect? The idea that economies were to be made was news is nonsense. We stood by the Government's commitment to reduce costs for those who must pay. I wish that Labour Members would spend more time thinking of those who must foot the bill; it is all very well to demand more and more services if one does not have to pay rates or make a contribution. That has been a problem for many years.

I admit a failing of a Conservative Government, which is unusual for me. Before we reorganised local government we should have reorganised local government finance. Had we done so, we might have made a better job of the boundary changes.

Mr. Wall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Marcus Fox: I always give way, unlike the hon. Member for Bradford, North.

Mr. Wall: I gave way to the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox). Is it not true that an all-party delegation from Bradford protested about the loss of £38 million in Government support, which was due mainly to the multiplier—a matter that I raised in the House last year? They demanded that the £38 million be paid to Bradford because it had never exceeded grant-related expenditure. Nevertheless, we lost that money. Had we not—enormous cuts have been made nationally in rate support grant—would it not have solved many of the problems facing Bradford's people?

Sir Marcus Fox: Various Administrations have experienced much difficulty in deciding how the rate support grant should be worked out. Indeed, when I was a Minister at the Department of the Environment I think that only three people understood it. It has never worked fairly, but it is always a good excuse to blame the rate support grant.

Expenditure in Bradford is £300 million a year and it has debts of £350 million. We cannot claim to have been deprived, but there is still much to be done. The formula has been made clear not only in by-elections that we have won. In May, we won not only Bradford but a couple of seats in wards that were not Conservative controlled.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Marcus Fox: The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) is preventing other hon. Members from speaking by intervening.

Mr. Turner: I am hoping to speak myself.

The hon. Gentleman said that he was a Minister in a previous Government. Surely he studied all the information and reports from the borough of Dudley and the great city of Birmingham. What is being proposed is not new. We experienced the effects of the Conservatives' experiments with local government in Dudley. There was much talk of frontiers being broken down, yet it was an abysmal failure, and many problems arose in Birmingham. Surely the hon. Gentleman is not saying that this is a new revolution. If he is, the people of Bradford will be on their knees in the next few weeks.

Sir Marcus Fox: I have considerable difficulty coping with my responsibilities as the Member for Shipley and with being involved with Bradford. I cannot possibly argue the case for Birmingham.

Successive changes in financing local government have failed because they have encouraged spending. Despite increased money being given to local authorities, services have declined and demands have increased. I welcome the community charge because at long last it will get to grips with the problem.

Competitive tendering, reductions in manpower and bureaucracy and performance related pay are not bad ideas. It is not a bad idea to get to grips with the introduction of the community charge in 1990. Why should it be deemed disgraceful that the new council in Bradford should be taking measures to try to make the community charge more acceptable? It is financial prudence; there is nothing secret about it. Opposition Members are concerned about those who have never paid rates, but if measures are taken that mean they will have to pay less in community charge they should welcome what is taking place in Bradford.

The hon. Members for Bradford, North, Bradford, South and Bradford, West harped on about the sale of three old people's homes. They ignored the fact that several million pounds would have to be spent on those homes to bring them up to standards acceptable to the private and public sector. The only way in which that money could be found was by bringing in the private sector. Protection will be given to residents; they will not be turfed out or be any worse off than they are today. That assurance must be given, and in no way would a Conservative local authority embark on that road without making such provision.

The citizens of Bradford metropolitan district are glad that change has come and are thankful that they do not live in Labour-controlled Camden or Brent.

7.36 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) I am grateful to the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) for putting me on so many interesting Committees. It was not until I read early-day motion 1526 that I realised he had so many outside jobs. My admiration for him increased when I realised that he is such a busy person. We should be grateful for the fact that he has found time to make his contribution this evening.

I am pleased to see the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment in the Chamber. She is a welcome addition to the Front Bench, and it certainly needed some adornment.

Mr. Cryer: Hear, hear.

Mr. Banks: I was thinking of intellectual adornment. I should not have been thinking of anything else, as I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) appreciates.

We have heard from two new Ministers today. The Government's new ploy is to change Environment Ministers, thus presenting moving targets and making it more difficult for us to get to them. I am sorry that two new political sacrifices are about to throw themselves on to the barbed wire of local government legislation. No doubt we shall be able to assist the Minister in the difficult times that she will face in the weeks ahead.

It is a bit optimistic and cheeky, to put it mildly, for the Government to expect to get the Bill through in the carry-over period. I do not know whether anything has been said through the usual channels, but I expect that we shall have some hairy times with the Bill. I see no reason why it could not have waited until the new Session.

The Minister said that the Bill would simplify the grant system for local authorities. Like other hon. Members, I echo the wish for a simpler system of local authority finance, which these days makes the oft-quoted Schleswig-Holstein question seem like something out of Blankety-Blank. A number of provisions in the Bill are iniquitous and inequitable. They will be bitterly opposed by Labour Members.

The Minister said that the Bill would bring certainty as we move towards the new system. He encouraged us not to talk about the poll tax because he said that it had been settled. It might have been settled in the House, but it certainly has not been settled in the country as a whole. The poll tax will undoubtedly remain the central and most controversial issue in local government in the months and years ahead.

The Minister said that we should not reopen the debate, and I do not intend to do so, but we cannot ignore the new system towards which we are moving. It is predictable that we should go towards that new system with a Bill that imposes on local authorities a retrospective set of injustices. The Bill's overall intention is to prevent grant entitlement varying with expenditure for the years 1985-86 to 1989-90 inclusive. The result will be that some local authorities will be left with windfall gains of grant, and other with unjustifiable and unpredictable losses.

The Minister made a big issue of the end of the link between grant and expenditure, which will prevent local authorities from indulging in grant maximisation through creative accounting. Creative accounting has come in for much criticism in the House, with the Minister and Conservative Members attacking it. All that we have had from them are the usual half-truths, caricatures and often downright lies about the way that creative accounting has been used in Labour authorities.I say "downright lies" because I know that Conservative Members have not deliberately set out to lie to the House, but have merely repeated the sorts of lies that have been published time and time again by the loony Right-wing press, such as *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*. It is amazing that Conservative Members are so lazy that they are not prepared to find out the truth about Labour-controlled local authorities in London and elsewhere. They merely reproduce the smears that are inflicted on local authorities by the press.

Why do authorities go in for creative accounting? Is it because they find it the easiest thing in the world to do? Conservative Members have suggested that the only reason why Labour local authorities have become involved in creative accounting is to spend more money —on women's committees, police committees and gay and lesbian committees. Some have, and I welcome the fact that they have brought this new and necessary dimension into local government. Let us be clear: the amount of money that all local authorities together have spent on those various committees that cause so much offence to Conservative Members is peanuts in terms of the global sum of local authority public expenditure. It is no justification for these wholesale, regular changes in local authority finance and for this continual assault on local authority accountability and democracy, which is all that we have had from the Conservative party since 1979.

Most local authorities have got themselves involved in creative accounting as their only way of protecting services and jobs in their areas. They have spent most of the money that they obtained through creative accounting on maintaining the standard of the statutory duties that they have to fulfil—for housing, social services and education. Those local authorities have been acting in the best interests of their constituents and ratepayers in the face of this hostile Government.

I defy Conservative Members to say that there is any Labour local authority that behaved as reprehensibly as Tory-controlled Westminster, which has become involved in some very shady creative accounting—not in the interests of its ratepayers, but to rip them off. There was the selling of the cemeteries for 1p. When suddenly everything goes wrong, there is the attempt to use ratepayers' money to buy back through compulsory purchase. There was also the scandal of the sale of the freehold of the Tory party's Central Office so that the Tories could sell it on. It is a nice piece of creative accounting, if one happens to be a Tory——

Mrs. Gorman *rose*——

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West) *rose*——

Mr. Banks: Hang on—sell it on to pay off the debts of a general election. That is ripping off the ratepayers of Westminster. If that had been a Labour local authority there would have been demands from the Dispatch Box for a public inquiry, but there was nothing but double standards and hypocrisy. I give way to two hon. Members who are specialists in it.

Mrs. Gorman: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the advice given to those councillors by members of NALGO, who were highly paid executives of Westminster city

council, was that those cemeteries should be disposed of? It is they, if anyone, who should be held responsible. They were men on salary scales of £25,000 to £30,000 a year —of which I am sure the hon. Gentleman would approve —who were giving duff advice to elected members.

Mr. Banks: It is a very poor councillor who shelters behind officers. That is a dereliction of duty, and the hon. Lady should know that an elected member is responsible for his or her actions. It is no good saying, "I am very sorry, but we were badly advised." Conservative Members should start thinking about some of the other examples, such as the Royal Ordnance factories, when Ministers said, "We got some bad advice, perhaps." It is a poor politician who cannot take responsibility for his or her actions.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is also a poor politician who will not withdraw a comment that he knows to be fictitious? Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the story that he has given to the House—I accept that it was in one of the newspapers, but the hon. Gentleman's views on the gutter press are well known—is completely fictitious in respect of Central Office? There is not a shred of evidence to support the hon. Gentleman's comment. It is inaccurate.

Mr. Banks: I am confident that the facts that I have given to the House are correct.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Banks: If I have misled the House in any way, I shall be big enough to withdraw what I said.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Perhaps when the hon. Gentleman makes those investigations he will look at the fairly important matter of whether No. 32 Smith square ever belonged to Westminster city council. It did not, and this point is rather germane to the hon. Gentleman's comments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members should return to the Bill.

Mr. Banks: If we have the public inquiry for which the Opposition call into the affairs of Westminster city council and the facts stated by the hon. Gentleman are correct, they will emerge. For the moment the Opposition are satisfied that a scandal has been under way in the city of Westminster. We need more facts. They will speak for themselves and will show that the facts that I have put to the House are accurate.

Mr. Madden: Why did Lady Porter not deny it?

Mr. Banks: Yes. I would accept the point from the Minister, but not from a young puppy of a Conservative Back Bencher. Would the Minister care to tell me whether my facts are correct? We must assume that they are, because she has remained in her seat.

There is a great deal of arrogance in the Bill. Local authorities will lose grant which they were entitled to expect to receive. They have made budget calculations and it is grossly unfair, once again, for the Government to change the rules. The Bill's impact is arbitrary.

I shall give the specific examples of three London authorities, one of which, Brent, has been mentioned innumerable times in the debate. Greenwich, Southwark and Brent have reported that they will lose grant because of the Bill. In the case of Greenwich, this is because the Government will assume a higher expenditure figure for 1986-87 than the council spent. The council approved its accounts for that year on 6 July 1988, but of course had not notified the Department of the Environment. The Department will assume that Greenwich spent £102 million when in fact it spent only £93 million in 1986-87. The council will lose £1.2 million as a result. Is that fair? Is the Minister prepared to listen to representations by authorities such as Greenwich when the Bill is seen to have adverse effect on them?

Brent suffers even more. The Department assumes that the council spent £185 million in 1987-88 when the latest estimate available at the time it set the budget was only £178 million. As a consequence of the reduction in expenditure in 1987-88, Brent increased its 1988-89 budget from an original level of £188 million to £195 million. Brent did not submit a form showing the lower 1987-88 spending and the higher 1988-89 spending before the 7 July secret deadline because it was still working out the details of the budget. However, the Department rang the council, secured the higher figure for 1988-89 and confirmed it in writing, but did not ask about the revised estimate for the previous year, which would have been shown on the same form. As a result, the Department is assuming a higher spending figure for both 1987-88 and 1988-89, although the figures are inconsistent, because to have a higher figure in 1988-89 Brent must have had a lower figure in 1987-88. Those figures were reported publicly in March 1988.

As a result of the Bill, Brent stands to lose £9 million in grant. *[Interruption.]* Tory Members who think that that is a good thing should understand the range of problems in Brent. I am not an unqualified admirer of Brent council. It makes mistakes, but the Government make mistakes to the tune of handing over millions of pounds of taxpayers' money to private companies and it sits ill on their lips to be so critical of a London borough which everyone should know—I am sure that in their hearts most people in the House do know—faces enormous social and economic problems.

I know that a line has to be drawn, and it might be said that some may lose while others gain, but the impact of the Bill is arbitrary, and when Labour authorities have so many problems pressing down on them it is unfair that they should lose anything at all, because they do not have enough to deal with the problems that they already face. I know the Minister to be a reasonable and decent Conservative, which puts her in a fairly unique position on the Government Front Bench, so when those authorities come and tell her the truth of the situation I trust that she will find some room in her heart to give way. If she does not, I assure her that our opposition to the Bill will be implacable.

7.51 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I welcome the Bill, as drafted, and echo some of the thoughts expressed by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). If there are genuine arguments, I am sure that Ministers will be prepared to listen. Like the rest of us, however, the hon. Gentleman must welcome the end of the rate support grant system. It is indeed like the Schleswig-Holstein problem, which has already been mentioned, as no one really seems to have understood the basis of calculation. The hon. Member for Birmingham,

[Mr. Kenneth Hind]

Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said that one could not blame everything on that, and I agree, but the system was not readily understood either by Members of Parliament or by the general public, and its demise is thoroughly welcome.

As supporters of local government, we must recognise that there is a balance to be struck between central and local government. They are like the balances on a weighing machine. As the hon. Member for Perry Barr pointed out, there are two mandates. If a local authority is predominantly of one party while the Government of the day are of another, one view must prevail. That must surely be of the view of the elected Government as having a superior mandate to that of the local authority, and in that circumstance central Government must interfere when local government has not shown itself responsible and has not used the proper mechanisms to protect the ratepayer and the taxpayer in the provision of services.

We have seen many examples. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West mentioned Brent. I could mention other London boroughs. Liverpool is an example on my own doorstep. Those and other councils in the past have proved themselves to be totally incompetent to run a local authority and thus, in the years since I first came to the House, we have had arguments about local government. Targets, rate capping and other devices have been necessary, not because the House wants to interfere in the activities of local government but because a minority of local councils have shown themselves to be incapable of looking after the authorities that they were elected to control and of safeguarding the interests of the ratepayer and the taxpayer.

It does not come well from Labour Members to attack what the Government have done with the rate support grant in recent times. The rate support grant for 1988-89 is £13·575 billion. That is a terrific amount of money and a £1·1 billion increase on the previous year. The county of Lancashire, part of which I am proud to represent, has an increase of 9·8 per cent. in its grant compared with the previous year—that allows for changes in the funding of the polytechnics—and there is no reason, projecting forward to 1988-89, for any responsible local authority to need an increase in funding above the rate of inflation. Yet Lancashire increased its rates by 18·5 per cent. this year. People on fixed incomes, the elderly and families with children have been hit extremely hard by a totally unnecessary increase which was opposed by Conservative councillors who argued that the increase should have been between 6 and 8 per cent.—much closer to the rate of inflation.

Ministers have been obliged to introduce legislation of this kind because local authorities have been seeking to expand the basis of their services into areas entirely unconnected with the services that they are expected to provide. The best example is probably the local authority of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, who I see is still in his place. That authority is providing two scholarships at a local college for members of the African National Congress. The authority is paying £2,000 per year in fees for each student as well as offering to pay for flights to South Africa and so on. I appreciate the wish to help people in the Third world to achieve a better education, but is that really the function of a local authority? Surely that is something that should be taken on board by the national Government if it is thought appropriate. Yet that is typical of the kind of activity going on in local government which Conservative Members oppose and to which we call attention.

Mr. Tony Banks: First, Newham is an education authority and thus fully entitled to do just that. Secondly, citing such a tiny example among the many services and millions of pounds of expenditure as justifying changes in the whole structure of local government is not worthy of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hind: I was brought up on the principle that if one looks after the pennies the pounds will look after themselves. All too often we are told by Labour Members that something is just a drop in the bucket, but if you drip into the bucket often enough it will overflow. We want responsible management of local authorities. That is the aim of the Bill.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): If we move to a community charge and the weakening of the link between local and central Government that such a change implies, does my hon. Friend agree that in the longer term there is a case for taking education out of the local authority sector altogether?

Mr. Tony Banks: They will scrap local authorities altogether in the end.

Mrs. Gorman: Good!

Mr. Banks: There you are!

Mr. Hind: I will not go down that avenue today as I should no doubt be called to order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

What we want above all is better value for money. The Bill calls for efficiency, to build on what has gone before —on competitive tendering. It will help to prepare the 70 per cent. of the population who have not paid their rates in the past but who will be called upon to pay the community charge and it will soften the burden that they will have to bear. Some 9 million people will pay only 20 per cent. or less, but equally others will be called on to pay for the first time. They will say, "We want good value for our money in the services that the local authority provides." The Government are entitled to meet that challenge and to respect the fact that people are making a contribution towards the services provided.

It is no good arguing about the past. Westminster has been referred to and we have heard a great deal about Bradford. Those of us who live on the fringes of Liverpool cannot escape from its past, when high rates were levelled by a local authority that has contributed to the destruction of Liverpool's economic base. The community charge and the national industrial rate will restore opportunities for new industry by a reduction of 30 per cent. in the industrial rate. Because rates are such a large proportion of industry's costs, that will be a major attraction to industries in other parts of the country to relocate in the Liverpool area.

Liverpool is not untypical of many authorities. Do those who will pay the community charge expect us to spend money on scholarships for the ANC, on gay rights and on racial committees? They expect us to ensure that those authorities are run properly. Some of the Labour authorities are appallingly run. The Comptroller and Auditor General's report 18 months ago on the London

boroughs effectively said that they were going bust and being very badly managed. Southwark, the borough in which I have the misfortune to reside when in London, had £24 million of rent arrears that it simply had not bothered to collect. Where is the management responsibility in that? Its management style was criticised and it certainly had no sense of cost management.

The local authorities in Liverpool wanted to take on the Government to such an extent that Liverpool city council was prepared to put 32,000 local government workers on the dole—yet the Government are criticised for introducing this Bill. We have only to study history and the way that many local authorities have behaved to realise the need for this legislation. For the first time, there will be a cut-off point and a new, clearer system that will define the needs of local authorities. They will know at the beginning of the financial year exactly how much money they will have. It is a wonderfully clear system.

There will be an end to creative accounting, such as leasing park benches and lights on bridges. I hope that during the Lancashire county council election in May the public will bear in mind that no effort has been made by the controlling Labour group to make efficient cost savings. Instead, it has imposed an 18 per cent. increase in rates. It wanted to spend £600,000 on expanding the county hall. Fortunately, the Conservative group, supported by the Liberals, voted that down. That money could be spent on old people's homes, social services, education and other facilities—not on bureaucracy.

There has been a problem in Lancashire with competitive tendering. Lancashire wanted the contract for the grass cutting in three local authorities, West Lancashire being one. It bought £100,000 of new grass-cutting machines and then tendered in such a way that 20 per cent. of the county was put together in one tender, effectively cutting out not only the in-house operations of the local authorities concerned, but every other local contractor who wanted to tender. It wanted to ensure that its own in-house operation would get the contract—yet I guarantee that that will not be as cost effective or as cheap as other tenders would have been had other contractors had the opportunity to tender. I and other Conservative Members in Lancashire have written to my hon. Friend the Minister about that, and I hope that a robust response will be given from the Dispatch Box this evening.

Lancashire, like many local authorities, is mismanaged. In an Adjournment debate, the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) dealt with capital expenditure on schools in Lancashire last year. Lancashire complained that it had lost a large amount of grant, but it had never applied for it. It did not apply in the priority areas where the Government had indicated that money would be available. It applied in the wrong areas, thereby mismanaging the whole business. We are entitled to call upon local government to be responsible and not to act in such a way.

I support what my right hon. Friends are seeking to achieve. I hope that there will be a more organised, more clearly understood and more cost-effective local government system. I commend the Bill to the House.

8.6 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I wish to thank three hon. Members who have taken part in the debate —my hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who made passionate speeches, and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), who spoke from the Front Bench. I am especially grateful to him because he spoke passionately and with great effect about the importance of local government to democracy. He said that effective, democratic local government was all important to a democratic society.

Many comments have been made about the city of Bradford, and I make no apology for devoting my speech to democracy in that city. It is under threat because of the actions of the controlling Conservative group, which has absolutely no electoral mandate for the policies that it is seeking to steamroller through the council by means of the mayor's casting vote on all matters. The objection of many citizens of Bradford to that arrangement has been compounded with the announcement by the controlling Conservative group of its intention to retain the mayoralty next year. It is rejecting the convention that has hitherto applied of the mayoralty changing according to political groups on an annual basis. It is breaking a long-standing convention that has been upheld by successive political groups for many years.

An autocratic umbrella guillotine motion was introduced last Tuesday at the first full council meeting under the Conservative controlling group. It means that at all meetings all debates will be terminated, with the mayor using his casting vote, at 10 o'clock. It will be assumed that all motions have been moved and seconded and, without debate by councillors, the guillotine will fall and all motions will be carried by the mayor's casting vote. That is more draconian—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order.

Mr. Madden: I am most grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker. I hope to make a brief contribution.

The Bradford council guillotine is far more draconian than anything that is practised in the House of Commons. As we all know, in the event of a tied vote, it is the long-standing tradition of all occupants of the chair to preserve the status quo and not to seek to carry controversial political matters for which there is no popular electoral mandate. We in the city of Bradford face a major challenge to local democracy, and that matter will be reported to the House on numerous occasions.

The vast majority of Bradford citizens feel cheated and betrayed by the way in which Bradford Conservatives have sought to manipulate democracy and are seeking to introduce into our city extremely controversial and unpopular policies. Bradford Conservatives have been dishonest by concealing their plans from the electorate. They were revealed only in late September after the by-elections in June and September and the election last May.

It is extraordinary that the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox), a Member of Parliament with 12 jobs, should lightly dismiss the fact that tonight 9,000 people in Bradford are threatened with the loss of their jobs. It is extraordinary that the hon. Member for Shipley should say that, when they voted in the by-elections and the district election last May, the people of Bradford knew what they were voting for—that is, if they were silly enough to vote Conservative. They certainly did not know what they were voting for. It is extraordinary also that the

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hon. Member for Shipley should speak ambivalently about one of Bradford council's most controversial measures—the sale of 15 old people's homes.

A few days ago, a street ballot was conducted on that issue in Bradford. It showed that 15,000 people are against the selling of such homes and that fewer than 400 are in favour of it. That is an authentic expression of popular view about that extremely controversial issue. The hon. Member for Shipley is no longer in the Chamber. He is obviously looking after the many jobs that he has to perform. For him to say that, when they voted Conservative in the by-election and district elections, the people of Bradford knew that they were voting to sell 15 old people's homes is to mislead the House and the people of Bradford.

The people of Bradford who voted in recent elections had no idea that, if elected to power, the Conservatives would seek to sack 9,000 council staff, sell 15 old people's homes, increase the price of school dinners to 80p a day, increase home help and meals-on-wheels charges, close benefit shops and independent advice centres, or increase rents by £3 a week, and, I guess, by even more next March.

The people of Bradford are angry that the Conservatives' hidden agenda is to go through on the mayor's casting vote. They feel angry that their councillors are being denied full information about council policy. They feel extremely angry that their councillors will be gagged at 10 o'clock at every council meeting so that measures that are deliberately placed down the agenda because they are politically controversial will be steamrollered through on the mayor's casting vote. The people of Bradford feel angry that, already, all council staff have been gagged to prevent them from talking to the media. All members of staff employed by Bradford council have been informed by circular that if they talk to the media about any aspect of their employment with the council they will face immediate disciplinary action. So much for Tory democracy in Bradford. It is a disgrace, and it rightly deserves national attention.

The more that the people of this country get to know about what the Tories in Bradford are seeking to do, the more they dislike it and the more fearful they are that Tories in their own localities will seek to introduce the same policies if they have the same opportunities to mislead the electorate that the Bradford Conservatives have had to mislead the people of Bradford.

Last Tuesday, 5,000 men and women gathered in Bradford to protest against the council's policies. It was the most spontaneous, genuine expression of popular opposition to Conservative policies that has been seen in Bradford for many years. Let my say to some people who may not know much about the political history of Bradford that, since 1980, the Conservatives have been in power, Labour has been in power, and there have been successive hung councils. Do not let us be misled into thinking that Bradford has been administered by Labour for generations, because that is completely untrue. The men and women who gathered outside city hall last week —whole families, pensioners, the disabled, council staff, and workers from the voluntary sector—came together to say no to Conservative policies in Bradford.

Bradford has a proud past. It has many difficulties at present, but it faces a most exciting future. Bradford pioneered public services, especially education. Our people are radical and hard working, with masses of common sense. They do not like being conned or used. They will not allow their families or their city to become the victims of a Tory experiment in southern imported Thatcherism. They know that Bradford needs jobs and community services, not more sackings and community cuts.

Every social and economic index published about Bradford shows poverty in Bradford and that, since 1979, it has been robbed of millions in rate support grant. Even this Bill robs Bradford of still more. Another £3 million will be withheld.

The Bishop of Bradford and other religious leaders—Moslem, Hindu and Sikh—know that Tory council policies will hurt poor people and low-paid families. The bishop has asked all priests in the city of Bradford urgently to report to him on how people will be affected by the Tory policies that are now being introduced in our city.

The sackings and cuts are to reduce expenditure to allow a nil rate increase next year and, thereafter, to reduce the poll tax. The price to be paid by those on benefit and by the low-paid for a small reduction in a high poll tax will be increased charges for all council services and the loss of some services. That is too high a price for the thousands upon thousands in Bradford to be forced to pay. They should not be asked to subsidise the Conservative party or the political ambitions of certain Tory councillors in Bradford.

The hon. Member for Shipley said that people will welcome paying a lower poll tax as a result of the expenditure reductions that Bradford Tories are proposing. At the recent annual Conservative party conference in Brighton, the Minister had the audacity to say that the elections in Bradford were won by the Conservatives on the basis of the poll tax. What nonsense. The leader of the Bradford Conservative group dodged every debate on the poll tax. The Conservatives accused the Labour party of spreading lies and misinformation about the poll tax. They did everything possible to conceal the impact of the poll tax on the city of Bradford. There are only 80,000 poll tax gainers but 220,000 poll tax losers in Bradford. That is the effect of the poll tax on Bradford.

Let us not have any more nonsense to the effect that the controlling Conservative group in Bradford has been elected on the back of the popularity of the poll tax. If that group makes 9,000 redundant and slashes community services to reduce expenditure and thereby reduce the poll tax, it will not be met with popular acclaim. Those who will lose under the poll tax are those who depend on community service for the quality of their lives. If they see a substantial increase in their cost of living by virtue of increased charges for school meals, home helps and all the other services that the council provides, and if at the same time they see the destruction of many other community services, that will not create popularity.

The Conservative party in Bradford will reveal what it has always been over generations. It exists to support the rich and the privileged at the expense of the poor, the underprivileged and the disadvantaged. This will rebound on the Conservative party in Bradford. The price that the Conservative party in Bradford is asking the poor to pay is far too high. They are saying no now and they will say no more loudly as the days, weeks and months pass. Let us have an election to test the popularity of Conservative policies in Bradford. Let us have a district election next year. Let the true candidates who have been proposed for

mayor, Conservative and Labour candidates, subject themselves to the people of Bradford. Let the existing mayor stand for election in Worth valley. Let us see whether he can get re-elected so that he can use his casting vote to steamroller through the Conservative party's unpopular measures. Let us talk about democracy, especially in Bradford. The Conservative party is trying to strangle it, and the people of Bradford will not let that happen.

8.22 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): After the peroration of the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), I feel that it would be a good idea to bring the debate down a tone or two.

I support the Government's general intention of stopping fiddling during the change over from one form of rate support grant to another. However, I am not euphoric at the prospect of a 9 per cent. increase in the money that is spent on RSG, that increase having been announced in the Government's proposals. It is said that that will amount to £1 billion, and I believe that that sum should be left in the pockets of the taxpayers where, as Mr. Gladstone once told the population, it would fructify and do a great deal more good. When my hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate, I hope that she will explain in more detail why we need this increase in taxation, for that is what the proposal means.

The Government's purpose has been to reduce the gross over-expenditure within local government. The Local Government Finance Act 1988 will make local authorities tender out a certain number of their services. I look forward to the day when we have digested that part of the Act. We can then introduce new legislation to reduce still further the activities that local government performs. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has expressed what I consider to be some of the best thoughts on local government, and I am a great supporter of him. He said that local councillors should meet two or three times a year to award tenders and then return to their homes to tend their gardens. They should keep their noses out of other people's affairs as far as possible. That is the sort of local government that I should like to see.

There is ample evidence to show that, wherever local authorities tender out work and introduce competition and the private sector, massive savings are made. That is the way in which we shall help the ratepayers of Bradford, Newham, Brent and elsewhere. I did not understand why the hon. Member for Newham North-West (Mr. Banks) spoke for the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who is conspicuous by his absence, but who knows a great deal about creative accounting. He initiated a great deal of creative accounting when he led the Greater London council. For example, he spent £20 million to try to stop the GLC from being disbanded. That creative accounting was indulged in to try to keep him in a job until he was elected to this place.

Mr. Cryer: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Gorman: The hon. Members for Newham, North-West and for Brent, East have nothing to complain about. The community charge and the new arrangement for local government will advantage high-spending Labour boroughs. The redistribution of the business rate will do them a favour. Having driven away businesses in their areas by imposing high rates upon them, they will benefit by the new system. They should be thanking the Government and congratulating them on helping them out of a hole.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): My hon. Friend is right. Many businesses in northern constituencies will benefit considerably. Perhaps my hon. Friend should give way to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) if he wishes to intervene. It may be that that is the very point that he wishes to make.

Mrs. Gorman: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Bradford, South if he asks again to be allowed to intervene.

Mr. Cryer: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Gorman: Yes, of course.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Lady said that the Bill would curtail fiddling and creative accounting. Will she confirm that she is talking about the way in which councils try to obtain additional moneys because of the crushing pressure of Government policies? Whatever they did was done legitimately. They did not indulge in the illegal activities that Conservatives have got up to in the City, Lloyd's of London and various companies which have come to grief in the criminal courts.

Mrs. Gorman: There is a world of difference between the way in which those in the private sector are answerable to their shareholders and to those who deal in stocks and shares, and the way in which local government has in the past, in many respects, been almost unanswerable to local electorates when accounting systems have been altered to accommodate spending tendencies.

Creative accounting has been getting an extremely bad press today. Like "gay", "creative" seems to have acquired a pejorative meaning, which I deplore. There are many ways in which creative accounting can help ratepayers. The hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) moaned and groaned about poor people who are left in the centres of cities while everyone else moves off to the suburbs. I have news for the hon. Member for Manchester, Central—I shall bring it to his attention when he returns—and for many moaning and groaning councillors. Most councils are sitting on a fortune in the shape of land and property, and in many instances they do not have a list or register of it. If it were converted into cash or some means of paying off local debts, councils in some instances would be able to pay a bonus to ratepayers or introduce a rate holiday for several years. Local councils, especially those of Left-wing persuasion, are in many instances sitting on a small fortune. They would be able to convert land and property to cash if they were bothered to do something about it.

Let me give an example. Barking—the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) happens not to be present today—has suddenly found enough land to build the equivalent of a new town within the confines of the borough. It has been sitting on the land for donkey's years. Tens of thousands of new homes will be built. The Government are bringing pressure on boroughs to release the land and assets on which they have been sitting for many years. When the land is sold to the private sector for the building of new homes for sale, that will help to reduce

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the cost of running the borough. Local ratepayers have every reason to be grateful for creative accounting of that sort.

I share to some extent the feelings of my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood). More of the money that local authorities realise from the disposal of assets should be made available for reducing rates. That would be a creative use of the economic powers that the Government could bestow on local government.

I do not share the idea, which is referred to constantly in the House, that local government must always be on the receiving end of more and more cash. There is no need for local authorities to be doing half the things that they are doing. The elderly are probably much better looked after by contracting out the homes which some need so that they are not subjected to the kind of abuses that we heard about in the Nye Bevan scandal, which was another of our wonderful local government efforts which the ratepayers supported and which the poor people who lived in that institution had to endure for many years.

In my opinion, local government should decide some of those issues, but it should not attempt to provide the services, because when it does corruption and neglect creep in. There is not enough supervision of the direct labour services, and that includes all social services. People get a much better deal as and when the private sector sets the example. In that regard I mention Marks and Spencer, which decides on a certain budget and quality control, but does not try to do the work. That is how we will eventually introduce legislation which does not require increases of 9 per cent. or similar amounts every time we make a change in the system.

We should put all local government services into the hands of the competitive private sector. Only then will we know that the local ratepayer will get a really good deal for his or her money.

8.31 pm

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): The contribution from the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) illustrates clearly the new breed of Conservative inside and outside the House. The hon. Lady would have been much happier if this had been a local government annex or abolition Bill. Clearly she has nothing to say about local democracy, local government and the role that local government has historically played and should continue to play in its relationship to central Government. Her contribution was a typical and classical example of the old adage—she

"knows the price of everything and the value of nothing".

Clearly the hon. Member for Billericay is very new to local government. She is a new Member of Parliament, as I am, but I spent 20 years in local government and I got a tremendous amount of satisfaction from that, as have thousands of local councillors of all political persuasions, in making a contribution and providing a service to the community. Some of tonight's contributions to the debate do a great disservice to the many thousands of men and women who are public representatives or servants of local government and have contributed in a huge way to our society. They have made significant advances with central Government in trying to provide the services that we all want.

The difficulties in local government have been exacerbated by the return of the Conservative Government in 1979 and the major changes that local government has had to accommodate over the past nine years. Local government has experienced frustration through the on-off availability of funds and the impossibility of any logical planning for services which Parliament has determined local government should deliver. While we talk about the needs of local government today, it must be evident to all hon. Members who take any interest in local government that it is facing problems at the moment. Many of the problems have been born from the Government's failure to come to terms with the needs of local government and to work with local government to achieve the required objectives.

It is said that people pay their taxes in sorrow and their rates in anger. If the Bill is enacted, ratepayers will have every reason to be angry. In some respects we can call the Bill a paving Bill for the poll tax, because that is precisely what it is. The past three Secretaries of State for the Environment, whom I would call faith, hope and charity, have contributed nothing meaningful to the needs of local government.

I want to refer to the problems that my authority in Wolverhampton and the rest of the west midlands will experience as a result of the Bill and the interim proposals in the rate support grant. The difficulty facing my local authority is that, as in previous years, the provision for current expenditure set by the Government is substantially lower than what is likely to occur. The Association of Metropolitan Authorities has estimated that that might be £1 billion. I hope that the Minister will answer my queries.

I know that inflation is always the subject of a great deal of controversy. My local authority has submitted its view to the Secretary of State that the levels of inflation in terms of pay awards and interest are not fully reflected in the rate support grant for 1989-90. Legitimately, we are concerned about that. That problem will have an impact on the level of rates that must be set by the authority.

Reference has been made on many occasions to the suggested 9 per cent., or £1·1 billion increase. I believe that that is very misleading. On the basis of the assessment for the current year, it is expected that £500 million will be returned to the Treasury because final grant entitlements for 1988-89 and earlier years were based on estimates rather than on final audited figures. I want the Minister to comment on that, because if that is true we are talking about an increase, not of £1·1 billion, but of £600 million, because £500 million has already been clawed back in the current year.

My next plea is very important in terms of equity and fairness. An arbitrary decision has been taken in the revaluation of the west midlands ratepayers' superannuation fund. Will the Minister please reconsider that arbitrary decision, which is likely to cost the ratepayers of the west midlands £25 million and my local authority an extra £2·7 million?

Mr. Gummer: Will the hon. Gentleman explain exactly his question on the superannuation fund, because I want to answer him clearly? What would he like us to do?

Mr. Turner: The Treasury and the Department of the Environment have undertaken a revaluation of the superannuation fund. The information that I have from my local authority is that, on the basis of that revaluation,

the West Midlands authority has been placed at a disadvantage to the extent of £25 million, and to the extent of £2·7 million in the case of my own local authority. My authority has asked me to raise this matter with the Minister, as it feels that, irrespective of the other decisions that the Government have taken—some of which might be said to be political—this matter is one that he should reconsider.

Mr. Gummer: I should explain to the hon. Member that it is not a matter of a Government revaluation, but that the West Midlands authority would like to revalue its superannuation fund. However, under present law that would be illegal, so it would not be proper for the Government to give the authority permission to do so—although we may be able to make some changes later. There is no way in which we could make legal that which at the moment is not legal.

Mr. Turner: I thank the Minister for his answer. If he proposes to be fair, he might be able to find a mechanism whereby he can still make a response in order to obviate the loss that the West Midlands will otherwise suffer. I hope that he will take on board my comments and will be in a position to respond positively.

The overall thrust of my argument is that there is a serious element of unfairness in the Bill. I am making the point that my own local authority has been dealt with unfairly and that there is cause for the Minister to reconsider that matter. All local authorities, not just Wolverhampton, know that since 1979 there had been a contribution of about 62 to 63 per cent. from the Exchequer to support local government in all its many services. Now, the Exchequer's contribution is about 46 per cent. That tells people why they are suffering huge indirect taxation imposed by a Tory Government. It is that that has created major problems in our towns and cities over the past few years.

I ask that the Bill be voted down and that, in the run-up to the iniquitous poll tax, greater fairness and equity be enjoyed by local government by giving it the support that it needs to provide the services that the House has, in passing legislation over many years, decided it should provide.

8.42 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): When considering the Bill, one can only wonder why it is that rate support grant was not abolished years ago. My right hon. Friend the Minister, in opening this debate, implied that one of two people in the Ministry understood rate support grant, and my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) observed that when he was a Minister perhaps three people in the Department understood it. In my humble position as a PPS for a couple of years, well below the salt on the ministerial table, I had a strong suspicion that the only thing that understood rate support grant was the computer, buried in the bowels of the Ministry's building, that produced the figures every year, and that very few people, if any, really understood how it arrived at them.

Given—hallelujah!—that the present system is at last going, my right hon. Friend the Minister is absolutely right in saying that we cannot change from the present arrangement to the community charge in one jump and that there has to be a mechanism covering the interim period. The Bill meets that challenge admirably. If we are to have a break between support for spending, which is crazy, and instead support for needs, however difficult that may be to assess but which makes much more sense than just support for spending, then I welcome the Bill if it can achieve that.

Nobody in the House can doubt that it is the role of Parliament and of the Government in particular to set the totality of public spending nationally. No one can doubt either that, in order to do that, the House must set aside an amount of money—or at least set a maximum—that is to be spent locally. That is a view held not just by my right hon. and hon. Friends, but one that has had all-party support for years. When in government, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) made a powerful speech arguing just that point. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), when he was Secretary of State for the Environment, argued precisely that the House was right to control national and local expenditure. He not only said that, but acted on it.

It was in 1966-67, or in 1967-68, when the Labour Government got themselves into a fearful tangle with the IMF, that the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney rightly asked local authorities to reduce their expenditure—and this was in mid-year—by £1,000 million. Bearing in mind the inflation that has taken place since those years, one is talking about a very large sum of money. So it sits ill in the mouths of Opposition Members to talk as though constraints on local government spending have only just been introduced by the present Government. They have always been there.

What has been missing in the past few years has been the willingness of Labour authorities to recognise the paramountcy of the House and to act in a voluntary way in meeting Government targets. Because those authorities refused to meet targets in the way convention always arranged in the past, the Conservative Government have been compelled to legislate much more than my right hon. and hon. Friends really would have wished.

There have been cries from the Opposition Benches, particularly from the three hon. Members for Bradford, for more money for Bradford—a voice from the bottomless pit. Their cries and arguments had all the overtones and language of the debates about Liverpool that we had three or three and a half years ago. It was the same story. Liverpool wanted to spend. The councillors there felt that as they had been elected they had a right to spend—but somebody else's money. I recall that at the time I served on Nottingham city council as well as in the House. Nottingham Labour councillors came down to London wearing their stickers proclaiming, "I support Liverpool." I said to them at the time that, apart from the waste of money in coming all the way to London to see me—because, as a city councillor, I could just as easily have seen them in Nottingham—I was elected as a Nottingham city councillor and as a Member of Parliament to represent the people of Nottingham.

I objected then, as I have since and do now, that spending by other authorities—be it in Bradford, Liverpool, or anywhere else—should take money away from a city such as Nottingham, which I represent. If the new system does away with that and makes each city stand up and answer to its own electorate as to how it spends,

[Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo]

then we shall have done a great service to local government. We shall have returned to local government the kind of democracy that we all want to see.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I was interested to hear the hon. Gentleman say that. Is he aware that business men in my part of the country are steaming with anger because their business rates will be raised to reduce the rates of other areas that have spent the money on extra services? They are angry because services have been held down in my area to keep rates down, and they now find that they will be penalised for action taken by sensible councils.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I have some sympathy with the hon. Gentleman. Many local authorities were, in effect, penalised for being prudent under the old system. There is no dispute about that.

Mr. Taylor: And under the new system.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: No. Under the new system each authority will be answerable to its electorate for what it spends.

Mr. Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: No, I will not give way again.

I referred to Bradford because there are a number of similarities between Bradford and the city of Nottingham. The city of Nottingham, too, has a hung council, and for two or three more days its future depends on the casting vote of the lord mayor.

Mrs. Gorman: Is he a Tory?

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Yes, a Tory lord mayor with a casting vote. But, happily, this Thursday the citizens of Nottingham will have the opportunity to say to their council, "Yes, we approve of what you have been doing in the city for the past 18 months." We hope that they will return a Conservative councillor to replace a Conservative colleague, David Flowerday, who died of cancer three or four weeks ago.

If, heaven forbid, the citizens of Nottingham—for whatever reason—elect a Labour councillor, theirs will be a very unusual council. It will have 27 Labour members, 27 Conservatives and one Communist. The city will then have to depend on the whim of a single Communist for its policies. In this place we sometimes forget just how important local government is and how much effect it has on people's lives. I venture to suggest that the by-election in Byron ward in the city of Nottingham on Thursday is probably more important than some of the parliamentary elections in the coming months.

Eighteen months ago, when the Conservatives won control of Nottingham, they began—perhaps without the drama of the past few days in Bradford—to put their financial house in order, and it is to their credit that they did so without much fuss or publicity. They froze the rate last year: there was no increase in Nottingham city council's rate at the end of the first year of Conservative administration. If hon. Members wish to visit the queen of the midlands, they will now see more businesses, factories and houses being built than in the past 30 years. That is what is at stake on Thursday.

Mr. Gummer: Before he leaves that point, will my hon. Friend draw to the House's attention that council houses are now refurbished in five weeks, providing homes for those who would otherwise be homeless, whereas under the previous Labour administration it took a year? As a result very few people are now in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for pointing that out. My Conservative colleagues in Nottingham have received some publicity and some deserved compliments for what was known as the "mini-mod" scheme. Instead of leaving properties empty for months on end and trying to carry out major modifications, they are now handling 1,500 modernisations a year. It is going extremely well, and all credit to them.

We have heard a good deal about creative accountancy tonight. To be fair, all councils—Tory and Labour—have used creative accountancy to some extent. Some of it would make us simply nod and smile, because it was not terribly naughty. If a local authority set its budget to a proper level, it would obtain the maximum grant; that was sensible local authority financial planning. But if the authority found towards the end of the year that it was not going to spend its full budget and was foolish enough to underspend, it would receive less grant under the old system. The local authority, if it had its wits about it, put the money into reserve. That counted as expenditure, so it would receive its full grant. That was called creative accountancy, and I suppose it was, but it was excusable and understandable and no one broke many bones.

What the Bill addresses, and what has happened in the past few years, is creative accountancy of a very different kind. It is much more evil. Financial deals have almost made future generations hostage to the vast debts that those deals built up. I think that the Government were absolutely right to stop those phoney deals and to stop local authorities—whatever their colour—from acting in an irresponsible way that mortgaged the future of those yet to come.

My right hon. Friend the Minister specifically referred to an adjustment being made because local authorities would no longer control the polytechnics. That could not be more germane to my comments about the city of Nottingham. In 1952 I went to what was then called the Nottingham district technical college—and it was the district technical college. Now Trent polytechnic is an enormous institute of higher education. It is far from being the local tech. It is not even the city tech or the regional tech. It is a national—even an international—institution, quite the equal of Nottingham university. The fact that under the new Bill it will be an independent, stand-alone institute of higher education, out of the clutches of the local authority, is the best thing that could have happened to it. If that means a minor adjustment to rate support grant, so be it.

Let us be clear about this. Local authorities have a duty to provide proper services, and they have a duty of care. But, as my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) pointed out, having a duty to provide services and a duty of care does not mean that the authority must provide those services and that care. If it can provide more care and more services more efficiently and cheaply by contracting out, then let it do so.

This is what the argument about staffing levels means. Bradford is saying that over a period 2,500 jobs are going —we have heard 5,000 and 9,000 mentioned: think of a number and double it—but those jobs will not disappear. The services are going out to tender, and the vast majority may well reappear in the private sector where they belong.

Mr. Turner: I asked earlier whether we had learnt anything from the experience of Dudley and Birmingham a few years ago when they were under Conservative control. School cleaning in Dudley was contracted out. Within a matter of weeks the schools were closed down because they were absolutely filthy. A report stated that contracting out had been an abject failure. Conservative Members should not say that contracting out is the answer in Bradford or anywhere else. The Conservative party has proved that it is an abysmal failure. In Birmingham, the school meals service was contracted out, but that had to be stopped in no time.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that there is good and bad in both the public and the private sectors. I simply make the point that if a local authority accepts that its role is that of an enabling body, and that if it has the mechanism to ensure that a contractor meets his tender obligations, services can be properly provided by the private sector. It has never meant that a local authority can put something out to tender and then turn its back on it and not ensure that it is handled properly. If what the hon. Gentleman described went wrong, that sounds to me like very bad supervision.

Mr. Turner: It went wrong because of greed.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: That may be the hon. Gentleman's view. I acknowledge that a local authority has a duty to provide services and care. In most cases, services and caring can be provided by the private sector, with the local authority acting as both the enabling authority and the mechanism whereby it can ensure that in the public interest its services are properly provided. I hope that the Bill will reduce the patronage and control that local authorities have exercised over many people's lives. If that is the result of this interim Bill and of the Bill relating to the community charge, I shall be a very happy man.

9 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I am very proud to speak on behalf of my constituency and of the people of Nottingham, having been born and bred there. All Nottinghamians are proud of their city. It is a beautiful place. Its people are some of the finest in the world, but they are very worried. They look up the motorway to Bradford and see what a Tory authority with the slimmest possibly majority can do to a city. What has happened during the last week to the people of Bradford may happen to the people of Nottingham.

The Bradford authority is seeking not to serve the people of Bradford but merely to impress its mistress in No. 10. In many ways the people of Bradford are suffering because their Tory city council is taking the lead from the Tories in Nottingham. The Tory city council in Nottingham does not care about many groups of people. It does not care about the handicapped in the city of Nottingham. There are 643 handicapped people on the waiting list for purpose-built accommodation, but it is being sold off by the Tory city council. It is flogging off that accommodation, thereby creating longer waiting lists and fewer homes.

The Tory city council does not care about the young newly weds who cannot get a home of their own either because the council is not building any more new council houses or because mortgages are too expensive in the city of Nottingham. *[Interruption.]* I know that Conservative Members do not like this, but they are going to have to listen to it.

The Tory city council does not care about its ratepayers. Every person in a household who is over 18 will soon have to pay £252 under the poll tax, yet the Tory city council utters not a word of protest to its mistress at No. 10. It does not care about the green spaces in our proud and beautiful city that are being sold off and asset-stripped. Allotment holders are being squeezed out for private development and speculation. The Tory city council of Nottingham does not care about council tenants whose estates may soon be sold to speculators. It does not care either about the elderly whose hedges are no longer trimmed and whose houses are no longer painted by community programme workers, who now face the dole.

The Tory city council of Nottingham is so incompetent that it has been unable to put correct rent demands before people. The result is that during the past few days the elderly and the disabled in Nottingham have received demands for rent arrears amounting to £500, £600 and in one case £1,000, sums which were unknown to those people. They have built up because of the Tory city council's incompetence. The council is involved in seedy land deals in the city and is stripping the assets of our city fair. A cut of 80 per cent. in Nottingham's housing investment programme has been inflicted on the city by this Conservative Government without a murmur from the Tory city council. That council has crawled on its belly to ingratiate itself with the Prime Minister, when the defence of our city services was needed. The council is not fit to safeguard the city of Nottingham and its assets and services are not safe in the hands of a Tory city council.

The by-election on Thursday will be the day of reckoning for a Tory city council that has followed in the footsteps of Bradford. It will no longer rule Nottingham because we shall have a Labour administration.

9.6 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): You, Madam Deputy Speaker, know how keen the competition is to participate in local government finance debates, so I thank you for calling me.

I have listened with some interest to hon. Members who represent Bradford constituencies and who are suddenly taking a keen interest in local government finance. They have seen fit to sign early-day motion 1502, which suggests that 9,000 employees are to be sacked over five years. There is an amendment to it which suggests that the number is in fact 2,500 and that redundancies will be rare. One can understand why the Socialists think that the greater the number of people working in central and local government and elsewhere who are dependent on the Government, the more likely it is that they will be in a Socialist fairyland.

I am not impressed by the huge march that so impressed hon. Members who represent Bradford constituencies. Bradford has a population of 320,000 and they say that

[Mr. Roger Knapman]

5,000 took part in the march. The average Labour rent-a-mob is about 50 per cent. home grown and 50 per cent. imported. If one assumes that 4,000 took part in the march, that means that there were about 2,000 people from Bradford in the march out of a population of 320,000. We are happy to fight a by-election at any time on that basis.

Mr. Gummer: I want to comment on the fact that that crowd filled the town hall, shrieked so loudly that no Tory could be heard and threw coins on to the floor. Does my hon. Friend think that that was a reasonable way to carry on a democratic discussion?

Mr. Knapman: I agree that that is not a reasonable way of carrying on, but I am sure my right hon. Friend will agree that it is a typical way for them to carry on, although the marches and protests of eight or 10 years ago were much larger than anything that we have seen recently, including the little demonstration organised in Bradford. One can understand why the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who has a tiny majority of a few hundred, is desperate to be seen to be doing something. I am sure that his turn will come at the next election.

Local government finance does not generally create such interest as we have seen this evening. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, when he was Minister for Local Government, said:

> "In the years that I have been in the House, when I have looked in on such debates, I have soon found that on the whole hon. Members keep away from them unless they have been alerted to attend by their local authorities."—[*Official Report*, 16 January 1985; Vol. 71, c.413.]

I have one small and perhaps narrow point which my right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning may care to consider. Should supplementary credit approval be granted when the Secretary of State approves a compulsory purchase order under section 114 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 in respect of listed buildings? It seems that the local authority has some responsibilities for listed buildings. Some are large, and some are constructed of ancient or traditional materials, and may be expensive to improve or to put into good order. I should like my right hon. Friend's comments on that if possible, because in my constituency there is one listed building in poor repair for which expenditure of about £720,000 is anticipated.

I have been a chartered surveyor for 20 years. To listen to the debate, one would think that Opposition Members were keen on the existing system. Quite how one can even dovetail the existing system with the Opposition's current proposals on the community charge is open to question, but I shall leave that point alone.

I dislike the ever-increasing complexity of the whole system, what with capping, penalties, targets, recycling, holdbacks, slopes and thresholds. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his new appointment. He has worked in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, so he is used to dealing with green pounds, ecus and all that sort of thing. He will know how to deal with capping and penalties and he has a ready appreciation of all the matters before us.

I am anxious for clarification of the position regarding historic buildings and the possible liability of councils for them. I do not think that such liability would arise often, but would it be possible to make provision in the Bill to deal with it should it occasionally occur?

9.10 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): There are just 10 minutes left before the winding-up speeches. [HON. MEMBERS: "Five minutes."] Conservative Members should not get too excited, or it really will be 10 minutes.

A lot of phrases have been used in the debate. We have referred to the need of the people. I think that we all agree that local expenditure should be directed to meeting need. Opposition Members are concerned with establishing who determines that need. It is local people who determine the need and who vote each year for their local authority representatives to decide how that need is to be met.

Let us consider what has happened since 1979. It should not be forgotten that the problem with local government has been central Government. Each and every year since 1979, central Government have eroded local authority grants. That is what has caused local government problems. Even in the face of that, local government wanted to be left alone and said, "Let central Government determine their grant and let us go to local people and say how we propose, with that grant, to supply their needs." That did not satisfy central Government.

Only two great bodies of people are in the way of the Government's attempts to move control away from local government. One is the trade union movement, against which the Government have repeatedly legislated; the other is local government itself, against which they have legislated continually. It does not take much imagination to realise that in the case of Salazar's Portugal, Franco's Spain and Hitler's Germany such moves led to the establishment of totalitarian states, and that is what we need to guard against.

Schedule 2, paragraph 6(1) says:

> "For the purposes of paragraph 4 above Z is a figure which is 1 or, if the Secretary of State so provides,"

the figure can be two. The schedule further states: "in deciding what figure to specify, the Secretary of State" may take into account various factors. Paragraph 6(4) provides:

> "Sub-paragraph (2) above operates without prejudice to the generality of the Secretary of State's powers".

Paragraph 7(1) says that for the purposes of paragraph 4 the Secretary of State is to determine the figure. Paragraph 7(2) provides that the Secretary of State shall secure the aggregate, and paragraph 7(4) that the Secretary of State shall specify certain figures and principles.

Nowhere does the Bill say, "The Secretary of State shall discuss with local authority organisations what shall be done". The Bill is moving powers away from local government into the hands of central Government and that is why we protest against it.

Let us not kid ourselves about the poll tax. It is not about local authority accountability to the people. By its very nature, it takes accountability away from local councils. All this talk about improving accountability through the poll tax is hogwash. It is concerned with much else, but not that. At present, local government provides 50 per cent. of the rate fund and the Government provide the other 50 per cent. Under the poll tax, the Government will provide 75 per cent. of the rate fund. Where, then, is the accountability?

In reality, local authorities will merely get the blame for what the Secretary of State does because the only thing that the Government want to do is to destroy local authorities.

9.14 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): This debate is about a minor matter, although one would think, from the complaints of Opposition Members, that it was a large-scale change in local government finance. In reality, the Bill is merely a winding-up of the old system. It is reasonable and fair.

The ground rules have to be changed, and dates by which decisions have to be made have to be set because, without legislation, there is a risk that some unscrupulous local authorities will engage in bookkeeping exercises that are simply creative accounting. They have become a way of life for some local authorities. How else did Camden arrive at a £15 million gap in its budget? How else did Brent arrive at a similar position? They lived beyond their means and creative accountancy became a way of life. They did that not because they wanted to protect local services or because they were desperate to do something about bad housing, but to avoid making difficult decisions.

Labour-controlled councils have put off the difficult decisions. They have said, "Perhaps we can pay tomorrow. We can think about how to live within our means later." That is how it has been in Bradford.

We have heard much about Bradford today. The incoming Conservative administration has taken the bull by the horns and said, "We have to make these decisions on behalf of people in Bradford. Without them, the long-term suffering will be greater." In one respect, we have not heard enough from Opposition Members about Bradford. "I would have thought that after all that has happened during this week we would have heard at least a few words condemning what has happened to the council in Bradford from the other side this week. I would have thought we would have heard a few words from the Opposition Benches—perhaps from the Labour Members for Bradford city—about the intimidation, the lies and the innuendoes that have been spread about the leaders of the Conservative-controlled council, perhaps condemning the Labour Opposition leader in Bradford who even quoted those lies and innuendo inside the council chamber, even though he must have known when he said it that what he was saying was simply not true."

Opposition Members have not said that they regret what happened in Bradford. Perhaps they do not regret it. Perhaps they ought to regret it. Perhaps they ought to regret the fact that the 68-year-old lord mayor had to have a police guard. The fact that they have not mentioned any of those matters means that we must conclude that they approve of what has happened and that their political friends organised it.

The Bradford revolution, as it has been called, is about protecting services. It will protect people in the long run by making difficult decisions now. If Opposition Members want proof that the Bradford Conservatives are ensuring the future of their city—enabling industry to thrive, creating jobs and wealth and providing better services—they have only to consider the parallel decisions being made by the London borough of Brent. The contrast proves that those who do not make difficult decisions are eventually forced to make them, whereupon they are harmful to local people. The Labour party is culpable. It has done deliberate harm to people in areas where it has political control. The Conservatives in Bradford are protecting people in Bradford.

Labour Members are worried about something that Councillor Pickles said at the Conservative party conference. He said:

"If we can do it in Bradford, we can do it anywhere."

He is right. If they can protect their services and transform the economy in Bradford by what they do in the council chamber, it can be done in any of the other northern cities. I believe that the Labour party is desperately worried about what will happen to its vote in those areas when people see the success that Eric Pickles and his colleagues will bring to the economy, understand what they are doing and vote that council into a majority so that it can continue with those successful policies.

9.19 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) described this issue as a minor one. That point reflects the general view of Tory Members who consider the financing of local government to be a minor issue. The Bill, which represents a further cut in the rate support grant, and tightens the regulations restricting capital expenditure by local government, is a deliberate move to prevent local authorities from embarking on expenditure to provide the services needed by the people served by local government. There is no doubt that the Bill seeks to portray the way in which the poll tax will apply and at the same time to discredit the present rating system. It restricts local authorities in improving the environment and providing the services that people rely upon in the cities, towns and villages throughout England and Wales.

The Bill is cruel and dishonest and does nothing for local government. The Minister referred to changing the grant title to the needs grant. All we require now is to add to that the resources element and we shall be back to where we were in the 1950s and 1960s when the rate support grant was made up of needs and resources elements.

Will the Minister identify how the needs of local authorities will be determined? If we are to end the present system and introduce something in its place, there should be some explanation as to how we are to identify the needs of various authorities. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) spelt it out that local government is about differences, about different areas having different needs and requiring different services. Local government is about differences. Therefore, hon. Members—particularly Opposition Members—those who serve local government and those who rely upon its services are interested to know how the Minister will determine the needs element within the new formula.

The Bill is cruel and dishonest and does nothing to improve the environment. At the Tory conference the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State, Ministers and Conservative Members declared that they care about the environment, but to say that they care about the environment without providing the resources to protect the environment is cruel and dishonest. People expect their streets to be cleaned. They expect to have street lighting, which is important in our towns and villages. Local authorities and their planning departments must be able to tackle the dereliction in our towns and cities. Greater consultation and public involvement in planning matters

[Mr. William O'Brien]

which influence people's destiny must be a part of local democracy. The Bill does nothing to meet the call for greater public participation in planning issues.

The hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), who is not in her place, suggested that councillors and people working in local authorities should have no influence and that a few contractors should decide the level of services to be provided. The hon. Lady also said that in some areas there have been increases of up to 9 per cent. and that that is deplorable. She did not say anything about the fact that water authorities have increased their expenditure by 9, 10 or 11 per cent. over the past few years. I wonder what she will say about the Yorkshire water authority, which is planning to increase its charges by 27 per cent. in the coming year. What will Conservative Members say about accountability and about the fact that people's money is being spent? What will Conservative Members say about such increases, which are simply to justify privatisation?

It is cruel and dishonest to deny local authorities the right to better monitoring, inspection and enforcement of pollution control. The Bill acts against the better protection of the environment by local authorities.

Waste disposal, particularly hazardous waste disposal, is a major responsibility for local authorities. People are concerned about where waste is dumped and how it is disposed of. Their concern is greater than ever before. Since the Government took office the importation of hazardous waste to Britain has increased ten times. The Bill restricts the ability of local authorities to employ the necessary trained people to carry out monitoring of pollution control. Hon. Members should do more than pay lip service to concern for the environment. That is cruel and dishonest. Words are cheap.

Mr. Redwood: How much extra money would the Labour party suggest should be spent and how would it be allocated?

Mr. O'Brien: It would not be for a Labour Government to decide the needs of local authorities. That is our point. The local authorities should determine their own needs. Local government should be provided with adequatee resources, properly trained manpower and back-up services to ensure that the environment is protected.

The Government have cut pollution research staff by 42 per cent. Reported cases of water pollution have increased by two thirds since 1980. Two of the most serious environmental issues causing concern to communities are noise and dirt. The problems are not restricted to inner city areas or Labour-controlled authorities.

Local government is concerned not only with hazardous waste disposal but with waste disposal in general. Because of the financial restrictions that the Secretary of State has imposed on them, local authorities must cut corners and, in many instances, act against the best interests of the environment.

It is significant that Tory-controlled North Yorkshire county council is intending to turn a beauty spot in the North Yorkshire national park into a refuse dump. The reason given is that it would cost £175,000 a year to provide an alternative means of refuse disposal. It would prefer to dump refuse in the North Yorkshire national park than to provide an alternative means of disposal costing £175,000 a year. If the Bill is passed and we approve the Secretary of State's proposal to change the allocation of rate support grant, North Yorkshire county council stands to be robbed of £8·6 million over two years.

Mr. Patnick: Has the North Yorkshire national park any planning controls, or are they vested in the North Yorkshire county council?

Mr. O'Brien: I should have expected the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) to be aware that the planning department of North Yorkshire county council overrides the planning committee of the North Yorkshire national park. If the hon. Gentleman is as concerned as Labour Members about this matter, he should make representations to Ministers:

As I said, North Yorkshire county council stands to be robbed of £8·6 million over two years. Suffice it to say that the money that will be held back would provide a tipping area or alternative for refuse disposal for 50 years. That is the measure of the way in which the Bill will attack local government.

The position in north Yorkshire is dramatically heightened by the comments of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), whose constituency is so near to the rubbish tip that this weekend he said:

> "I am a little concerned about the use the county council has made of its powers to override the national parks committee."

I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will say that during the by-election next year.

Much of the debate has centred on the problems in Bradford. My hon. Friends representing Bradford constituencies have made it clear that the programme being carried out there by the Tories has not been put to the electorate. Nowhere in their manifesto was reference made to £830,000 being cut from the social services budget. Nothing was said about the selling off of 15 old people's homes and the old people in them. Nothing was said about the massive charges for the meals-on-wheels service. If Conservative Members have democracy at heart, they should give Bradford's people the opportunity to go to the polls next year and test the programme that is being put forward. There is little difference between the Tories in Bradford and North Yorkshire and the Secretary of State. They are out to destroy local government and, in the process, commit the environment to untold damage and destruction. The Bill effectively adds to that process.

Practically every hon. Member who has spoken referred to Bradford, including the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), who praised the Bill. Is he aware that, under the Bill, Spelthorne council stands to lose £64,000 and Surrey county council £9·5 million?

Mr. Wilshire: If the hon. Gentleman wants to talk about my borough council, perhaps he should make it clear that it has managed to cut its rate by 73 per cent. this year and is now providing better services. That is the truth.

Mr. O'Brien: And still Spelthorne council loses £64,000 and Surrey county council £9·5 million because of the Bill. Will the Minister include in the needs element the flooding to which the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) referred? Such issues should be included.

The continuing migration to rural areas is causing concern to local authorities in terms of access, communications and housing. There is also the matter of law and order in the cities and towns, but particularly in

rural towns where the police forces are stretched to the limit. My hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr dwelt at length on the amount of money that will be cut from the police committees' budgets if the Bill is passed in its present form. I hope that we shall be given answers to my hon. Friend's questions.

If we consider the holdback of rate support grant in 1987-88 and 1988-89, we realise the dramatic effect that there will be on police authorities. I should like to add to some of the points made on this important issue. The Northumbria police authority is robbed of £272,000 in the first year and £660,000 in the second year. The West Midlands police authority is robbed of £750,000 in the first year and £1·8 million in the second year. The West Yorkshire police authority is robbed of about £500,000 in the first year and £1·33 million in the second year. All the police authorities will lose if the Bill remains in its present form. The Metropolitan police are robbed of £4·6 million in the first year and £11·3 million in the second year. If Conservative Members are sincere about law and order, they will realise that to vote for the Bill is to vote down the resources which the police authorities require to maintain law and order.

Tory-controlled local authorities will be robbed of £134 million because of the proposals introduced by the Secretary of State on 7 July. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) referred to the wonderful work that is done in Nottingham. The people of Nottingham must be made aware that, under the Bill, the county council will lose £9·8 million and Nottingham city council £492,000. It is true that the decision on the future of Nottingham will be made on Thursday. I hope that hon. Members will be honest and will tell the people of Nottingham the exact consequences of voting Tory.

Among those authorities, North Yorkshire county council will lose some £8·8 million, the authorities in the Humberside region will collectively lose £260,000 in the first year and £725,000 in the second and those in North Yorkshire will lose £175,000 in the first year and £391,000 in the second, with Richmond council being robbed of £47,000 and Harrogate of £152,000. Bradford is robbed of £3·7 million, so one can readily understand why the Tories who have taken over that authority are selling off old people in their homes to make up the void created by the Bill.

I trust that answers will be forthcoming to the questions that have been asked about this attack on local authorities, and I hope that Conservative Members will take note of the dramatic effect that the Bill will have on their authorities and join us in voting against the Bill.

9.41 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I hope that the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) will bear with me if I turn down his invitation to walk round the North Yorkshire national park with him and instead refer to the matters at hand in the Bill.

Most hon. Members with experience of rate support grant matters have given a warm welcome to the Bill, which heralds, if not the end of the present rate support grant system, at least the beginning of the end. We still have the 1989-90 settlement to come. The Bill is principally designed to tidy up loose ends from the present system before the community charge system is introduced from 1 April 1990 in England and Wales. The House has recognised that the new system will encourage greater local accountability and will be easier to understand than the present arrangements. In the words of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning, there should be no taxation without comprehension. The community charge also removes the unfairnesses of the present rating system. Local government's attention is moving away from rate support grant to revenue support grant, but I think that we all welcome my right hon. Friend's suggestion that we should refer to it as the needs grant, which makes it absolutely clear how the new system will work.

From April 1990, an authority's grant entitlement will be fixed in relation to its spending needs and will not depend on the level of expenditure incurred. That feature of the new system has been widely welcomed and the Bill paves the way for the new fixed grant arrangements. Local authorities have generally welcomed our proposal that grant should be fixed in relation to expenditure for 1989-90, which will provide them with certainty about their grant entitlement and assist them in making their budgets. The Department will shortly be issuing a consultation paper setting out full details of our proposals for next year. Having only recently turned from being a poacher to being a gamekeeper in this regard, I speak most strongly about the need for local authorities to be able to plan for the future and to know where they stand. The Bill opens the way for that to happen.

It was inevitable that at some point we would need to act to bring the present system to a close. Otherwise, we should have had to ask the House to approve a string of supplementary reports concerned with the present system until well into the 1990s. For those in local government, for central Government and for community charge payers alike, it is better to make a clean break with the past before the new system comes in, and local authorities have generally accepted the logic of our arguments about the principles underlying the intention to close down the present rate support grant system. The rules that we have put forward are clearcut and impartial and, so far as anything in this area can be, they are understandable. They are based on sound principles. The rules, which are set out in detail in the Bill, are based on total expenditure information with the Department by 7 July. That is not just any information available. It has been certified by chief financial officers as being the best estimates available to the best of their knowledge and belief. The Bill provides for common rules that apply to all authorities. The expenditure figures on which grant will be calculated are not the result of the Department exercising substantial discretion. The rules produce figures that provide a clear and unambiguous basis for the payment of grant and they are accepted by local authorities——

Mr. Michael *rose*——

Mrs. Bottomley: If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me, I hope to come to the points that he raised, but I need to make progress before getting there.

The hon. Members for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), for Truro (Mr. Taylor) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) made the surprising suggestion that the legislation was being rushed through, and said that they resented that. I should have thought that all local authorities would welcome a firm end to the current

[Mrs. Bottomley]

system so that they would know where they stood and could plan for the future. Local authorities frequently complain about not having known the arrangements until they were already far down the budget system. If we had waited until the next parliamentary Session to introduce the Bill, the reports could not have been debated until February or March at the earliest. That would have been far too late to give local authorities certainty about their grant entitlement for the next year in time for their budget-making.

We intend to issue a consultation paper on next year's settlement during November and to make the settlement itself before Christmas. Local authority associations certainly do not want the settlement delayed any longer than need be. They want the 1989-90 settlement made as soon as possible, and preferably in December, so that it can be debated in January.

The hon. Member for Truro asked whether 7 July was an appropriate date for close down. Most hon. Members accept the principles underlying our intention to close down the present RSG system, although some, like the hon. Gentleman, argued that 7 July was not necessarily the best date available. However, by 7 July all authorities bar two had provided the Department with total expenditure information about their budgets for 1988-89 and with revised budget information for 1987-88. It was requested that that information be in by 31 March 1988. Authorities have had a further three months in which to get the information to the Department.

In July my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced details of grant and provision to give local authorities an early indication of next year's RSG settlement. To make that announcement without indicating our intention to close down the present RSG system would have been misleading. It is now clear that the full amount of grant—£13,575 million—will be paid to authorities next year when grant will no longer depend on expenditure. Delaying the announcement of close down beyond the end of July would have meant that we could not announce details while the House was sitting.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: What will happen to those local authorities that have not yet approved their final accounts, and where major decisions affecting those accounts had been taken prior to that date? Will the Government take that into account? Those authorities had already taken those decisions, but, if I understand the Minister, they would not be taken into account by the Government.

Mrs. Bottomley: The most straightforward way to proceed is to set a cut-off point by which the Department decides the information must be provided. Once we open the door to exceptions and special cases and take into account whether local authorities have made decisions, we open the door also to every sort of indecision. Every constituency would have a special plea and a special case and the matter would never be settled. We would be perpetuating the present system of supplementary reports year after year as special cases were found. We must find a way to move forward.

Mr. Michael *rose*——

Mrs. Bottomley: I shall not give way. I am about to deal with some of the hon. Gentleman's points.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr, supported by the hon. Member for Normanton, claimed that the Bill would deprive local authorities of £500 million grant in 1988-89. He quoted a series of figures. I wonder whether hon. Members think that they are real figures. They are, in fact, hypothetical. They were taken from a parliamentary answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to a hypothetical question from the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). They are not based on the actual provision of individual authorities. The hon. Gentleman invented a figure and asked my right hon. Friend what would happen if it were to apply. The return figures were produced, and then the hon. Gentleman applied them generally. He has been caught out. The sum of £500 million is the amount of grant forgone this year, because local authorities, in aggregate, have spent about 4·5 per cent. more than was allowed for the RSG settlement. It is quite unrealistic to assume that, in due course, outturn figures will show that authorities have underspent their budgets by that amount. I accept that, traditionally, local authorities underspend against budgets, but not to that extent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), who has great knowledge of such matters, asked for an assurance about any errors that may emerge in the rate support grant settlement. The Bill fixes one component of the grant calculation—expenditure. The other components, particularly the assessment of spending needs, will be set out in the main RSG report. We hope that no supplementary reports will be needed for 1989-90, but the Bill does not prevent one being made if we discover that some adjustment is necessary.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) asked further questions. He particularly asked what would happen to local authorities that receive no block grant, and whether they will receive support for preparing for the introduction of the community charge. I am glad to answer that authorities that administer the community charge will receive an additional specific grant in the form of the £55 million that my right hon. Friend announced last week.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) mentioned Cardiff city council. He argued that the Secretary of State for Wales gave a commitment that any reduction in expenditure in 1987-88 would result in an increase in grant. He alleged that the Bill breaches that commitment. Let me make the position clear. The Secretary of State gave that undertaking in December 1986, and repeated it in March 1987. The four authorities set their budgets for 1987-88. The authorities had the chance to take it into account when drawing up their plans for 1987-88 and in making their returns to the Welsh Office in spring 1987. The authorities had a further opportunity to report reduced expenditure in spring 1988, when treasurers reported their provisional outturn for 1987-88. Therefore, there was a full 18 months during which authorities could report their lower expenditure for the year concerned. The majority of Welsh authorities did so.

Many hon. Members have spoken today as though they were re-fighting the Odsall by-election in Bradford. We have heard from the hon. Members for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall), for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), and we have heard from my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Michael: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that it is a point of order.

Mr. Michael: The Minister is misleading the House on the——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Ministers do not deliberately mislead the House.

Mr. Michael *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman may disagree, but it is not a point of order.

Mr. Michael: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank you for saving my reputation, Mr. Speaker. Ministers do not deliberately mislead the House—certainly not early in their careers. The hon. Gentleman is mean-spirited. I have devoted more time to responding to him than I have to many of my hon. Friends.

Mr. Michael: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I suspect that it may still be a point of disagreement.

Mr. Michael: No, Mr. Speaker. I wish to make it clear that I did not suggest in any way that the Minister was deliberately misleading the House. I said that what she said was wrong. I shall happily help her if she will allow me briefly to intervene. She is misleading the House.

Mr. Speaker: Whether the Minister gives way is up to her.

Mrs. Bottomley: I was planning to say that I hope that the hon. Gentleman will have many opportunities to pursue this point in Committee. There are many Welsh alleyways. At the moment, I should like to refer to Bradford.

My hon. Friends the Members for Spelthorne, for Shipley (Sir M. Fox), for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) and for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) have referred to Bradford, where a brave group of councillors are beginning to try to set the city in order. It is a sign of the times that it is so newsworthy and a subject of such great public interest that setting Bradford to right, rather than all the difficulties it got into in the past, seems to make headlines. Opposition Members seem to have been suggesting that in some way decisions properly taken by a democratically elected council are the responsibility of the Government. We applaud any effort by local authorities, whatever their political persuasions, to provide their own people with better——

Mr. Allen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If there were to be a tied vote this evening, would you remind the House which way you would cast your vote?

Mr. Speaker: That really is a hypothetical question.

Mrs. Bottomley: I understand that it has been suggested that the use by the lord mayor of his casting vote was in some way improper. I draw the attention of Opposition Members to the fact that the Local Government Act 1972 provides that if there is an equality of votes the person presiding at the meeting shall have a second or casting vote. Similar provisions have been enshrined in local government legislation since at least the turn of the century.

We applaud the effort to promote competition and to contract out services. It offers an especially good opportunity for obtaining value for money. My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) referred to Nye Bevan house. It is interesting that Opposition Members give so much attention to the prospect of selling old people's homes when some of the greatest abuses of recent years in old people's homes have involved homes owned and run by local authorities.

Do Opposition Members not wish savings to be made? Do they want Bradford ratepayers to have to continue to shoulder the burden of the sixth highest local rate of any of the 36 metropolitan districts? Bradford receives a great deal of support from central Government. For example, it received £151·5 million in block grant this year, which was £40 million more than in 1987-88. It has an urban programme allocation of £4·5 million, of which £3·2 million has already been approved. Further resources within the allocation will be released if the council comes forward with suitable proposals. European Commission approval for support of Bradford's integrated development operation of just over £50 million is expected shortly.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr referred to the role of local government. We would agree with much of what he said, but we also have a radical, modern and new view of local government. We believe that local government should be a facilitator and enabler, not necessarily the provider of services. We believe that local authorities can control so much better what they themselves do not necessarily organise. We are opposed to municipal aggrandisement. We look for a system of local government finance that will ensure the long sought-after accountability of local authorities to local people.

The complexity and intensity of contributions to the debate provides yet further evidence, not that more is needed but that the time is long overdue to bring the present unwieldy system of central Government financing of local authorities to a speedy and final close. The time and effort spent by the House, councillors, local authority finance officers and long-suffering officials at Marsham Towers, and even newly appointed local government Ministers, in mastering the intricacies of the present system can scarcely be justified. In a number of local authorities so much effort is directed, with the help of some City institutions, towards manipulating the grant system to produce the greatest short-term advantage to the local authorities at the expense of the national taxpayer. Often this is understandable. This time and energy would be more appropriately spent on ensuring that necessary local services are delivered in a cost-effective and efficient manner that provides value for money.

We have heard of efforts made by local authorities to reduce expenditure. This bodes well for the chargepayers of the future. Those who complain that their virtue is not being sufficiently rewarded by the Government's proposals to bring the present system to a timely and orderly end will be gratified that the major intention of our future system of local government finance is that such measures should be directly apparent to the chargepayers so that their virtue may be rewarded at the polls.

Some of the efforts to reduce expenditure reflect the sincere attempt to get to grips with local authority spending. Others seem to be more ingenious than genuine. It is not entirely clear who owns Camden's lamp posts, let alone its library books and municipal art collection. We know that a French bank was reported to have bought its

[Mrs. Bottomley]

parking meters. It is bookkeeping transactions or financial deals which are unrelated to true spending and which alter the level of reported total expenditure but which gain Government grant that we seek to prevent in our proposals. It is especially necessary that the close down of the present system offers a unique opportunity—*[Interruption.]* The Bill deserves the support of the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 252, Noes 198.

Division No. 461] **[9.59**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Mariand, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David

Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Cleiland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Committee tomorrow.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Foreign Marriage (Amendment) Bill [*Lords*] may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Rate Support Grants Bill [Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Rate Support Grants Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

10.14 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I do not think that we should allow money resolutions to go through on the nod. There may well be some public expenditure involved. The resolution that we are debating authorises

"the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act."

However, the financial effects of the Bill are not clearly set out in the explanatory and financial memorandum. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members beyond the Bar please leave quietly?

Mr. Cryer: These are important matters, Mr. Speaker, and I am grateful for your attention.

The relevant paragraph states:

"The Bill will require calculations and estimates of individual authorities' block grant entitlements to be based not on their total expenditure but on the relevant amount as defined by the Bill."

The "relevant amount" is defined in schedule 1. The result is that the aggregate amount of block grant payable for the years 1985-86 to 1989-90 may be either more or less than if the block grant entitlements were based on total expenditure.

I want to know what the financial effects of the Bill, as calculated by the Department, will be. Will more money be paid out? When the Minister opened the debate, I understood him to say that all the information has been received from the local authorities, apart from two. Therefore, the Department ought to have been able to calculate the financial effects of the Bill. I accept that the Department cannot be precise, but it ought to be able to provide some information.

The paragraph on the financial effects of a Bill usually says that it will cost, say, an additional £15 million or £20 million. Occasionally that amount cannot be calculated, and then it is a matter for the House. This paragraph is not the clearest that has ever been contained in an explanatory and financial memorandum. Will the financial effects of the Bill enable the £38 million that an all-party delegation that visited the Department of the Environment asked should be paid to Bradford to be paid? Bradford has been the subject of considerable debate. The point has been made repeatedly that, according to the local authority's calculations, £38 million has been denied to Bradford over a period of three years. Should a calculation of that kind be included in the financial effects of the Bill?

Bradford will suffer a cut of £3·7 million because of the Bill. Some local authorities will benefit from it, but it appears that most local authorities will suffer a cut. Bradford, with the Right-wing Tory clique in control, faces difficulties. The Tories appear to have been taken over by Right-wing extremists. I hope that traditional members of the Tory party—the one-nation group, or the wets as they are contemptuously described by the Prime Minister—will exert themselves in Bradford and stand out against these onerous and vicious attacks on the people of Bradford.

Bradford will face a cut of £3·7 million. On top of the cuts for all local authorities, the general financial effect will be a cut in Government expenditure. I understand the reason for the money resolution. If there should be an unauthorised increase in expenditure, the Government will have to come back to the House for that authority, so it is convenient for them to obtain that authorisation now. However, I should like to know what the precise effects will be, how much money is involved and whether the £38 million that is due to Bradford will be paid.

10.19 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I am pleased to hear the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). There is no doubt about it: what he says is quite true. There will be massive cuts. I hope that the Minister for Housing and Planning is listening, rather than reading and talking, because we have a credible Opposition over here. Now the Minister is laughing because he finds that funny. We are a credible Opposition talking seriously about a serious problem. I wish that the Minister would not talk to his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, but that he would listen to what is being said.

We are talking about the problems of local authorities. I am afraid that, although we have a Conservative-controlled local authority in the city of Nottingham, on Thursday the Conservatives will lose control of that council and we shall then be able to put things right in Nottingham.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South is right about the cuts that the Government have made in local authority grants, which seriously affect the services provided by those authorities. Earlier today the Minister would not give way to me. He is going to get it now. He stood there like Maria Heep. [HON. MEMBERS: "Who is Maria Heep?"] When they sit round the table in the Department, they are all like Maria Heep, looking to see where they can cut and cut and seriously affect our local authority services.

I come now to a very serious point——

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Hear, hear.

Mr. Haynes: That fellow has not been here very long. Some of us have been here a long time.

Mr. Speaker: Order. He is not "that fellow". He is an hon. Member.

Mr. Haynes: I accept your ticking off, Mr. Speaker, as always. The hon. Gentleman has not been here very long. Some of us who have been here a long while know how the House works under the Conservative Government. The hon. Gentleman supports the Government, although it will be interesting to find out whether he supports them tomorrow night.

My local authority strives very hard, under the difficult circumstances created by cuts in the rate support grant, to provide the necessary services. The Minister does not seem to realise that, whereas we used to have nine coal mines in my constituency, we now have only four. The mines made a massive contribution in rates. Now that money has gone and this lot have not made it up. In Ashfield we are

struggling to provide the necessary services, and now the lads are having to sit around the table because of the law that this lot have passed and because of decisions that they have made. My colleagues are having to try to find ways of cutting services that they should be providing. They were providing the services before 1979. The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) should not look surprised.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South) *rose*——

Mr. Haynes: I see that I have drawn him.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: It would be quite wrong to allow the House to think that when a mine closes the local authority loses rates and that jobs are lost. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the site of the Wilford pit, in my constituency, which was closed, now accommodates the Queen's industrial estate, which employs four times as many people as ever went down the pit.

Mr. Haynes: I did not mention jobs. I simply talked about the rate support grant and said that the industry paid rates which were lost when the pits closed.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Is my hon. Friend aware that what the hon. Member for Nottinghamshire, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) said does not apply in all areas? In my constituency, there were eight pits before the miners' strike and there is now one, and no jobs have been put in their place——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a debate on the money resolution, not about jobs.

Mr. Haynes: That is right. That is why I steered clear of the subject. I was not going to have you pull me up again, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Nottinghamshire, South drew me into the subject as he mentioned Wilford pit, which is in his constituency. When that pit closed, there was a Labour Government. We made it right when the pit closed. This lot do not. Services have to be cut. My colleagues in Ashfield have to see what services they can cut to come into line with the laws that this lot make. I am talking about the Government. I could say many things about the right hon. Lady at No. 10, but I shall not wander off the money resolution. No doubt there will be other opportunities to talk about her. I have always tried to stay within the rules of the House and your strictures, Mr. Speaker.

The Government have cut ever since I have been here. I came here when they came to power. Like many others, my local authority is struggling to provide services. Ministers and the Prime Minister say regularly that some local authorities are overspending. I am making out a case for my local authority, which has lost money in two ways. First, it has lost as a result of pit closures. Five pits have gone, so there is a lot less money coming in to provide services. Secondly, the Government have cut rate support grant.

How does the Minister expect my colleagues in Ashfield to provide necessary services? They have difficulty standing still, never mind providing the additional services that are required. When the Minister spoke on Second Reading, he would not give way to me and give me an opportunity to put my case to him. He was frit. He did not know what was coming. He looked at me and said, "I am not giving way to the hon. Member." It will be there in *Hansard*. I said that I would have a word with him outside, but the money resolution has given me an opportunity to put my case to him now. I am looking for some answers.

I know that the Minister has moved from the agriculture Ministry. He was supposed to look after wild animals while he was there, but he did not do a very good job. I hope that, now he has moved, he will help my local authority to overcome some of its financial difficulties. I do not want the Minister to sit on his backside and say nothing. He should let me know what he will do about it.

10.28 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I am sad to note the lack of a Welsh Office Minister in the Chamber, as I want to return to a point that I raised earlier. Perhaps the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) has rushed into the House to support my argument because of the way in which ratepayers in his constituency will be affected by the money resolution.

Does the money resolution take account of the likely legal costs of disentangling the arguments which are inevitable in view of the impropriety of the elements in the Bill to which I drew attention earlier and which were ignored in the Minister's winding-up speech?

In her summing up the Minister made great play of the benefits of certainty, as did her ministerial colleague earlier in the debate, and she referred to statements by the former Secretary of State for Wales and the Secretary of State for the Environment. Those statements offered certainty that the final grant decision made by the Government would be determined not by updated estimates, to which the hon. Lady referred, but by the actual money spent by the local authority. Those assurances were given in the House, without equivocation, there were no ifs and buts, yet the point was avoided during the debate and in the Minister's reponse. Both Ministers made great play of the benefits of certainty, but they offered the House all the predictive certainty of being told, "You were hanged yesterday, so would you kindly lie down in the coffin and stop making a noise about it?"

Cabinet Ministers gave assurances to the House about precisely how the system would operate. There is bound to be an argument, because the Bill seeks to overturn those explicit and clear assurances.

I spoke earlier of two local authorities that had met all the Government's requirements and more. How can Ministers come to the House and suggest that, somehow, a failure to answer a questionnaire, which was not about actual costs, but about estimated costs, which was not available until a couple of days before the statement in the House on 7 July, which did not require a response until the end of July, is the basis upon which they can change the rules overnight?

If there is any integrity among Ministers, they will accept my point and amend the Bill during its passage through the House. I hope to be able to welcome such a move at a later stage of the Bill, and not to have to worry about whether the money resolution caters for the inevitable arguments that will arise if they do not.

10.31 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I want to ask the Minister some questions about the aspects of the money resolution that affect staffing, under the heading: "Public service manpower effects of the Bill."

[Mr. Tony Banks]

"Staffing effects' would be more appropriate wording. Having heard Ministers speak in many local government debates about staffing implications and reductions in the number of people employed within local authority areas because of the provisions passed here, none of which they have been prepared to quantify, will the Minister this evening tell us what staffing requirements will stem from the Bill?

The Bill states:

"There will be a small reduction in staffing requirements within central government"—

I trust that it will not affect the Minister's job, or that of his colleagues on the Government Front Bench—

"and there may also be a small reduction in the administrative work load of local authorities."

Will the Minister at least attempt to give us some idea of the numbers? Hopefully, he will be able to secure the information that he obviously needs. If the Bill says that there will be a small reduction, surely someone somewhere must have a figure for that.

I do not understand how a local authority such as Brent, which will suffer a £9 million loss because of the Bill, the London borough of Greenwich, which will suffer a £1·2 million loss, or the London borough of Southwark, which will also suffer a financial loss, will be able to reduce the number of staff required to administer the new system. As there is a large number of losers as well as gainers from the Bill, clearly the administrative problems of local authorities will be enormous. In those circumstances, when faced with a Government who keep changing the rules, making life more and more difficult for treasurers' departments, how on earth can the Minister justify the statement that

"there may also be a small reduction in the administrative work load of local authorities."?

It sounds like pious hopes. As with so many other aspects of local authority legislation that we have unfortunately passed in the House, Ministers and Conservative Members have some ideas about what they would like to see in the future, but at the same time they are unprepared to—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) is disrupting my concentration. I cannot work out whether he wants to join the Conservative party or to impart important information. Perhaps he feels that the points that he made in his contribution need more detailed intercourse with the Minister and that is why he has crossed the Floor. If so, he places a low value on the power of his oratory, which we all value. I am sure that the Minister understood the points that he made without it being necessary for him to cross the Floor and explain in detail in his right ear.

The Minister will have to quantify the statement made in the Bill. We have heard so many promises from Ministers about the staffing implications and the impact of various aspects of local government legislation that the Minister cannot be surprised at the fact that we do not believe what we read in the Bill. Perhaps the Minister will explain what is meant in terms of numbers.

10.36 pm

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): In making the financial calculations on the Bill I wonder whether the Minister has taken account of rent arrears in respect of local government finances. It is an important point. There have been cuts of £28·4 billion in central Government support to local government since 1970 and there is a growing problem of rent arrears. It has been calculated that Bradford has lost £80,000 a week in housing benefit. That means that we lose £4·1 million a year in benefits. Of that £80,000, £67,000 relates to local authority tenants and only £13,000 relates to private tenants. Because that money has not been paid, the poorest in our community have to spend money on rent that they would normally have spent on food, clothing and essentials. That has a multiplier effect in terms of a loss of expenditure in the city.

For the first time in Bradford's history council house rent arrears passed the £2 million figure some weeks ago. That has an enormous effect on the general standard of living, the general revenue of the council and the general welfare of the citizens of Bradford. The story is the same in other cities. Doncaster has one of the lowest levels of council house rent arrears. However, since the introduction of the new social security measures on housing benefit, debts in council house rents to the Doncaster local authority have increased by 50 per cent. On a television programme we saw and heard about a gentleman who was paying rent. The proportion that he had to pay had increased from £6 to £26. To ask an unemployed man to find an extra £20 a week is a harsh imposition.

Can the Minister give us some idea of the Government's views on that issue?

10.39 pm

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I shall respond to the reasonable comments of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). Until we have certain audited reports from local authorities, I cannot give him, as I think he realises, an exact final outcome. That is why we have a money resolution.

It may be that over the number of years concerned we will pay out rather more of taxpayers' money to local authorities than we would have done had we not made these changes. Any argument that people are losing or being cheated under these arrangements falls to the ground. We expect that over the years the amount paid out will be even-Stephen, but I cannot guarantee that. My guess is that it might be a little more than we expect. As long as it is not too much more I should be sympathetic, because it would prove that everything that I have said is true. The hon. Member for Bradford, South was right to raise the matter, and I hope the House will accept that as a reasonable assessment in advance of the audited reports.

The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) generously and politely explained that he would have to leave, but he has returned, so I shall say what I intended to say in the first place. I am sorry that I did not give way to him, not because of what happened thereafter—although I was glad that it happened openly rather than in the dark corridors of this building—but because I gave way generously to many hon. Members, and at some point one has to say no. I thought that he was mature enough an hon. Member—he said how long he had been an hon. Member—to take it in the way that it was intended. I have nothing against the hon. Gentleman, and we have crossed swords with pleasure——

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Normally, the Minister says "No, I am not giving way any

more", but he said to me "I am not giving way to that hon. Member", which is different. I am asking the Minister to put things right.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. That was the last debate.

Mr. Gummer: If the way in which I refused to give way to the hon. Member for Ashfield caused him embarassment or remorse, I apologise. I very much enjoy crossing swords with the hon. Gentleman, but I refused to give way to two of his hon. Friends and I thought that it would have been invidious to pick him out after our long association in agriculture matters. I am pleased to note his interest in this subject, and I should not have liked to miss it.

The House is indebted to the hon. Member for Ashfield, because if he was not the hon. Member for Ashfield we might have had the present deputy leader of Nottinghamshire county council. Had that gentleman been chosen, although we would have done Nottinghamshire county council a favour, we would have rued the day to a degree that I should not like to contemplate.

The Conservative-controlled city of Nottingham—I am trying to apply this closely to the money resolution—has done much good for its people. I was lucky enough to see the extremely good refurbishment of council houses, which it now takes five weeks to complete instead of a year. Young couples are able to obtain council houses, which is an opportunity that they would never have had if the Socialists had been in control. I disagree with the comments of the hon. Member for Ashfield about one of the best-run councils in the United Kingdom. I am sad that the hon. Gentleman—a man of such upstanding and outstanding worth—should have looked forward to linking arms with a Communist to control the city——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Now perhaps we can get to the money resolution.

Mr. Gummer: I was coming to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The money resolution has been attacked by the hon. Member for Ashfield, who said that the closure of nine coalfields would have an effect on——

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not refer to the closure of nine pits. I referred to the closure of five out of nine.

Mr. Gummer: I am sorry—the closure of five out of nine coal mines. That meant that the rates that would have come from those five hypothecated coal pits would no longer come to the local authority. That is true. But the rate support grant that is given to the local authority is adjusted to take account of the reduced local resources. The hon. Member for Ashfield always wants to have it both ways. I now see that I should have given way to him. That would have been a useful point to make in the middle of a debate that was perhaps even better attended than this one.

It was a pity that the hon. Member for Ashfield referred to laws that "that lot"—the Conservatives—had passed. These are not laws that we have passed. They are laws that Parliament has passed. It is important in a democracy to accept that, when Parliament has decided, we have all decided and we all obey those laws. We now have an Opposition who say that they do not pay taxes that they do not like, who advise other people not to pay taxes that they do not like, and who do not sack Opposition spokesmen who promote that view. Therefore, the hon. Member for Ashfield is only taking his cue from his leader.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) asked whether there would be extra payment for the legal costs of disentangling the arguments that would result from the money resolution. One reason for this simple stocktaking system is that we do not want to have vast legal costs and arguments to decide whether this or that audited report is right or wrong, or whether this or that date which this or that local authority decides is right is the right one. We have a simple system about which legal arguments cannot obtain, because it is what we received on 7 July. There is a good reason for doing that.

Cardiff city council had a very long time—well before it produced its budgets and well before 7 July was near—to make such adjustments to its spending as it thought suitable. It did not do so. I find it difficult to say that Ministers, the House and the whole of the United Kingdom must wait for Cardiff city council to decide at what point it will please it to meet the statutory requirements. It is not unreasonable, when all that time has been given, to take the figures that were given by the council's financial officer, and signed by him as the best estimates that he could give, as the figures upon which the Government could act. I cannot see that there is an alternative if one is moving from one system to another.

Mr. Michael *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: We are about to move into the Committee stage of the Bill and I do not wish to presume upon your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I have a suspicion that you might suggest that detailed discussions of the Bill's effect on Cardiff city council would be more appropriately dealt with when we come to the clause which covers that matter.

Mr. Michael *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I am happy to continue arguing with the hon. Gentleman, but I have given way to him, if not four times, then certainly three, so I do not intend to do so again.

Mr. Michael *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I gave way three times and my hon. Friend the Minister gave way once. That was four times in one debate. It is not unreasonable to complete this debate without giving way.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) talked about staffing resources. I do not have an exact figure. We have suggested that, with a system that most people can understand, it is likely that fewer people will be needed to organise it at local authority level than if it were complicated. That is all that has been carried out.

I cannot accept that it is reasonable for local authorities such as Brent to fail to deliver their figures months after the date on which they are supposed to do so. I cannot see that one can run a public authority on the basis that Greenwich runs its public authority when, after having repeatedly been asked for the figures, it still does not give them. Greenwich received the form for 1986-87 on 26 May for return by 31 July 1987, but had still not returned it by 7 July 1988.

How can we have accountability and a sensible system of running local authorities when people cannot produce

[Mr. Gummer]

a form a year after it is sent to them? A private business would be struck off the companies register if it behaved in that way. Someone would make it clear that it had to be done and would come round and collect the form. It is certainly not reasonable for the hon. Gentleman to complain that the Government should have allowed more time. We cannot give him the figures that he wants, because some authorities seem to find it difficult even to fill in a form on time.

I do not know how Brent intends to deal with this, just as we do not know how Brent intends to clean up the streets. The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) is no longer present—I am sorry that Labour Front-Bench Members are not here to discuss the money resolution which their supporters regard as so important—but, in the light of his comment about people wanting their streets kept clean, I hope that he will go to Brent and see what happens when a Left-wing Labour authority cannot, and in certain areas says that it will not, keep the streets clean.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: No, I shall not give way. The hon. Member who made the point is not here, so he deserves to have it thrown back at him.

I was surprised to hear the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) raise the subject of rent arrears, as one of our problems has been that Labour authorities have not called on people to pay the rent that is due. They have not collected the rents, and have very often then asked taxpayers elsewhere, in local authorities which have collected their rents, to make up the shortfall. That seems wholly unacceptable. The hon. Gentleman must look a little beyond Bradford and ask himself whether it is fair that other people should bear the burden of an authority that has failed to collect its own rents.

As for the hon. Gentleman's comments about the Social Security Act, we are spending more money on social security, not less, but we are concentrating that greater amount on those who most need it. The result, therefore, should be more regular payment of rents rather than less. It is only because of Labour party propaganda that anyone has used that Act as an excuse.

The battle in Bradford, and in many other places, is not so much about the town hall being run by one lot of people rather than another, but about whether it should be run by cosy arrangements with the unions or on the basis of value for money. If local authorities were run on the basis of value for money, the money would be available to provide the services that are necessary in so many areas. The hon. Member for Bradford, North will rue the day he raised the subject of rent arrears, because in this regard Labour authorities are the experts. It is they who have failed to collect the rents and then had the effrontery to ask the general taxpayer to pay for their incompetence and their uselessness.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The debt counselling unit of Bradford citizens advice bureau has done an impressive job in reducing rent arrears by advising people how to manage their affairs more effectively, but the CAB is threatened with closure because the new Tory controlling group is threatening to remove its funding from the budget as well as refusing to provide additional funding for the debt counselling unit. We share the Minister's concern about the rent arrears and other debts that are building up as a direct result of Government credit policy. Will he therefore ensure that Bradford CAB receives the necessary support to continue its important work and that extra funding is made available by the Department of Trade and Industry to the CAB nationally so that people can be given more advice about managing their affairs, which will help to reduce the debts about which he and I are so concerned?

Mr. Gummer: Although I understand the hon. Gentleman, there appear to be two precisely opposite points. The hon. Member for Bradford, North said that the amount of rent arrears in Bradford had increased out of all proportion. The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) has asked me to congratulate the CAB on the reduction in rent arrears. It must be one or the other. I have great respect for the CAB, which is an extremely efficient body that works hard in my constituency. I do not know the precise arrrangements in Bradford for its funding because I believe in local government and I expect Bradford city council to make its own decisions on how to spend its ratepayers' money. Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I do not believe in central control over how local authorities make decisions.

Mr. Wall *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman because I have been very tough about his remarks.

Mr. Wall: Rent arrears in Bradford have risen to above £2 million for the first time. However, that does not conflict with what my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) said. Considerable efforts have been made to reduce that debt. The problems of debt arise, not because people deliberately want to defraud other citizens who are paying their rent, but because of the impossible position in which those people now find themselves.

I deliberately refer to Doncaster, which has a Labour administration. According to the Audit Commission, it has one of the best records for rent collection in the country. It is not the most prosperous area, but it has the Yorkshire tradition of meeting its bills. If rent arrears in Doncaster have risen by 50 per cent., it is a sign of real problems for families. The problem will be compounded even further by the increase in rents in Bradford well above the level of inflation, and in electricity prices nationally. It is really striking home that the CAB has had to put at least half its staff on to debt counselling, which shows that there is a real problem, not just some invention.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman must still face the fact that the Government have increased the amount provided for social security, but have directed it at those who are most in need. Therefore, those who were least able to pay their rents should now be able more easily to pay them. That is a fact of life. If hon. Gentlemen insist——

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone) *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I shall not give way, as I have given way many times already during this debate, as I did in the previous one.

If we are to have a society in which we try to help those who are least well off, it means that those who can afford

to pay their rents should be encouraged to do so as a matter of priority, rather than that being put at the bottom of the list.

Mr. Allen McKay *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I shall not give way. I have already told the hon. Gentleman that.

It is clear that Labour authorities are less willing, less enthusiastic and less hard working in the collection of rents than are Conservative authorities. Until that is changed I shall take no lessons from those who fail to produce the figures, but who ask the remainder of the community—decent, hard-working people who pay their rents—to pay their rents in advance.

It being three-quarters of an hour after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Rate Support Grants Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.

[Mr. Gummer]

Foreign Marriage (Amendment) Bill *[Lords]*

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

10.59 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): The Bill tidies up the legislation relating to marriages abroad. In their report on the subject published last year the English and Scottish Law Commissions decided against recommending a comprehensive reform of the choice of law rules relating to marriage, but, nevertheless, they considered that there was scope for detailed reform of some provisions of the Foreign Marriage Act 1892. The useful result is this small Bill. The schedule alone perhaps merits a footnote in the text books of constitutional history.

I am grateful to the House for the support that has been accorded to the Bill and to the Law Commissions for their endeavour, and I commend its Third Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Road Traffic (Penalty Points)

11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I beg to move,

That the draft Penalty Points (Alteration) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 21st October 1988, be approved.

It is not just the law that has led this country to having the lowest road casualty rate of those countries that have cars and whose populations drink. In about 1983, in relation to population and the number of motor vehicles, Japan's casualty rate improved dramatically and, I think, led the world. It is generally recognised now that Britain is in the lead. Last year, our casualty rate dropped by 10 per cent. We had about a 5 per cent. reduction in casualties. In 1987, the number of people killed and seriously injured was reduced by about 5 to 6 per cent. There are many things to be grateful for.

What we cannot be grateful for is that road offences contributed to a large number of the 5,200 people who died and the 300,000 who were injured on our roads last year. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State set a target of cutting the number of casualties by one third by the year 2000, so that, within the next 11 years, we want to save about 1,700 lives and about 100,000 injuries a year.

There can be nothing more serious in transport than safety. During the last year or so, the House has heard about many transport safety issues. The House rightly gives attention to air safety, public transport safety, and safety at sea. Tragically, one can add up the deaths on other forms of transport but they would not amount to more than the number of road deaths in a month or two in a bad year. We cannot put names to the people who will die or be injured, but we know roughly how many child pedestrians, cyclists, car drivers, lorry drivers and so on will be killed or injured. The facts are too obvious and too serious to allow the present situation to continue.

I now refer to the role of the law. Obviously, the police have an important job in enforcement, but it is not purely in enforcement. They do a great deal of work in school road safety education. They are welcomed in most schools. I acknowledge that there is little political in road casualty reduction. The police do good work, road safety officers do good work, and many parents do what they can to encourage road safety training for children. I pay tribute to the media, especially local and regional media—radio, television and newspapers—who constantly return to what we can do to make safer our co-operative interaction on the roads.

There is a role for the courts, which is imposing penalties after due convictions. The purpose of the order is to increase penalty points for four road traffic offences. Those offences are careless or inconsiderate driving, failure to stop after an accident, failing to give particulars or report an accident, and driving without insurance against third party risks. The order, if passed, would come into effect on 1 March 1989.

The increases arise from recommendations in the report of the road traffic law review, the North report. I pay tribute to those who served on the committee. I recommend those who have an interest to read the report, which is closely argued and well presented in plain English.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): My hon. Friend has referred to the North committee, which

reported in April, and he invited many outside bodies and organisations to comment on the report by September. My hon. Friend is bringing forward proposals that pre-empt any of the consultations which may or may not have taken place. In other words, he has not really given sufficient time for outside bodies to bring forward their views on the North report. Why is my hon. Friend being so hasty?

Mr. Bottomley: The North committee put out for consultation some initial views. My hon. Friend rightly says that the committee reported in April. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave his preliminary response to the North report on 26 July. In that was the decision to recommend to the House the four specific changes that are before us. Anyone who reads the 16th and 17th chapters of the North report will find the reasons for that.

My hon. Friend will recognise also that the Government are not putting to the House precisely what the North committee recommended. Our proposals incorporate more flexibility than that which the committee recommended. It is worth noticing also that the primary body with the most major concern is the Royal Automobile Club. As an associate member of the RAC, I lean rather more to the Automobile Association's views than those of the RAC, but I do not want to try to balance the numbers in either organisation.

We are trying to deal with the problems that arise from a range of careless or inconsiderate driving offences, along with failure to stop after an accident, failure to report an accident or give particulars of it, and driving without insurance against third-party risks. The issue is why there should be further delay if the House comes to the conclusion, as the North committee did, that these problems should be brought into the open.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Does my hon. Friend agree that one body that might have an interest in this matter is the Magistrates Association, whose members have to administer the law? What has the association's response been to these proposals, and what account has my hon. Friend taken of its views in coming to his conclusion?

Mr. Bottomley: I have taken fair account of the association's views and I have spent quite a lot of time with magistrates. I have not been able to get round to all the county associations, but when I was with 300 magistrates in a particular county, not one of them raised one of the four issues that are before us, even though the relevant announcement was made on 26 July.

I welcome the views that are submitted by the association, but I do not believe that there is a burning sense of injustice that the discretion that magistrates traditionally want, which was not recommended by the inter-departmental working party report in 1981, nor by the North committee, has not been given to them.

It is obvious to the majority, and certainly to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), whose motoring interests are well known to me and to the House as a whole, that there are three opportunities for the exercise of discretion. Perhaps the middle one is not really discretion. The first opportunity rests with whether a motorist is charged. The police can issue an informal warning or a caution. The second opportunity lies with whether the court finds that an alleged offence is proved. The third opportunity arises when consideration is given to what the penalty shall be. It is worth noting that in none of these offences are we talking about immediate disqualification. Instead, we are discussing a range of penalty points.

If a motorist subsequently or previously accumulates penalty points, it is up to the court to exercise its discretion when determining what the period of disqualification should be. If a motorist feels that he has been unlucky in being charged and has been wrongly convicted, and has penalty points, he may have a sense of grievance. Such a case would require the magistrates to impose a period of disqualification which would be disproportionate to the various offences.

I do not think that anyone would claim that any particular range is necessarily precise or that no argument could be advanced for a wider range or for no range at all, so we should remove the discretion element. I submit that what is before the House makes sense.

It might be sensible if I were to end my introductory remarks now, listened to hon. Members' views and responded in greater detail later rather than trying to anticipate what might be said. There has been much discussion about undercharging and, in the Government's view, the careless driving offence should go to the top of the proposed range. I remind the House that the North committee recommended that any offence that would earn two penalty points would more properly be dealt with by a caution or a warning.

The number of people who fail to stop after an accident, possibly because of links to drink driving, has been rising. The failure to give particulars or report an accident where necessary is an important offence and can lead to a lack of compensation and redress for innocent parties in crashes. To drive without insurance is a serious office and the House should demonstrate that by accepting the proposed changes.

If there are points to which I should respond later, I will do so.

11.10 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The issue of consultation has already been raised by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) and I have considerable sympathy with his view. I do not think that it is satisfactory to come to the House and say that, because the Government's view was trailed, that is an excuse for not allowing the consultation process its full merit. It is worth considering what the North committee said about consultation. Paragraph 1.8 states:

"It was, in our view, very desirable to give the widest opportunity for that experience to be made available to us. For many people the use of the roads is the aspect of their lives where their own behaviour and the rules laid down by Parliament and enforced by the police most often come together. We took the view, therefore, that it was essential that road traffic law should command the widest possible support. This made it important that everyone concerned about the areas of road traffic law to which we were directed should have, and feel that they had had, an opportunity to convey their views to us."

I commend that principle to the Minister. Inevitably the way in which the public perceive the laws and penalties that Parliament imposes is of fundamental importance to the success with which our road traffic laws are operated.

On this occasion I am in the rather unusual position of agreeing essentially with the Government's proposals, but there is a real issue about consultation. I hope that in future the Department of Transport and the Ministers

[Mr. Tony Lloyd]

involved will accept that the public are more reassured by a proper consultation exercise and the belief that it takes account of a diversity of views even though inevitably in the nature of things where views are contrary some will have to be ignored.

I join the Minister in saying that many hon. Members view with some seriousness the fact that road traffic offences are seen in a different light from many other forms of behaviour that bring the individual into conflict with the law. There is a sense in which road traffic offences are seen as being morally neutral or acceptable. In passing laws, it is important that the House makes it clear that they are backed by the sanctions of Parliament and that, where offences have serious consequences for society in general, there can be no argument other than that the penalties should reflect the serious consequences.

The Royal Automobile Club wrote to all hon. Members, commenting on the changes that the order seeks to introduce, and perhaps it will help if I go through them one by one. Careless driving must be seen in the light of the North report's general comments—that that offence must be taken in the context of other changes that the report recommends.

It is a little unsatisfactory that we have a small measure before the House tonight when major legislation is, one assumes, to be delayed for at least one full Session. Perhaps the Minister will say what is in the Government's mind in introducing a more substantial review of the law in the light of the North report.

There will inevitably be some dissatisfaction if the present offence of reckless driving will, at the lowest level, attract only one penalty point more than careless driving. I do not want Conservative Members to imagine that I am over-sympathetic with the view that a nine-point penalty is not appropriate for careless driving. North and his colleagues clearly make the point that there are certain circumstances in which careless driving must be viewed as a very serious offence; they describe it as "a quite serious offence."

There are circumstances in which "a quite serious offence" merits an individual being subject to a penalty level that will take him three quarters of the way to disqualification, which is the argument put forward in the report. I should not want Conservative Members to assume that, because I sympathise with the view that we are in danger of having too narrow a differential between the offences of reckless driving and careless driving, I believe that the maximum penalty for careless driving should be altered. That, too, is a serious offence, and the nine-point penalty reflects that it is.

I accept the point made in the report and reiterated by the Minister that, at the lower level, if an offence is not worthy of at least three penalty points, the offender should not be required to appear before the courts. However, such a policy needs to be clearly defined by the Department and thoroughly understood by those responsible for its administration. It is at the point where people are brought before the court for a relatively trivial offence, and consequently feel a sense of injustice, that the law will cease to command the respect of the motoring public.

For the offence of failing to stop after an accident or failing to report one, the balance that is before the House tonight is about right. In most circumstances, that ought to be viewed as a serious offence. The RAC makes the point that there are circumstances in which failing to stop after or to report an accident may seem a trivial or technical offence. If it is the result of ignorance, then, as North comments, no offence can really be said to have been committed. Again, a purely technical or trivial offence ought not to merit court proceedings.

The alternative is the calculated offence of deliberately failing to stop after or to report an accident. It must be viewed seriously in the light of the increasing number of such offences, particularly the oft quoted example where the offender concerned has been drinking and driving, and whose failure to stop or report the accident is a way of getting round automatic disqualification.

I believe that I am correct in thinking that one of the reasons why the Government diverge from North in that respect is the way in which the law is structured. They insist that, rather than have a fixed penalty, it is necessary to substitute one range of penalties for another. Therefore, this Parliament has inevitably saddled itself with some slight untidiness in its primary legislation.

Driving without insurance should be viewed as a very serious offence. I do not feel that it can be argued that there is such a thing as a technical offence in this context. Failure to be insured should command little sympathy from hon. Members, for the consequences are potentially very serious for those who may be accident victims. I have little sympathy with the suggestion that a "technical offence" should receive a lower penalty. I consider that, if anything, the upper range is about right, although the courts will be able to use their discretion in applying a penalty of between six and eight points. But it must be firmly established that two offences of failure to possess adequate insurance cover would lead to disqualification, because it would be criminal folly for the offence to be repeated. In some circumstances, the deliberate failure to carry insurance should, in my view, lead to automatic disqualification, but that again would have to be taken into account by the courts.

It would be helpful if the Minister took us into his confidence and told us how the North report generally will be dealt with, and if he would comment specifically on consultation. As I have said, I have some sympathy with his hon. Friend the Member for Northfield, who has his own doubts about that aspect.

11.21 pm

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I consider tonight's proceedings very unsatisfactory. If I were speaking on behalf of all motorists, which I do not claim to do, I should feel that they, too, would think this an unsatisfactory way of handling a matter that is of such importance to so many people.

I share the pleasure of my hon. Friend the Minister at the reduction in the number of road casualties, but I would ask him—with respect for what he has done in this regard—if we could proclaim it a little less often. Circumstances in one country are so different from those in another, and it is a simple fact that 5,000 deaths a year are far too many. Perhaps if we increase the rate of congestion and reduce the speed of cars still further—I believe that the average in London is now 11 mph—we would reduce the number of road casualties even further. But the number of casualties

is terrifyingly high, and I fear that we are tempting fate if we proclaim too often that we are better than other countries.

Why do I feel that today's debate is so unsatisfactory? Many motorists who break the law are often guilty of criminal behaviour—criminal in the fullest sense of the word. In many cases they should receive prison sentences for their crimes. Sometimes they do, but perhaps not often enough. Many others, however, are perfectly decent, ordinary citizens who are guilty of one error of judgment, or sometimes of technical errors.

Because there is such a range of difference between these people, I believe that we must always leave it to the magistrate to make the final judgment about whether they should receive a very severe or a very minor penalty. There is a difference between the technical and the criminal offence. That is where I disagree with the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), particularly in regard to driving without insurance. It is a very serious offence, and in some cases a sentence of imprisonment may be appropriate, but in others it may be a technical matter. That is why I worry about the proposals that we are debating.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Will the hon. Gentleman nevertheless accept that even in the most technical offences the absence of insurance can have dramatic consequences for the victims of accidents, for instance?

Mr. Moate: I agree. We do not regard it as a serious enough offence. In some circumstances it should be treated very seriously, but please let us leave it to the magistrates to judge when such an offence is a technical one and when it merits further penalties. The maximum penalty is not enough, but we ought not to apply strict minimum penalties, as is done throughout the order, for a range of offences which sometimes are only technical.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Moate: No. I should like to make my general point. I do not intend to speak for very long.

The North report is tremendously important, but we have not debated it. The Government announced in July what they intended to do, and organisations were invited to comment by the end of September. A number of hon. Members have gleaned information about it, but only a very small number of hon. Members are here. We have picked up information from whatever sources are available to us. That is a most unsatisfactory way in which to debate very important matters. I am not attacking my hon. Friend the Minister. I know that he is passionately concerned about these matters. We must not, however, be cavalier or superficial, which we are becoming, simply because there is a large Government majority, with orders of this kind being carried almost automatically. We must not take the parliamentary procedure for granted. In this case we are in danger of doing so.

I feel very strongly about this issue. The penalties that we are allowed to impose are in many cases not severe enough. I fear that the order will provide an excuse for inaction rather than for action over road penalties. I am particularly concerned about the maximum penalties that magistrates can impose if people drive while disqualified —people whose activities are near-criminal, because they go on the road time and time again, although they have already been proved to be a menace to other road users. The same applies to people who drive time and time again without insurance. The magistrates do not have the power to impose sufficiently harsh penalties.

This minor order, which is defective in many ways, has been introduced late at night, without very much notice, and the House is taking very little notice of it. I do not believe that that is the way to deal with serious matters of this kind.

That is my general complaint. My specific observations are these. I should have liked the order to retain lower minimum penalties. I do not object to the higher maximum penalties. To drive while uninsured or while disqualified, and also careless driving and failing to stop after an accident, can be technical offences. In those cases, magistrates ought to have the power to take account of the circumstances and impose a lower penalty. If the minimum penalty imposed in such cases is so high, it might result, if another not very serious motoring offence is involved, in the disqualification of a driver who ought not to be disqualified.

It is all out of balance. Often we penalise, I shall not say the innocent, because nobody on the road is innocent; we are in charge of motor cars that can be dangerous. We cannot plead innocence or ignorance if we infringe the law. However, we often penalise disproportionately the decent citizen compared with the way in which we deal with the near-criminal person who disregards the law, takes his vehicle on the road and endangers other people's lives carelessly, frequently and time after time. The subject is worthy of much more debate. The order does not arouse my admiration.

11.28 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I welcome this attempt to distinguish between minor traffic offences and serious traffic crimes, in particular when unsafe and dangerous driving is involved. I am pleased that the legislation increases the penalties for careless driving—a charge that in practice is often laid because of the difficulty of identifying bad driving as reckless driving. It has often proved to be difficult clearly to define reckless driving, which warrants the imposition of stricter penalties than are imposed for genuinely careless driving.

Careless driving covers a variety of driving offences. If we provide a wider range of penalties, covering anything from leaving a junction without paying due care and attention to hitting a stationary vehicle, we are giving the courts flexibility to distinguish between different offences.

I take this opportunity briefly to raise an issue arising from an incident in my constituency. A Ministry of Defence lorry drove into a car carrying some of my constituents. The car had stopped at a junction and the traffic lights had been red for some time. My constituents tell me that they were told that the police no longer took action in such cases. That seems extraordinary. It is to be hoped that the order will go some way towards correcting the position. I am raising the matter in the meantime, and I hope that the Minister will feel able to comment on that general point. He is indicating that he will not, which is understandable, but I hope that we shall be able to get to the root of the matter, as it gives cause for considerable concern. In the case to which I referred, serious whiplash injuries were suffered, as well as major damage to the car, and it seems extraordinary that no action should have been taken.

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

I have some reservations about the minimum penalty for failing to report an accident, which is being increased from four to eight points. I understand why some hon. Members say that it is a serious offence in many cases, but I agree with the hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) that that is not always so. It seems a somewhat questionable move to set the minimum level at eight points, given that the penalty for drunken driving is 10 points.

I feel very strongly about the penalties for lack of insurance. If we are to attach high penalty points to that offence—as I believe we should—we must be sure that people are made aware of the technical breaches that exist so that they can avoid them. Many people with "any driver" insurance assume that that term means what it says. In practice, they are usually not insured for under-25s or for people with a record of accidents.

I have spoken to insurance brokers and to members of the general public. The general public are often not aware of the problem, whereas many insurance brokers seem to regard it as neither here nor there. It is just one of those things, and people do not pay much attention to it. Even those brokers who mention it to drivers they are insuring do not really expect them to remember it. Is there anything that the Government can do to draw people's attention to the potential seriousness of not being properly insured? Even if someone is not directly responsible for an accident and no careless driving has been involved, his lack of insurance can have very serious consequences for those whom he injures.

I support those hon. Members who have complained about the consultation process. It is not acceptable for the Government to say that responses have to be in by September and then make the announcement in July. There may be general support for what the Government seek to do in this measure. We would certainly all support the objective of reducing accidents and ensuring that people are properly compensated when their vehicles are damaged or when they are injured. However, that is no reason for the Government to announce a consultation period and then to short-circuit it.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In precisely what way are the Government or the North committee supposed to have been deficient in the consultation process?

Mr. Taylor: I shall give the Minister a straightforward example. The RAC understood that its response had to be submitted by September——

Mr. Bottomley: There may be a lot of reliance on the RAC, and I pay tribute to it in many respects, but it will have seen the Secretary of State's press notice of 26 July, which talks about what is accepted in principle, what conclusions are accepted where views are sought, and states:

"Regulations will be amended"—

which is shorthand for saying proposed to Parliament——

"in the autumn to change the penalty points awarded for the offences of driving without insurance; failure to stop after an accident; and for careless driving."

It then gave the proposed new ranges. It was about as specific a statement of Government intentions as is possible. It was made in July. It seems to me that, given the great interest in the House and outside in having the North committee's report and the Government's response brought forward, the one thing of which we cannot seriously be accused is lack of consultation. In anticipation of winding up the debate, may I say that paragraph 1.8 is the North committee talking about its own consultation.

Mr. Taylor: What the Minister has said is of some interest to hon. Members. We shall see what the response is. It would have been helpful to organisations if they had known that the Government intended to bring forward their basic response. If the Minister is saying that there is still time for the fine tuning of consultation, perhaps organisations could have been told, or perhaps there might have been a separate procedure.

I hope that the Government will learn from these criticisms and will not repeat the exercise. Nevertheless, I think that there is general support for what the Government are trying to do, and I hope that the order will be approved.

11.36 pm

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): I declare my non-financial interest as a member of the RAC public policy committee, which examines proposals for legislation and comments on them. There has already been much discussion of the briefing that the RAC has sent out.

The RAC is as committed as the Minister—I can give it no higher praise—to road safety. It strongly believes that people who flagrantly disobey the law should attract the highest penalty. What the RAC and I, as a motorist, object to is not the increase in penalties at the top, but the lack of flexibility. It is not good enough to say "If it is a technical offence the case will not be proceeded with." The law is the law. I fear that some policemen are slightly overzealous and might push prosecutions which others would not.

The danger associated with imposing higher penalties is that treatment could be very unequal as between different parts of the country. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister wants to avoid that. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) said that an "any driver" certificate would not cover any driver under age 25. I do not think that that is quite correct, but the small print, which the driver or owner often does not read, can make a tremendous difference to the cover. In such circumstances, there can be much innocent breaking of the law, or at least unintentional breaking of the law. That is to say nothing of cover notes that do not arrive, cover notes that are incorrectly written, postal strikes and other factors.

Mr. Bottomley: It would be helpful, in view of my hon. Friend's experience, if he could say in what circumstances there is no insurance cover. If the cover note has not arrived but the insurance has been accepted by the insurance company, a person is insured although he does not have a cover note.

Mr. Fry: A cover note is not necessarily evidence of insurance. Some insurance brokers on the point of leaving their businesses issue cover notes like confetti and never pass them on to the insurance company, with the result that there is no cover. I assure my hon. Friend that in a whole range of cases the person who, technically, has broken the law is the innocent party because of the negligence of a third party who may be issuing the insurance.

Another example is that most insurance certificates allow someone to drive any car that is in the possession of the policy holder. There are occasions when, at the end of the year, or when the car is changed, the insurance company insists on a specified registration number, or may suggest limited terms. If the insured does not have the proper document at that time, I understand that there is a risk that a fairly high penalty point can be imposed against him. As has already been said, two comparatively minor offences can lead to a driver automatically losing his or her licence.

As for not reporting an accident, we all want the motorist who does not report an accident because he has had too much to drink, or because he has caused injury and is afraid of the consequences, to face the most severe penalty. However, I can give my hon. Friend an example that happens nearly every day. Many cars have offside mirrors, and when two cars are travelling down a narrow road their offside mirrors may touch. Technically, by not reporting that those mirrors touched, the drivers could be accused of not stopping and not reporting an accident. In that extreme circumstance, I do not think that many cases would go to court, but it illustrates that there is a vast difference between technically breaking the law and an accident in which someone has been run down and left by the side of the road and the motorist has driven away with no intention of reporting the accident.

I believe that my hon. Friend is guilty of not giving magistrates the necessary flexibility. I ask him to think again, particularly about the lower limits on driving without insurance and failing to stop after an accident.

It is very rare that the two Houses of Parliament debate the same subject. In the debate in the other place earlier tonight, not one speaker approved of the order. We want many of the recommendations of the North report to come into effect, but I agree that we should first have a major debate on the issue. If we do not have that debate, there will be the feeling that some people will be penalised because, late at night, a handful of us allowed this order to go through. Would it not be wiser for my hon. Friend to withdraw the order tonight, to complete the consultation period, to have a full parliamentary discussion and then to come forward with his proposals in toto in the spring? I suspect that then nearly everyone who is criticising him tonight will be with him in the Lobby.

11.43 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry), I regret very much that my hon. Friend the Minister has brought the order before the House tonight, in this form and with so little notice. It it extremely unsatisfactory.

I understand that the order has been brought forward now because a consolidation of the road traffic law is taking place. No doubt my hon. Friend is anxious that that consolidation should include the revised number of points for different offences so that the law is not immediately out of date. I am a member of the Joint Committee on Consolidation, &c. Bills, so I understand that there are reasons for wanting to tidy up the law in a sensible fashion, but quite frankly that is not sufficient reason for overriding the views of many parties who have an interest in the matter and for bringing forward an order without adequate consultation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough spoke about the RAC. It is unsatisfactory that an announcement should be made about a change in the law when the consultation period is in mid-stream.

The Magistrates Association is different from meetings of individual magistrates, because it brings together the views of magistrates as a whole. It has not yet met to consider its formal response to the North report, but it has submitted a draft response. I understand that the meeting to consider and confirm its response will take place on Thursday. Even so, many changes to the recommendations of the North report are implemented in the order. Is my hon. Friend aware that the Magistrates Association, in its draft response, has said that the present minimum of five points for failure to stop is too high and should be reduced? Is that not something that we should debate properly? Surely we should consider the association's views before we implement the law. It is the magistrates who will have the job of ensuring that the law is administered.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: I disagree with the view that the low limit should be even lower, but the hon. Gentleman is right in saying that that matter should be properly debated by the House. When we take into account the fact that the order will not come into force until March next year, there can be no argument against the fact that the laying of the order could have been delayed until the consultations for which the hon. Gentleman and I are arguing have taken place.

Mr. Waller: The hon. Gentleman is right. The only reason for bringing it forward now is to include the points tariff in the consolidated law, and that is not a sufficiently good reason.

It might be helpful to go back to 1981, when my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) and I were on the Standing Committee that considered the original tariff and penalty points proposals. It is interesting to note that when the Government initially brought forward their plans relating to failure to stop there was a single six-point system. We debated that for a full morning in Committee. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) went away after the debate and supported the views that had been expressed in Committee. He came back, after giving the matter considerable thought and having consulted widely, and introduced the range of five to nine points for that offence. It was not something that somebody thought of off the top of his head. It was carefully considered.

On page 172, in paragraph 16.23, the North report refers to the failure to stop. The committee concluded:

"Of course prosecution discretion would filter out many minor cases".

That is quite right. However, other cases would not be filtered out by discretion. Is my hon. Friend the Minister saying that there should be no mid-point between a caution and eight points? Offences do not happen like that. Many different types of offence are involved in a failure to stop. The idea that one can distinguish clearly between those which should have a caution and those which should have eight points is nonsense. Further thought should be given to that.

When the Standing Committee considered that matter on 19 March 1981, it was not argued that we should be more lenient. One of the reasons why we argued the point so fervently was that we believed that some cases should

[Mr. Waller]

have more than six points. It is interesting that, when one looks back at the points that one made, one still agrees with them. I said:

"However, in this case of failing to stop after an accident, it seems to me that the variation between the most minor type of offence of this nature and the most serious is enormous. That is why I propose that a considerable amount of discretion should be left to the courts. In fact, I propose that there should be a minimum of two points and a maximum of ten."

The Committee debated various options and there was a vote on a range of four to eight points, on which the Committee divided equally. There was strong feeling that a considerable range of options should be considered.

I continued:

"In the event that someone drives into a bus queue, knowing full well that he or she has had far too much drink and that there is no possible way that he or she could pass a test for the presence of drugs or alcohol, that person has a considerable incentive to get away as quickly as possible. Surely we need a penalty which takes account of that sort of incentive. In other words, I think that ten points is not too high a penalty for such an offence and that the six points specified in the Bill is too few to deter someone who wishes to make such a getaway."

I later referred to the more minor type of offence and said:

"I argue that there is variation in the range of accidents and that an accident in which a driver knocked people down and then drives off to escape the consequences is considerably more serious than many other incidents of failure to stop."

Many hon. Members referred to cases of failure to stop. The late Martin Stevens, who was a magistrate, said:

"there is hardly a motoring offence that comes before the courts where the degree of gravity varies more widely than the offence of failure to stop. It can be a purely technical offence."

This is the offence for which my hon. Friend the Minister proposes that there should be a range of only two points. Martin Stevens' words are worth recalling. He said:

"It is not unknown for motorists to suppose that they have reported the offence whereas, in reality—because no proper note was taken or they did not give their name and address in the proper form, or because of a technical deficiency either in the way in which they made their statement or in the way in which it was recorded—what they thought they had done does not amount to reporting. They therefore find themselves, to their surprise, accused of failure to report.

That is the type of case—there are many—where a magistrate would give a defendant an absolute discharge, where there is no guilty mind and the defendant is possibly the victim of someone else's error."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 19 March 1981; c. 1144-48.]

In such a case, someone could be charged with failure to stop.

I should like to refer to a case that has been brought to my attention recently. A lady was driving off a motorway slip road and as she stopped at a roundabout she felt a tap at the rear of her car. She realised that the following car, whose driver had failed to pay attention to vehicles approaching from the right of the roundabout, had moved and slightly struck the rear of her car. Because she thought that no damage had been done and the roundabout was a dangerous place to stop—the accident clearly was not her fault—she drove off. The incident was witnessed by the police, who stopped her and warned her. Although it was not her fault—she had not thought it a good place to stop—she was told that she would be reported with a view to action being taken against her for failing to stop and report an accident. I do not know the outcome of the case, as no decision has yet been made. It is a case where an innocent party, who made an error of judgment in not stopping as soon as she could, may find that she has eight penalty points on her licence.

There are many minor offences of that kind, and if one doubts that one should look at the table of offences in Scotland, which is included in the North report. In 45 cases in 1986, only a fine of up to £5 was imposed. In a further 228 cases, a fine of up to £10 was imposed. Should not the points tariff bear some relationship to the fine and the way in which the magistrates have assessed the case but found a technical offence? It must. It is nonsense to rely on discretion not to bring a charge. Often there will be such a charge.

There has been inadequate consultation on this matter and magistrates feel that this is unsatisfactory. If my hon. Friend the Minister presses ahead with the order, if will be passed. There are many hon. Members who have not heard the debate, but who could, if necessary, be called upon to support the order. If my hon. Friend withdraws the order, he will get great support from people throughout the country who will recognise that he has been willing to listen, that he wants to consult properly and that he intends to introduce another order soon, after it has been properly considered and debated, so that the House can give its view. If my hon. Friend does not do that, I am afraid that his reputation, as one who is concerned to change the law so that it reduces casualties, will be damaged. People will feel that we have not got off to a good start in passing the order.

11.55 pm

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): I share my hon. Friend's concern about discretion. The offences of failure to stop and exchange particulars and of failure to report can be extremely serious. In the worst examples, disqualification and imprisonment may be appropriate. I am worried that, by passing the order, we will put the fairly innocent offender in the same camp as the very guilty.

First, I shall give an example of failure to stop and exchange particulars. A man and his wife park their car in the high street. The man reverses the car gently and it bumps the car behind him. He says to his wife, "Will you give the people the particulars? I have to nip into the bank." The wife stays to exchange particulars and the man goes off to do his business. He is guilty of failure to stop and exchange particulars. There can be no doubt about that. He stands to get eight points, and we may think that that is wrong.

Secondly, I shall give an example of failure to report. A man driving home along a country lane after work skids going round a corner. His vehicle comes slightly off the road and hits a five-bar gate, causing it slight damage. He waits for a few minutes. No one is around, so he goes home. The next day, at lunchtime, he rings his police station and says, "By the way, I bumped a gate yesterday. No one was hurt." He is guilty of failure to report because the obligation is to report as soon as reasonably practicable. If he can report the incident in the evening when he gets home or at breakfast time, he must do so. If he reports the next day at lunchtime, he is guilty of failure to report. No other car or people were involved, only a fence. Do we want to put such a man in the same camp as the very guilty? If the order is passed, he, too, will get eight penalty points.

In those two examples, without doubt the offences of failure to stop and exchange particulars and of failure to report have been committed. It is not good enough to say that the police will exercise their discretion and not prosecute, because those are two reported cases where they have prosecuted. We must ensure that magistrates have the discretion to say, "This is a technical offence and we shall deal with it leniently," or, "This is a terrible offence and we shall deal with it harshly." The problem is that we are imposing a harsh penalty on the relatively innocent. That is unfair.

11.59 pm

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): Given the number of hon. Members who, to a man, have spoken against the order, it is clear that my hon. Friend the Minister should withdraw it. I appreciate that he wanted to let the traffic world know his and the Department's views and I therefore applaud to some extent his announcement in July, but I must question why just a few offences have been pulled out from the whole array of motoring offences. Surely the whole matter should be considered at length and in detail as it was in 1981. Only then can one balance and counterbalance the various ranges of penalty points against one another and provide heavy or light weighting for appropriate offences.

I sincerely hope that my hon. Friend has the authority to withdraw the order today as it is clear that wider consultation would be of benefit in deciding on the allocation of points to the various offences. There is a great deal of grievance on both sides of the House about this, and I very much hope that the order will be withdrawn.

12 midnight

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): At this hour I shall detain the House for no more than a few moments. There has clearly been a lack of opportunity to debate the road traffic law review report, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give us that opportunity at an early time.

There is certainly a need for wide publicity of penalties. In this context, I commend to my hon. Friend the possibility of sending out a list with the annual registration renewal form. In this debate, I shall deal briefly with just two or three examples.

Reference has been made to careless driving. Nine points for that offence would surely be draconian—just one point less than for reckless driving, although the whole House recognises the difference between the two offences.

For failure to stop after or report an accident, an automatic move to eight to 10 points will restrict magistrates' choice. We have heard examples of trivial and technical offences which come into this category, so a scale of two to 10 points would be more appropriate. Here I make not just a constituency point but a personal point. If one takes the trouble to report an accident—one may be involved in an accident with a third party—the police should be encouraged to keep one aware of what is taking place. Having done my public duty after a number of constituency engagements and reported a hit-and-run or other such incident to the North Yorkshire police, I have then not been informed at all of what subsequently took place. I have been delighted to hear of their vigilance and of the fact that prosecutions have been brought, but had I not persisted in asking I should still be in the dark.

Finally, on the subject of driving without insurance, will my hon. Friend the Minister have discussions with his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to ensure that we move to the system used in some countries whereby a valid insurance sticker must be displayed? If the insurance is cancelled, the relevant sticker is removed and returned to the insurance company. In that way, the public can tell at a glance from the relevant colour whether the vehicle is insured and whether the insurance is up to date.

I believe that the order is rather too hasty and has not been well considered by the Department. The wider scale of penalties that we should all like to see, not just on behalf of motorists but on behalf of those who enforce the law, is not available. I therefore urge my hon. Friend the Minister, whom I hold in very high regard in respect of road traffic matters, to heed what has been said today and to consider all those factors.

12.4 am

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I shall be brief because my hon. Friends have covered most of what I had intended to say. I am not yet convinced that there has been full consultation. It is strange to say that there will be consultation and then to introduce amendments to the four major items on which most people would want the opportunity to comment. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister could tell us about the attitude of the police to the recommendations that he has put before the House tonight.

One snag is that, if the goalposts are moved on the four important offences, what will happen with the linkage with all the other traffic offences such as speeding and so on? Without considering them all as a whole, there is a danger of going over the top with some and going light on others when the time comes to consider them all.

The most important consultation must surely be with this House. We could certainly have assisted in the debate on the vital issue of traffic safety. That concerns everyone, not only drivers, because we all have some connection with the roads. We could have put our views on whether to accept parts of the North report.

I agree with my hon. Friends about the question of failure to report an accident. On many occasions innocence could cause the unreporting of an accident. A bump at Hyde Park corner may, with a shrug of the shoulders and a certain gesture, make one party think that there is no damage. He might drive off and not report the accident, but subsequently the other party might report it and he is then guilty of a high penalty offence. A level of eight to 10 penalty points is too high, and perhaps a return to a lower minimum of four points would be better.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) gave examples of the conflict that could occur with uninsured driving in quite innocent circumstances. With a six to eight range of penalty points, there is not sufficient distinction between the car thief, the joy riders and those who wilfully ignore the law and the old lady or gentleman whose memory has lapsed and has committed a technical offence. They may be guilty of driving while uninsured, but there is a great difference between their offence and that of the car thief or joy rider.

Ideally, my hon. Friend should postpone this order to a later date, but I do not think that he will do so. I hope that he will comment in some detail on the points that have been raised tonight.

12.8 am

Mr. Peter Bottomley: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker—*[Interruption.]* I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) would want me to repeat his remark. It is, perhaps, an echo of what some of my hon. Friends have said.

My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) offered a friendly caution against telling the truth about the reduction in road casualties. I am not in any way complacent about the cut in the number of casualties. I simply believe that there would not have been the significant reductions last year and, to some extent, this year without a large number of people modifying their behaviour.

There has been no change in the law on sentencing or in enforcement during the past two years, yet there has been a continued reduction in road casualties even though the mileage driven has risen. It has been almost across the board, with the exception of child pedestrians. Motor cycle rates have reduced faster than the drop in motor cycling itself and the car casualty rate has also reduced. Much of that has happened because we no longer put the burden solely on the police and the courts. Most people are now trying to drive better more often because they realise that that is important for themselves and that it is their duty as road users.

I do not want anything in this debate, which is about penalties available to the courts, to take anything away from us all realising that, if we were to drive from here to Birmingham, most of us would commit enough offences to lose our licences, even under the existing penalty point system.

Mr. Roger King: Speak for yourself.

Mr. Bottomley: I do speak for myself.

Because it goes with the job, I was asked to take the Institute of Advanced Motorists test and the RoSPA advanced driver test. I told them both that they would get more publicity if they failed me, but they still said that I had passed. I am aware that I am by no means perfect in my driving. I try to improve. We shall all realise that we make mistakes. As my hon. Friends have said, driving is one of the few areas where carelessness can be a criminal offence, and we should be aware of that. It is one of the major themes running through the North report. The House will join me in paying another tribute to the committee members who went out to consultation.

Two groups of hon. Members have spoken in the debate. Contributions have come from my hon. Friends the Members for Faversham and for Keighley (Mr. Waller). Other hon. Members may also have been involved in the 1981 legislation, which went from totting up three equal offences to losing one's licence, to the points system that has generally been welcomed.

There is a range of views. I was asked for the police view. The police and others put forward the view that, especially with a failure to stop offence, if one is in a large vehicle and is not aware that one has been involved in touching someone else's vehicle or having an accident, it would be unfair to have major penalties. As my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) said, if one is unaware that that has happened, one is almost certain not to have committed the offence of failing to stop after an accident. One must have knowledge of the crash, collision or scrape to be successfully charged and convicted.

Mr. Fry: How does one prove it?

Mr. Bottomley: I do not have the answer to how one proves most things in court.

I emphasise that a certain voice has not been heard in the debate. I do not criticise hon. Members for that. Last Saturday, the annual general meeting of the Campaign Against Drinking and Driving was held. People met, and the only thing that they had in common was that a member of their family had been killed by a drinking driver. Many of those families had to bear a court prosecution for careless driving in which the fact of death was not even reported, because it was not apparently the intention that anyone should have been killed. Often, when someone is convicted and sentenced, people start to discover the full circumstances. Many people in Britain feel a grievance that the person who was involved in the crash or collision that affected them had been under-charged.

I refer hon. Members to chapters 16 and 17 of the North committee's recommendations. They were not fully summarised in some of the representations that were put to some hon. Members. If I singled out the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), it is not because I want to pick on him, but when he was going on about this matter I realised that he had perhaps not had a full opportunity of reading chapters 16 and 17.

Paragraph 16.24 of the report states:

"We recommend that failure to stop after or to report an accident should carry 10 penalty points in all cases, and that the Magistrates Association should review its guidance on the use of disqualification for these offences with a view to securing an increase in the use of disqualification."

It continues:

"The appropriate bodies in Scotland should consider issuing guidance."

More argument appears before the statement, but the beginning of paragraph 16.24 states:

"The Magistrates Association's 'suggestions for traffic offences penalties' already advise magistrates to consider disqualification where both failure to stop and failure to report are present."

A motorway case was put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley. I thank him for letting me see details of it in advance. That case emphasises that the duty to stop when people know that there has been an accident is important. It protects the innocent, provides a reminder to those who may have been at fault—obviously, it is difficult to tell in advance who is at fault—and provides a basic protection. It is important that those who are involved in bumps should stop. There is the example of two wing mirrors touching each other, and one motorist stops but the other does not. The motorist who stops has a defence if he is subsequently charged with failing to stop after an accident.

Mr. Waller: Of course a person in that situation should stop, but is a misjudgment of that kind really on a par with being drunk in charge of a motor vehicle? It carries a penalty of 10 points, which is only two more than the minimum that might be imposed for failing to stop in the most superficially minor case.

Mr. Bottomley: That argument is advanced on the assumption that motorists are failing to stop after minor accidents and that the Crown Prosecution Service is taking

them to court. Points by themselves mean little. It is when they add up to 12 that disqualification takes place. The magistrates then have to decide what period of disqualification should apply, and, as I understand it, disqualification can range from one day to an extremely long period. We must take these issues together.

Mr. Malins: I mentioned two examples of offences that would be at the bottom end of cases of failure to stop and exchange particulars—we must not forget about the failure to exchange particulars. Are such offences not so wholly different from offences at the top end of the scale that a substantially different points penalty should be made available?

Mr. Bottomley: We need to——

Mr. Roger King: Just say yes.

Mr. Bottomley: If there is a growing number of cases of failure to stop, and if it is in general the intention of failing to stop that leads to the charge, followed by conviction and the penalty, we are on firmer ground. I expected to be criticised for watering down the North committee recommendations, which was for a flat 10 points. In the 1981 debate, it was the intervention of Conservative Back Benchers that led both to a minor lowering and a significant increasing of what the Government were then proposing.

I want to divorce the four offences and the penalties that are applicable to them from the major consideration of the North committee's recommendations. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made plain in July, there is a difference of treatment. Perhaps we could rightly be accused of complacency, although I recognise that we have not been this evening, if we had left these recommendations so that they could come with the fuller response in January. I was asked when the response will come. The Government plan to bring it forward in January.

My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) talked about the importance of publicity on penalties. We shall consider how we can both publish the penalties and the reason why the offences are offences. We should not talk merely of what will happen if I offend, for example. We must talk also of why it is important that drivers should stop after an accident and carry insurance. It is important that we should publicise the extent of careless or inconsiderate driving. It has been said that the one point difference between the maximum points penalty for careless driving and the penalty for reckless driving seems small. In practice, the CPS has to decide whether to bring a charge of careless or reckless driving and we need to see a significant overlap.

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): I have not spoken in the debate, but I do not understand the timing of the order. Has my hon. Friend consulted representative bodies in Scotland, for example? I would accept that that might be an irrelevant issue this evening. Why is my hon. Friend bringing the order forward so quickly, given the remarks that he has made recently and the comments of some of my hon. Friends? What is the rush?

Mr. Bottomley: In July, the Government explained in a parliamentary answer and in a press notice that we wanted to take action on the recommended adjusting of penalty points by lifting the maxima and some of the minima. That is a plain way of putting it.

I meet the RAC frequently, and normally without disagreement. Even when we disagree, it may be advancing a point of view to which we need to pay attention, which we do. I meet also the representatives of various motoring interests. There are few who get around the country as often as I do to meet these interests, whether it is the police, the magistrates or motorists. I have had few representations on this proposal, with the exception of that presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), either inside or outside the House.

It is important to continue reiterating that this is a specific example of change following the North report. The committee began sitting before I took over the job of Under-Secretary of State, which was at least two and a half years ago. There is one point that I want to make plain to the House. This is the only proposed change that we intend to bring to the House before the Government have responded to the North report early next year.

Mr. Waller: As a matter of record, will my hon. Friend confirm that in the press notice in July, although notice was given of the intention to change the tariff for three penalties, there was no mention of failure to report? The three included failure to stop, but failure to report was not included and no notice was given of that until the order appeared.

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is correct about the early part and it would take me a little time to read through the subsequent pages. However, in paragraph 16.24 the North committee takes the two together.

My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West referred to the example of someone who goes into a bank and the person who interferes with a five-bar gate. One can find examples of apparent triviality in all cases. If a motorist believes that it is appropriate to report the five-bar gate incident, that should be done as soon as possible. That was the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West. I find it difficult to believe that a magistrates court would apply a significant penalty if the five-bar gate incident took someone up to or above the 12 points. The period of disqualification is not mandatory and that is where the magistrates maintain their discretion. There is a fair amount of discretion within the system.

It is perhaps wise for me to realise that the interest expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House for consideration in depth should be reported to my right hon. Friends who manage the affairs of the House. Obviously I cannot say if and when there will be a major debate on road casualty reduction or about the law on road traffic offences to which the North committee addressed itself.

There is unanimity in the House over the fact that the law has a part to play in getting more of us to drive better more often. I repeat a basic theme of the North report: many examples of carelessness can lead to a criminal offence being committed. The North committee does not expect the police to arrest people for all the examples. Some big issues must be considered later as the North report is examined. There are proposals for determining a charge by the consequences rather than by the intent. Many of our legal friends will have a fair degree of interest in that.

Most of the reaction to the North committee recognises the committee's approach. It is obviously difficult for many people outside the House or outside the area of road

[Mr. Bottomley]

casualty reduction to read the whole report because it is rather longer than most. However, that is a reflection of the effective way in which Dr. North and his colleagues went through the issues. It was one of the most open procedures that any committee has gone through since the Beveridge report. A combination of outsiders and public officials sat on the committee and the report has been public since April this year. The order represents one part of the report which, on reflection, the House will recognise did not have to wait for a fuller response on some of the other issues.

There is provision in the Road Traffic Act 1981 for modifications to be made to the range of penalties. As my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley rightly said, road traffic legislation is being consolidated, but that is not the overwhelming reason for having this debate. It fits in with the Government's response made in July when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that this was one area in which the Government proposed to take action in advance of the further consultation on many of the other specified issues set out in the written answer of 26 July.

I am probably the Minister who least relies on changes in the law to bring about better results. There are times when it is necessary to propose changes to the law. In general, I ask those who still feel strongly about these issues to reread and reconsider the arguments and facts that the North report advances and to recognise that those involved had the benefit of wide consultation on two occasions. I hope that the House will pass the order.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Penalty Points (Alteration) Order 1988, which was laid before this House on 21st October 1988, be approved.

Textile and Clothing Industry

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

12.25 am

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I applied for this debate to highlight the increasing danger of a major upheaval in the textile and clothing industry. It is my belief that unless the Government act now to halt the present uncertainty and allow the industry to plan and invest in the future, thousands of jobs, right across the industry, could go. My message tonight to the Minister and to the Government is clear and unequivocal: they must act now and seriously to address the problems facing the industry. In the short time that I have available to me tonight, I shall attempt to highlight those problems.

First, I emphasise that the textile and clothing industry is vital to our economy. It is not, as some would have it, a sunset industry. In the United Kingdom, it employs more than half a million people—10 per cent. of the total work force. Its contribution to the national economy is greater than that of the car industry, and three times greater than office machinery and data processing. There is strong regional dependence on the industry, which is concentrated in areas where unemployment and poverty rank high: 30 per cent. in Northern Ireland, 22 per cent. in the east midlands, and 17 per cent, in my own area of west Yorkshire.

The textile industry went into rapid decline in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and there is deep concern that it could witness a rerun of the situation in 1980-82, when more than 300,000 jobs were lost. Those parts of the industry that survived became much more capital-intensive and automated, and some survived more intact than others. Woollen and worsted, for example, has increased output by 80 per cent. per head, and exports account for 60 per cent., of output. That part of the industry is least affected by imports, but it still finds itself vulnerable and threatened for other reasons. I hope that the Minister accepts that the industry has fought back. Workers in the industry, never noted for their militancy, have become even more flexible—in fact, wages remain very low—and, because of the Government's mishandling of the economy, they are once again threatened by redundancy.

High interest rates are particularly damaging to the industry as they push up the value of sterling and add immediately to costs. Fluctuating exchange rates and the high prices of our exports when the pound is strong create a disinclination to invest and prevent any serious forward planning. Present sterling levels make imports cheaper and our exports more expensive. I am sure that the Minister will not argue against that.

Inflation is also causing concern. High energy and water prices have an effect on costs, and the high cost of water after privatisation has been drawn to my attention by woollen manufacturers, who use large quantities of water in their processes. Other factors, including EEC changes, are adding to the problems. The existing multi-fibre arrangement will end in 1991, and any new MFA is likely to have a quota set for the EEC as a whole. The free market that will exist in the EEC after 1992 means that the entire quota for a particular product could be targeted at just one country. Already within the EEC there is concern that some Governments are finding ways of

subsidising textiles, despite rules against doing so. Not so in the United Kingdom, unfortunately, where present policies seem to be positively harming the industry.

Such concern is not felt just on these benches. I draw the Minister's attention to the parliamentary question asked by the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) on 26 October. The hon. Gentleman asked for

"the latest position regarding the French Government's allegedly illegal subsidy to Filature du Hainault to manufacture polypropylene filaments."

The Minister for Trade replied:

"The EC Commission announced on 27 July that it had approved the French Government's proposed aid to Filature du Hainault and that that aid did not conflict with the objectives of the Community's synthetic fibres discipline."

The Minister went on to sympathise with the hon. Member for Colne Valley, saying:

"I have told my hon. Friend that I share his anxiety and doubts about this."—[*Official Report*, 26 October 1988; Vol. 139, c. 293-94.]

There have been other instances, of which I am sure the Department is aware, in France and Italy, and I have other suspicions of subsidies. Within the EC exports in relation to imports fell dramatically between 1978 and 1985. In United Kingdom trade with West Germany, for instance, United Kingdom exports as a percentage of imports fell from 65 per cent. to 29 per cent. In trade with France there was a fall from 73 per cent. to 46 per cent., and the fall in the Netherlands was from 96 per cent. to 40 per cent. In the EC as a whole, the fall was from 65 per cent. to 37 per cent.

I believe that the implementation of the single market will make matters worse, particularly for constituencies such as mine where there is still a heavy reliance on manufacturing. Market forces will inevitably relocate activity to more favoured parts well away from centres such as Halifax and west Yorkshire. All of us are worried by recent events in Halifax, where one of the major reasons cited for the closure of the KP Foods factory was the need to obtain even more profits in the run-up to 1992. A thousand jobs were sacrificed on the altar of the single European market.

As I said earlier, these economic indicators, coupled with potentially damaging legislation from the United States in the form of the Textile and Trade Apparel Bill —recently vetoed by the President, but hanging over our heads like the sword of Damocles—could, if implemented, increase US protectionism for the next 10 years, forcing many Third-world countries into the European markets. Imports are already damaging those markets, particularly our own. During the first six months of 1988 textile imports increased by 12 per cent. to £3·4 billion, increasing the balance of trade deficit and leading directly to redundancies and mill closures. If there were more time, I would cite some of those closures.

Almost a third of our balance of trade deficit is in textiles and clothing, and sooner or later the Government will be forced to act on what is a major crisis in trade imbalance. All sides of the industry agree on the problems, and there is a fair measure of agreement on the solutions. Only the Government, with their adherence to the free-market philosophy, seem to be at odds with that agreement. Peter Booth, the national secretary of the Transport and General Workers textile group, recently said:

"What we have at the moment is a double constraint on British Industry, first of all by the false level of sterling making it impossible to compete fairly and secondly by the punitive interest rates designed to push the pound even higher. In effect the Government are garotting British Manufacturing by their myopic economic policies based solely on interest rates. Unless there is a change of course the many improvements in productivity and efficiency in our industry will be swamped by the ever increasing tide of lower priced imports. Tax cuts in June are no use at all to the 1,000 textile workers facing the dole in September."

Just eight days later Barry Spencer, president of the British Textile Confederation, said:

"First the recent strengthening of sterling against continental currencies is now making our highly successful export performance more difficult to sustain in Europe. Second, I turn to the associated question of interest rates. The recent series of increases in the base rate adds to uncertainty and is a disincentive to investment, in what is now a highly capital intensive industry. Finally, I want to call attention to the impact of rising textile and clothing imports on the national trading deficit. There is rightly considerable concern about the likely size of the national deficit this year."

Exchange rate movement has encouraged companies to buy yarn abroad instead of manufacturing it here. Tootal gets much of its yarn from China and two thirds of its employees are overseas, while 55 per cent. of its textile materials are bought outside the United Kingdom. It ships in cloth from India, sends it to Germany for finishing, to Mauritius for stitching and then sells it in the United Kingdom. The trend is very worrying. Marks and Spencer, which traditionally has supported British manufacturing, has recently opened a purchasing office in Hong Kong, joining the shift to far eastern "sourcing".

Imports of acrylic yarn from Turkey have increased from 600 tonnes to 4,500 tonnes in three years. The 1988 quota is 5,000 tonnes. There is massive exploitation of textile workers in Turkey. The labour laws in that country are repressive and very low wages are paid. State assistance is massive. Huge subsidies are provided for the industry.

I want the Minister to tell the 5,000 people in my constituency who are still employed in the industry what he intends to do about these unfair practices, because they have been on the receiving end of his Government's lack of concern. In Halifax, wages are well below the national average and there is still a great deal of part-time work. A recent economic survey carried out by the local authority showed that 45 per cent. of the work force is still employed in manufacturing, so what is on offer for them?

West Yorkshire is ranked the 46th most disadvantaged region after countries such as Northern Ireland and Sicily, but there are no new policy initiatives for the area. In France, however, two textile closure areas, which are ranked 103rd in the same table, have already had a financial input, so what is the Minister prepared to do to redress the imbalance?

There are many other regional disparities in the EEC. Emphasis is shifting to less well-developed areas and away from declining industrial areas. In the past, Halifax has received help under the non-quota textile area funding. That ends in 1989. My local authority tells me that Calderdale is not included among those parts of west Yorkshire that the Department of Trade and Industry submitted to the European Commission in connection with eligibility under its second objective—reform of the structural funds. I take this opportunity to ask the DTI, through the Minister, to reconsider that decision.

I understand that the Department has recalculated the published unemployment rates to include the self-employed and that the average rate of employment recorded in Calderdale during the last three years on that basis is 12·35 per cent., compared with the Community average of 12·5 per cent. We failed to qualify by 0·15 per

[Mrs. Alice Mahon]

cent. If, however, the Department were to take the published unemployment data and did not allow for the self-employed, Calderdale would qualify. In the past, self-employment data have proved to be notoriously unreliable. I ask the Minister to take that point on board.

Calderdale is the only district in west Yorkshire that is not being put forward in connection with the second objective. Economic activity there is certain to be sucked into surrounding areas, where firms can obtain European regional development fund grants and where local authorities can provide improved infrastructure with that kind of assistance.

Finally, I must press the Minister for assurances on a number of points. First, will he urge the Government to renogotiate the multi-fibre arrangement and other trading arrangements to allow for fair competition? Will he ask the Government to include a social clause that would make employers in foreign countries, who are exporting to the United Kingdom and other EEC countries, treat their work force humanely?

Secondly, will he press for Professor Aubrey Silberston, of the Imperial College of Science and Technology, to be replaced as the expert who is due to report on the multi-fibre arrangement and other trading arrangements? The professor is a well-known free marketeer, whose 1984 report recommended phasing out the multi-fibre arrangement. It was widely attacked by all sides of the industry.

Thirdly, will the Minister take up with the Chancellor of the Exchequer the question of high interest rates and point out that manufacturing and trade are vital to our future prosperity? Trade is all that some of us have by which to earn our living, once the oil runs out and everything has been sold off.

Fourthly, will he tell the Government that they are destroying the textile industry's ability to plan for the future by their worship of the free market and their mishandling of the economy? I say in all earnestness to the Minister that the free-market philosophy is endangering the livelihoods of my constituents and contemptuously damaging their efforts to restore the local economy. They have been through one trauma and dragged themselves up, with very little help. Halifax, my town, had its assisted area status taken away in the early 1980s.

The industry has dragged itself up. Parts of it have recovered. We now want the Government to use sensible interventionist policies to ensure fair competition and to make sure that the healthy growth of the textile industry in my constituency continues, rather than allow a return to the position in which the industry found itself in the early 1980s.

I beg the Government not to persist with their policies. Anyone can see that they are forcing up costs, increasing our export prices and subjecting us to cheap imports.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South) *rose*——

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West) *rose*——

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Do the three hon. Members representing Bradford constituencies have the consent of the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) and the Minister to intervene in the debate?

Mrs. Mahon: Yes.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): Yes.

12.40 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) for giving us the opportunity to discuss this serious subject.

I emphasise the fact that the import of cheap Turkish acrylic fibre yarn has caused at least 600 job losses in the Bradford area, many of them affecting my constituents. Mills have been running on short time and redundancies have resulted. Can the Minister say whether his Department is in a position to require the EEC to take action under the safeguard clause of the treaty with Turkey, especially as the likely increase in Turkish yarn imports is causing grave anxiety to the industry?

No doubt the Minister will want to refer to the record of the last Labour Government, as most Ministers do, so let me tell him that employment in the West Riding woollen industry was much higher in 1978, when we were in office. I hope that the Minister will aspire to that level of employment and to the improved quality and output that were achieved under the Labour Government.

I have no time for anything more, other than to endorse the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax that high interest rates are also very damaging. The damage is not clear yet, but it is working its way through and jobs will be lost in the near future.

12.41 am

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) for introducing the debate. The textile industry represents the sixth largest sector of the British economy, employing 450,000 workers. It is larger than the car industry and had £2 billion more value added in 1985 than the aerospace industry. The British Textile Confederation newsletter of July 1988 said:

"Continued control of inflation is obviously vital; and the textile industry is not looking for an under-valued currency to make life easy. Far from it. But, particularly with the move towards a Single European Market by 1992, the industry needs to plan ahead with reasonable confidence that its own efforts—in productivity improvement, new equipment, product development, marketing and so on—will not be undermined by changes in competitiveness due to increases in sterling."

Given that interest rates have doubled in 10 stages and that we have one of the highest rates of inflation in Europe, for textile workers and the textile industry, which has already faced a rise in import penetration from 31·5 to 44·6 per cent. in the period 1980 to 1986, the prospect of 1992 is a nightmare.

We face a further problem. There is the possibility of the American Government introducing a quota Bill restricting America's imports to a 1 per cent. increase per year. As my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax said, that will not only directly affect British exports to America, but will mean that far eastern and other suppliers will look for markets in Britain.

The issue of imported acrylic yarn has been brought home to me graphically. I live opposite a mill which, for the past two years, has found good employment for workers. Plenty of overtime has been worked because of the low average wage. For the past fortnight, however, owing to the import of vast amounts of subsidised acrylic yarn from Turkey, the employees have been working part

time. That will continue for the foreseeable future. That mirrors the position of textile workers in the West Riding as a whole.

12.44 am

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on securing this debate and declare my interest as a Member sponsored by the Transport and General Workers Union, the textile group of which represents many thousands of men and women who work in the textile, clothing and knitwear industries. Thousands of jobs in those industries are now under threat, for within the next few weeks—certainly in the next few months—thousands of redundancies will be announced in them.

I appeal to the Minister to take urgent action to safeguard textile employment, as it is often in areas that already suffer from high rates of unemployment. I urge him to convene a crisis conference of the textile, clothing and knitwear industries, the textile committee of the Trades Union Congress, employers' organisations that represent the industry, Members of Parliament who represent textile constituencies and local authorities where the textile industries are important so that the Government can be given clear information about the range of action that they should take to assist those industries and the dangers that they face.

I urge the Minister to put to one side his reputation as a free marketeer and recognise that urgent Government action is necessary if these jobs are to be saved. That is the crisis that confronts the Government. Continued complacency is not an option that they can afford. If they are complacent, many more thousands of men and women in the textile, clothing and knitwear industries will be cast on to the dole queue.

12.46 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): I congratulate the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on obtaining this debate. I recognise the importance of this matter to her and to the other hon. Members who have spoken. I shall cover as many of the points that have been raised as possible, but I may not be able to deal with all of them in the nine minutes that remain, so perhaps I might respond later in writing to those that I cannot cover now.

I acknowledge the vital importance of the textile and clothing industries to the British economy. They are spread throughout the country, and are not confined to the constituencies of those hon. Members who have spoken. In the hon. Lady's constituency, however, there are some 20 firms, ranging from small establishments with fewer than 20 employees to a subsidiary of one of our largest firms which has more than 300.

I acknowledge, too, the scale of the industry, even after the retrenchment that has taken place over some decades. We are talking of some 15,000 firms which employ up to 500,000 people. That is equivalent to about 2 per cent. of employment in the United Kingdom, and almost 9 per cent. of manufacturing employment. Output in 1987 was about £12 billion, making it the UK's fourth largest manufacturing industry.

Exports of textile and clothing products in 1987 totalled more than £3 billion, forming one of the largest exporting sectors in the United Kingdom. Many firms have major international links throughout the world. Some of those links are long established, and others are more recent. By any standards, we are talking about very large industries. I salute them on their achievements, and I should like to identify some positive points that have not been brought out fully tonight about the industry's resilience.

We must pay tribute to the skilled and adaptable work force and the improved management standards that have recently been experienced throughout the industry. The increasing use of more and more sophisticated technology must be acknowledged. It has produced significant productivity gains. We must also remember the critical importance of good design.

My portfolio includes design, and I should like to take this opportunity to emphasise its importance. Remarkable progress has been made, establishing London as an acknowledged centre of fashion.

All those factors are of the greatest importance and have produced industries which can match fair competition and respond rapidly to the changing demands of the market place. However, we recognise the great difficulties that those sectors face.

My Department has a close relationship with the industries through its contacts with individual companies and with trade associations. Ministers and officials meet regularly, and only this morning my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade met representatives of the British Clothing Industry Association and the Knitting Industries Federation to discuss current trade issues. That may go some way to answering the point raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), who called for a special meeting. I emphasise that such meetings and discussions are a continuing process. Although I cannot concede his point, I hope that he will acknowledge that that goes some way to recognising the difficulties that the industry continues to face.

We acknowledge that there are still significant concerns which I shall do my best to cover. First, I should like to deal with the problem of Turkey, which has been raised by all the hon. Members who have spoken.

I am aware of the concern about the situation which has arisen in the past year in the acrylic yarn spinning sector, which, as the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) rightly pointed out, has resulted in redundancies and short-term working.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade has met representatives of the Confederation of British Wool Textiles and hon. Members to discuss the problems and officials have followed the situation closely. When the Turkish voluntary textile restraint arrangements with the European Community were renewed last year, we were able to secure a new restraint limit on Turkish acrylic yarn exports to the United Kingdom, although the level was higher than the industry had sought. However, at the time of negotiations, there was insufficient evidence of serious disruption to United Kingdom industry as a result of those imports. The economic data that have to be taken into account in negotiations of this kind—such as the trends of domestic production, consumption and exports—did not at that time show the sort of systematic downward movement which was necessary if we were to be able to make a case for a tighter restraint level. Indeed, United Kingdom production levels remained high well into 1988, although we recognise that the position has changed in recent months. However, it is also relevant to note that imports of Turkish acrylic yarn have also fallen very

[Mr. Eric Forth]

sharply in the first nine months of this year compared with the same period last year, and currently represent only about 25 per cent. of the agreed restraint level.

It was factors such as these which have created difficulties for the anti-dumping application made by the European industry, including the United Kingdom, against imports of acrylic yarn from Turkey. This application also covered imports from Mexico. We were disappointed that the Commission did not feel able to take action. I am sure that the hon. Member for Bradford, South, with his unique involvement in European matters, will be able to pursue this matter through the institution of which he is such a distinguished member.

The Department's unfair trade unit assisted the United Kingdom industry in the preparation of its part of the complaint, but on the basis of the information available it was not possible to establish injury attributable to the Turkish imports. Other contributory factors, such as fashion changes which have led to a fall in demand for knitwear, did not help either. I am afraid, therefore, that there does not appear to be an early prospect of returning to the Commission—where the dumping complaint remains on the table—with a renewed request for action. However, the Department's unfair trade unit is continuing to monitor the situation closely in conjunction with United Kingdom industry.

Before I leave anti-dumping, I should say that work proceeds on other textile cases. Two investigations and one review of earlier measures are in progress at present and a number of other complaints have been lodged with the Commission or are in various stages of preparation. Again, our unfair trade unit is carefully monitoring progress on all these cases.

I should like to turn briefly to the multi-fibre arrangement. The current phase of the MFA, phase IV, expires in 1991, as hon. Members have pointed out, and details of any successor arrangement have yet to be worked out. The MFA is in any case one of the many trade issues under consideration in the GATT multilateral trade negotiations now under way, known as the Uruguay round. In these negotiations, taking place in Geneva, we and the European Community generally are committed to examining the "modalities" for the return of trade in textiles and clothing to normal but strengthened GATT disciplines. The Government believe a lasting return of textiles and clothing trade to GATT rules can be achieved only if the right conditions are established. In particular, we will be looking for a satisfactory safeguards clause to guard against sudden surges of imports, for better market access, and a reduction in trade barriers by developing countries, particularly the newly industrialised countries.

At the mid-term ministerial meeting in Montreal in December we shall be pressing for a clear reaffirmation of the commitment entered into by trade Ministers of all parties in Punte del Este in 1986 that the "modalities" for returning textiles and clothing to GATT depend upon strengthened rules, and we shall be looking for progress elsewhere in the GATT discussions.

The news that the United States Congress had failed to override the President's veto of the Textile and Apparel Trade Bill was of course most welcome. Had the Bill passed, it would have imposed limits on legitimate United Kingdom exports to the United States and it could well have resulted in the diversion of third country exports to EC markets. On the other hand, the United States has passed a major new general Trade Act and we shall be monitoring its implication closely. The United States has been left in no doubt that, if the new Act is used in a manner—

The Motion having been made after Ten o'clock on Monday evening, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at five minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 1 November 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

NORTHAMPTON BILL *[Lords]*

CITY OF LONDON (SPITALFIELDS MARKET) BILL
(By Order)
Orders for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time on Thursday 3 November.

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL *[Lords]*

AVON LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[Lords]*

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords]*
Orders read for consideration of motions.
To be considered tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

NHS (Pay and Conditions)

1. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations have been made to him by trade unions with members employed in the National Health Service about the pay and conditions of their members.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Recent representations that I have received have been concerned with the implementation of the clinical grading structure for nurses and the grading review for the professions allied to medicine. Pay settlements have now been concluded for 1988 covering more than 90 per cent. of all National Health Service staff.

Mr. Wareing: In view of the most recent leak—about the Autumn Statement—by this leakiest of Governments, will the Secretary of State tell us how he will ensure the full funding of the pay award to the National Health Service ancillary staff? The AHAs say that £2 billion is necessary even now. Will that necessitate the media going to another Spanish beach before the people in the Health Service are told by the Government that they will receive a real reward for the hard efforts that they have put into the service?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman will have to contain himself and wait for the Autumn Statement, which I believe he will find contains quite good news. Meanwhile, I can only remind him that 90 per cent. of our staff have reached satisfactory settlements, and these settlements have now been put into effect for the staff concerned.

Mr. Soames: Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that his Department's successful achievement in the pay settlement has been received with considerable pleasure? Is he aware that nurses find it difficult to move, especially to the south-east of England, because of the very high cost of housing and living expenses? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the time is fast approaching when we must move to regional pay? What hope can he give that the Government will take that step?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend, because obviously it is necessary that we recruit and retain people of the required quality in every part of the country. We all know that the costs incurred for staff vary from place to place, as do difficulties in recruitment. We have put in our evidence to the nurses review body the suggestion that we should now move to greater geographical variation and local flexibility, and similar discussions are taking place in the Whitley council about management and administrative staff. I believe that common sense dictates that we should start to reflect local variations in conditions in future pay negotiations for a giant service such as this.

Mr. Orme: Is the Secretary of State aware of the anger and dismay being expressed by nursing sisters about regrading? I have evidence from Hope hospital and Park hospital in the Greater Manchester area and from many other areas. What will the Secretary of State do to resolve that problem?

Mr. Clarke: When the new G grade posts are created in the new year, about three quarters of all sisters will be on the higher grades. If the right hon. Gentleman has found discontented sisters, he has no doubt looked hard and had the assistance of COHSE, which is trying to make difficulties over the minority of sisters who find themselves on the lower grade. The unions agreed to this grading structure, and it is preposterous now to claim that everyone should have gone on the higher of the grades available to sisters. Sisters have been graded according to their skill and the responsibility of the post.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my right hon. and learned Friend make it clear that the fear expressed by a number of health authorities that they could meet the pay award only by reducing services is unjustified? The Government have made extra funds available so that the whole of the award to nurses can be made without any reduction in services within the National Health Service.

Mr. Clarke: Yes, Sir. I am glad that I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. We had to adjust the estimates of the cost as the grading exercise went on and as it became obvious that our first estimate was too low. We have honoured our commitment to fund the cost of the grading exercise in full. We used the regional health authorities' own figures as the basis for doing so, and the authorities have all confirmed that they are satisfied that that funding has been made available in full. That means that there is no reason why patient services should be affected in any way by this desirable improvement in the career structure of nurses.

Mr. Robin Cook: As this is the Secretary of State's first appearance at the Dispatch Box since his appointment, may I welcome him back to Health and express the hope that he will be with us for rather longer than his predecessor? May I invite the Secretary of State to

reconsider his decision of two weeks ago not to meet the trade union side? Is he aware that, in the recollection of the Royal College of Nursing, he is the first Secretary of State who has declined to meet it when requested, which appears all the more odd as his predecessors were doing double the job? Does he agree that most of the 20,000 appeals which are now going through the system could have been avoided if he had agreed to the trade union offer to go to binding arbitration? If he is so confident of his case on regrading, why did he intervene personally to veto arbitration?

Mr. Clarke: First, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind words. I look forward to his contribution to our discussions on the Health Service.

I declined to meet the staff side of the Whitley council because it is quite improper for the Secretary of State to put himself in the place of the management side in a negotiating body of that kind. We had plainly reached the stage where continued negotiations were getting us nowhere and where, in my opinion, the trade unions were trying to reopen the basis on which everybody had accepted the grading structure earlier in the year. I concluded that we should get on and implement the Government's declared intention in the new grading structure and provide the funds to meet it.

Of course, I look forward to meeting the staff side of the NHS at some time in the future when we have a sensible agenda and when we are not trying to supplant proper negotiations within the Whitley council.

Doctors (Pay)

2. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much in real terms doctors pay has increased since 1978.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Doctors' pay has increased by 36·4 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79.

Mr. Key: May I be first on this side of the House to congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his first appearance at the Dispatch Box in his new post—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".]—and say how warming it is to find such a robust and positive attitude at the Dispatch Box? Given that the average target pay for general practitioners is now about £28,000 and that that represents only one of a number of variable factors, for which it is hard for anyone to budget, is there any hope of a unitary Health Service as long as we have family practitioner committees? Should not family practitioner committees be abolished and brought within the district authority health service?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks and for the lively reaction behind me. I suspect that that will not be the only lively reaction behind me before this day is out.

We are looking at the future of the family practitioner committees, just as we are looking at practically every aspect of the service in the current review. My hon. Friend will recall that we set up the FPCs on their present basis only three or four years ago and, whatever we do, we must ensure that we consider the special qualities of the family practitioner services and of the family doctor service in particular. We do not want the family doctor service to be overlooked by being drawn into the net of the general hospital service.

Mr. Fearn: Will the Secretary of State comment also on the pay scales of junior doctors and tell us whether they have had the same increases during the past 10 years as those he has just mentioned? Will the Secretary of State relate that information to the hours of work that junior doctors are now putting in?

Mr. Clarke: Junior doctors also are much better paid than they were—and certainly they deserve to be, because of their heavy commitment to the service. We are looking yet again at the vexed question of the hours of work of junior hospital doctors, which has been tackled by this Government on more than one occasion and to which I am glad we have made some worthwhile improvements. The fact is that getting things improved requires the commitment of the Government, the authorities and the whole profession. Although at every level the representatives of the profession are fully supportive of what we are trying to do, we sometimes encounter local practice where consultants are not as helpful as they might be about the type of cover that they want. I have also encountered some junior doctors who do not really want their hours reduced because they do not like the fall in pay that goes with it. At the moment we are trying to get rid of one-in-two rotas —and so we ought

Waiting Lists

3. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what reduction in hospital waiting lists he expects after removing those patients who have already had treatment or who no longer require it.

The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. David Mellor): Many waiting lists will contain the names of patients who no longer, in fact, require treatment. It is not possible to put a figure on this, although some studies suggest that it could be 10 per cent. or more.

Mr. Galbraith: The Minister is correct. Many studies suggest that the figure is at least 10 per cent. and sometimes as high as 30 per cent. I thank the Minister for that answer and welcome him on his first appearance at the Dispatch Box in his new post.

The Minister will realise that the thinning of waiting lists that takes place when those patients are removed greatly improves the efficiency and delivery of care. What plans has he to ensure that every health authority thins its waiting list in this appropriate manner and therefore improves patient care throughout the country?

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his welcome. I appreciate his expertise in these matters and the non-partisan way in which he has put a question that goes to the heart of our concern. We are keen that waiting lists should realistically reflect the workload of a district. To that end, we have been sending out questionnaires and requests to districts to ensure that they improve their information systems. The new Körner system is giving us much better statistics than we used to have. We also see an obligation to try to improve the mechanisms, whether in human terms or in terms of the machines needed to ensure that proper records are available. It is crucial to the efficient management of a district that we know exactly the state of a waiting list. It should not be swollen by people who do not want an operation after all.

Dame Jill Knight: Will the Minister tell the House the percentage numbers of patients on waiting lists for spare part surgery, where there must obviously be difficulties in moving them from the waiting list?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend is right. One of the major constraints of spare part surgery is the availability of organs to be transplanted. She will have noted the initiative taken by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), the Under-Secretary of State for Health, to encourage more people to carry donor cards, which would assist that process. We are proud of the fact that there has been a marked expansion in spare part surgery. We started heart transplants in 1979 and now have a programme that enables almost 300 a year to be done, and I hope that we shall be able to do more in the near future.

Medical Physics Technicians

4. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the pay of medical physics technicians employed in the National Health Service.

11. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the pay of medical physics technicians employed in the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: A settlement was reached in the appropriate Whitley council on 19 October. Before that, we had received numerous letters from right hon. and hon. Members and individual technicians.

Mr. Skinner: Is not the truth of the matter that, over the past nine years, the people who work in those backroom capacities, in laboratories, have lost ground in relation to other people? Will the Minister confirm that there are currently recruitment difficulties as a result of that? Is it not a scandal that, when the Government are prattling on about a booming Britain, 46·3 per cent. was handed over in wage increases to business executives last year, while these people are having to potter about on single figure pay increases?

Mr. Mellor: I hope very much that business executives will feel further incentives to generate the wealth which we can tax and from which we can pay the wages of medical physics technicians. There are now 30 per cent. more medical physics technicians than there were in 1979 and, although there may be recruitment difficulties in some areas, our innovative ideas on regional pay will help adjust those. I look forward to the hon. Gentleman's enthusiastic support.

Mr. Boateng: Does the Minister recognise that, while business executives are busy generating wealth, the Parkside health authority has problems, not only with recruitment, but with the retention of suitably qualified staff? What special assistance can be given to such health authorities on that difficult problem, which is beginning to affect patient care?

Mr. Mellor: It is a serious problem. I, too, represent an inner London constituency, and I am aware of recruitment difficulties. I am aware also of the problems that are faced by staff who are not beneficiaries of the review body system. We want to try to address these matters. In the nurses' pay award there was a 9 per cent. additional supplement for inner London, which is the beginning of a move towards regional pay. I believe that that will be the only way in which we can recognise the difficulties that people have in working in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and in mine, as against many areas in the rest of the country where living costs are much lower. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we recognise that there is a problem and that we want to try to do something constructive to resolve it. Any constructive suggestions that he has will be seriously considered.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that regional pay is important and that those who do not have the emotional pull of nurses—for example, technicians and others who work in extremely important areas within the Health Service—should not think that the Government ask themselves, "How little can we pay them and get away with it?" We must ensure that market forces are in full play so that we can recruit those who are necessary in technical and other areas. May I have the assurance of my hon. and learned Friend that the Government will work vigorously to introduce reasonable pay differentials so that health authorities in areas such as my constituency in Dorset will be able to recruit staff who are essential for technical departments?

Mr. Mellor: I think that both my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I were nodding in assent during my hon. Friend's supplementary question, which made the central point that all those who work within the service are valuable to it. We must ensure that every group is properly considered, and that is more easily said than done. It is plain that there is room in which to examine the issue, and we shall do so.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome the Minister's response to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), but I ask him to reconsider his use of percentages to show a decided increase in staffing levels. Does he recognise that over the years there has been a tremendous advance in the use of science and technology in the service of medicine? That being so, there will be an increase in numbers. Will he recognise also that sometimes some of those who are included in the numbers that are returned are not in post for various reasons? Will he accept that perhaps we are overstraining the commitment of medical staff and technicians to the Health Service and their care of patients?

Mr. Mellor: I am not quite sure what point the hon. Gentleman was making in the first part of his supplementary question. Self-evidently, unless there were a good reason for appointing 30 per cent. more staff in any given grade, the Government would stand condemned for wasteful employment of unnecessary people. It is clear that there has been an increase in high technology medicine. That has required more staff in certain grades and a mass of others in the service with greater qualifications. Our job is to try to ensure that our increased resources touch on the conditions of these people and allow us to recruit the numbers that we need to keep the service going. We must ensure that we look to some of the lesser groups and not only the large groups. We must bear in mind those who do not necessarily have the public emotional clout of some others in the service.

NHS (Value for Money)

5. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he intends to improve value for money in the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We remain committed to ensuring that health authorities continue to improve efficiency in all areas in order to maximise the resources available for patient care. We expect authorities to look critically at all their unit costs, including supplies, energy and, increasingly, clinical costs. Substantial progress has already been made by authorities with over £700 million worth of cost improvement savings expected to have been diverted into providing patient services by the end of this financial year. Health authorities have increased the number of patients they have treated at a faster rate than the increases in their expenditure, and they should continue to do so.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am sure my right hon. and learned Friend will agree that few reasonable people would quibble with the concept of value for money in the Health Service or anywhere else in the public service. I seek assurances on behalf of the well-run districts which believe in value for money and sensible budgeting, and understand that there are 12 months in a year, and not 10 or 11, as some districts seem to think. I ask for an assurance that sensible, well-run districts will not lose money as a result of the activities of profligate ones, and that their income will be properly protected.

Mr. Clarke: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. The Department allocates all its money each year and does not keep any in reserve centrally. Authorities receive their allocation—allocations are based on the same principles throughout the country—to improve their patient services by a combination of the new money and their efficiency in making use of it. It would be wrong to raid the budgets of better-run districts to help those who get into difficulties. The Health Service sees increasingly that authorities have the remedy in their own hands when they face any short-term financial problems.

Dr. Moonie: Does the Minister agree that the poorest value for money in the Health Service arises from closing acute units for two months at the end of the year? Will he guarantee that that disgraceful situation which occurred in the Health Service last year will not be repeated this year?

Mr. Clarke: I covered that point in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo). We allocate money in England on the same basis to all authorities, using the RAWP formula. The vast majority of health authorities are extremely successful at using that money, increasing their efficiency and increasing the number of patients they treat. Obviously all the authorities face difficult problems and some get into difficulty with their services. I believe that we have provided the funds to enable the service to be expanded and we should see a reduction in local difficulties which crop up from time to time.

Mr. Latham: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that mothers-to-be will not regard it as value for money if the Leicestershire health authority tries to close all rural maternity units? Will he tell the authority that such policies are simply not acceptable in rural areas?

Mr. Clarke: We have a well-tried procedure whereby there is full consultation about proposals of that kind. Eventually the proposal comes to my Department and my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State would have to approve any closure proposal. There are long-standing arguments all over the country about whether the service is most effectively provided in small maternity units or in the maternity sections of large district general hospitals. If the proposal comes to us, we will look very carefully at the particular situation in Leicestershire and at any representations that my hon. Friend and his constituents wish to make.

Mr. Allen: Does the Minister agree that the best value for money is to be found in preventive medicine rather than in trying to treat ailments after they have developed? Will he therefore even at this late stage read the document produced by his district health authority's local dental committee and the document from the local optometrists, which demand that the changes in the amounts charged for dental examinations and eye tests should not proceed today? Will he read those documents?

Mr. Clarke: I have read those documents, and obviously it would be most sensible for me to address myself to the arguments that they contain later, when the hon. Gentleman and I will have an opportunity to debate the matter. Of course I agree that preventive medicine is the best value and should be encouraged. I do not agree that the proposed charges will reduce the amount of preventive medicine. I would regard a decision to keep the charges in the pockets of the six out of 10 of the better off who will be liable to them as a very poor use of resources which could be put to much better use elsewhere in the Health Service.

District Health Authorities'

6. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the variations in efficiency between different district health authorities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Edwina Currie): The actual cost per in-patient case in 1986-87 varied from £456 to £1,117 in non-teaching districts and from £699 to £1,334 in teaching districts. At least part of those substantial variations remain unaccounted for. We are certain that there is still scope for some authorities to make better use of resources to improve services to patients.

Mr. Hunter: Does not my hon. Friend's answer show the value of performance indicators in assessing relative efficiency and, further to what has just been said, that many health authorities still have a very long way to go to improve their efficiency in spending taxpayers' money?

Mrs. Currie: Oh yes. I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware of the Health Service indicators for the Basingstoke and North Hampshire district health authority, which covers his constituency. The average looks OK, but when we analyse them more clearly it is clear that Basingstoke's throughput is low, the length of stay is too long, the turnover intervals—the length of time that beds are vacant between patients—are too high and the length of time to clear the waiting list is too long. Basingstoke is being reviewed today by the regional chairman and no doubt he will take note of the figures.

Mr. Eastham: Is the Minister aware of the growing bad reputation of the National Health Service as a late payer? As a consequence it is losing discounts on purchasing equipment. Crumpsall hospital in Manchester is so short of equipment that even in the casualty ward there was a shortage of drip equipment. Is that the kind of thing the Minister thinks about when she refers to value for money?

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman has asked two different questions. I agree with the first part of his question. We do not regard it as a good idea to be late payers. Apart from anything else, that simply pushes up the price of the equipment that we have to purchase. I take note of the second part of his question and will contact him to tell him exactly how the situation stands.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my hon. Friend ensure that districts such as Lancaster, which do well in performance indicators, are not penalised for the benefit of those which do less well, such as some of those represented by Opposition Members?

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend is right. The cost per case in Lancaster is £625, which is well below the national average. However, I hope that the Lancaster health authority will not be complacent and will ensure that it obtains the maximum amount of patient care for that money.

NHS (Pay and Conditions)

7. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the pay and conditions of service of ancillary staffs in the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: Since the last time this matter was raised during questions on 12 July we have received three letters from right hon. and hon. Members and six from members of the public.

Mr. Pendry: Will the Minister take it from me that should, in the current negotiations, the management side of the Whitley council not recognise the essential part that those overworked and underpaid workers in the NHS play, he will be receiving strong representations from the union side? If the talks end in deadlock, as seems likely, will he give a guarantee now that he will use his best endeavours to ensure that both sides in the pending dispute go to arbitration?

Mr. Mellor: We have enough trouble already without anticipating trouble that may not come. The hon. Gentleman's predictions about what may or may not happen at the end of a pay round that has barely begun do not excite my interest at the moment. The hon. Gentleman does us a disservice. During the course of the previous negotiations the 40-hour week was reduced to 39 hours, which meant that the lowest basic hourly rate for ancillary workers was increased by 9 per cent. That is a much better deal than they obtained under the Labour Government when, he might like to recall, the pay of ancillary workers fell 10 per cent., compared with an increase in spending power during the Conservatives' reign.

Mr. John Townend: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that the higher that wage settlements in the NHS are in the coming year, the less money will be available for improvements in patient care?

Mr. Mellor: Yes. One thing is absolutely clear. Some people talk about the NHS as though it was merely a basis for increased pay for those who work within it. Already we know that of the substantial resources that go into the NHS, over 70 per cent. goes towards the pay of those who work within it. We recognise that one of the greatest assets of the service is the skills of those who work within it, but a lot more needs to be done and, plainly, improving patient services is something to which we intend to give even greater priority than we have in the past.

Nurses (Pay)

8. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the cost of funding the nurses pay settlement; and what plans he has to fund it in full.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I announced on 13 October additional financial allocations to English regional health authorities to meet in full, the best estimates of the final costs of the nurses' pay settlement, including the clinical regrading exercise. An additional £98 million has been made available, bringing the total cost for England to £731 million.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Secretary of State aware that he has let the nurses down? He has broken a promise to the nurses. The Secretary of State represents a constituency just down the road from mine. I have had nurses from all their organisations coming to have a go at me at my surgery on a Saturday morning when they should have been having a go at him. There is no doubt that, because of what he has said at the Dispatch Box today, he is not holding surgeries to have those nurses come to see him. I want to know whether the Secretary of State will live up to his promise and give the nurses the money to which they are entitled.

Mr. Clarke: I, too, hold my surgeries on Saturday mornings and my constituency is so close to that of the hon. Gentleman that I can almost hear him addressing his constituents. The announcement that we have made honours in full every commitment that we gave to the nursing profession. It represents on average a 17·9 per cent. increase across the country and it is the best deal that the nurses have ever had in the NHS.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, following the nurses' pay increase, their salaries will be 45 per cent. higher in real terms than they were in 1979?

Mr. Clarke: That is absolutely correct. It contrasts with a drop of 20 per cent. in real terms that took place during the period of office of the Labour Government.

Ms. Harman: Will the Minister agree to meet myself, the nurse managers for nurses in hospices and Help The Hospices, which is the umbrella organisation for hospices, to discuss our concern about the effect of the pay award on nurses in hospices? What financial arrangements will he make for pay awards for nurses working in hospices that currently receive no grant from their district authority, such as St. Oswald's in Newcastle, St. Clare's in South Shields, and the Hartlepool hospice?

Mr. Clarke: I can assure the hon. Member that a Minister from my Department will meet her deputation. Obviously it will be left for the most convenient

arrangements to be made when she contacts my office. We remembered the hospices in the settlement that we made, although their case was not pressed upon us by anyone in the trade union movement; perhaps the hon. Lady may have done so. We have made a provision of extra money to cover regrading and pay increase costs in those hospices that currently have a relationship with health authorities. We are still discussing how best to distribute it, and we shall listen with interest to whatever the hon. Lady has to say on behalf of individual hospices throughout the country.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm what was said by his predecessor, that under the award, nurses will receive equal pay for equal work and responsibility, but that it will be made clear that some nurses have more responsibility than others in the work that they have to do, and that that is a crucial factor in deciding whether they are graded G or F?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is right, and seeking to ensure that such is done on the right basis throughout the country has been a complicated process. I think that that exercise has been extremely successful. In some cases a new G-grade post will have to be created. My hon. Friend is right to say that there will have to be some competition, so that the health authority may choose the best candidate for the extra skill and responsibility involved. We have ensured that once that skill and responsibility is being carried, it will be properly paid for under the new arrangement.

9. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the implication of the nurses pay award.

17. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from trade unions and professional bodies with members in the nursing profession about the recent pay award.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government's decision to provide substantial additional funding to meet in full the estimated final costs of the nurses' pay settlement has been welcomed by health authority chairmen and managers and by responsible representatives of the trade unions and professional bodies.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Does the Secretary of State agree that his cavalier refusal to meet the nurses' organisations at an earlier point in the disagreement arising out of the current pay dispute has resulted in poor morale in the Health Service? Although the Minister has so far committed himself to paying the estimated cost of the award, it could yet be that the award will be still higher than the level of money currently being discussed. In those circumstances, will the Secretary of State guarantee that further money will be made available?

Mr. Clarke: The morale of all Health Service staff would be raised if the Government, management and trade unions all took part in responsible discussions on these matters. At certain stages in the negotiations over the detail of the grades and structure, I believe that people were seeking meetings with me more for the benefit of securing publicity for themselves than for the purpose of furthering the nurses' pay settlement.

The money that we have found—which is a very substantial sum of almost £1 billion for the United Kingdom as a whole—is in full and final settlement of the cost of implementing the new arrangements. It is based on the regional health authorities' own figures. Clearly, we must now put that behind us and concentrate on what is now in hand, which is the giving of evidence before the nurses' review body for next year's settlement.

Mrs. Mahon: If the Minister believes that he has treated the nurses very generously, can he explain to the House why so many nurses and midwives are angry and have seen through his outrageous regrading swindle?

Mr. Clarke: Certainly one of the trade unions involved is having remarkably little success in its continued attempts to find nurses with a sense of grievance about the settlement. I regret the fact that some trade union leaders continue trying to find opportunities for dispute. I particularly deplore the fact that they are trying to organise industrial action in one or two places up and down the country. I am sure that they will not succeed, and I am sure also that the public recognise that the great bulk of the nursing profession is very satisfied with such a very generous award.

Mr. Ralph Howell: In 1985 my right hon. and learned Friend's Department was unable to tell the Public Accounts Committee whether we were employing too many or too few nurses. Can he tell us now whether there are too many or too few?

Mr. Clarke: We certainly have much better information than we had a few years ago about the number of staff whom we employ, and we are improving the quality of nurse management. Now that we have given them a new career structure, it is extremely important that those responsible for the management of the skilled professional staff make the best possible use of their trained manpower. We are looking for the best deployment of nurses in all grades to ensure the maximum quality of service for patients.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: I am sure that the Secretary of State will have read in yesterday's *Western Mail* that nurses in Wales are not to be paid their new rates or be regraded at the same time as their colleagues in England, because the Treasury has intervened. Will he now consult urgently with the Secretary of State for Wales so that they can go back to the Treasury and say that nurses in Wales are entitled to the same pay rates as their counterparts at the same time?

Mr. Clarke: I regret to say that I have not read the *Western Mail*, and this is plainly a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. However, the regrading exercise was carried out on exactly the same basis in Wales as it was in England, and should produce the same satisfactory conclusion for nurses and midwives in both countries.

NHS (Review)

10. **Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to publish the results of his review of the National Health Service.

13. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to publish the results of his review of the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We shall bring forward a White Paper in the new year.

Mr. Garrett: Does the Secretary of State expect the review to confirm the principle of a tax-funded National Health Service, or does he expect it to follow his charges for preventive tests, with charges for accommodation and food in hospitals? Or is he waiting for the Prime Minister to make up his mind for him?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman will have to wait for the review, but I can assure him that it will be consistent with our policy of seeking to improve and develop the NHS. As for the charges, it was a Labour Government who, in 1951, introduced the principle of payment for dental, optical and pharmaceutical services by those who could afford it. The Labour party has never gone back on that, except for a very short period. Labour raised charges when it was in office, and it is obvious that this is a sensible way of raising revenue to finance the considerable expansion of the NHS that we are implementing.

Mr. Cohen: Is not creeping privatisation the cup of poison that the Government have planned for the NHS? Are they not planning a further rundown in the NHS to help the rise of the private sector, although that sector does not train nurses but only steals them from the NHS? Will not this pernicious privatisation mean more personal bankruptcies from bad health and the shrinking of available treatment on the NHS?

Mr. Clarke: The answer to all three questions is no. The hon. Gentleman should not base questions on such a parody of our policies after a period when we have plainly improved the NHS greatly, compared with its performance under the preceding Labour Government.

Mr. McCrindle: If, as my right hon. and learned Friend seems to suggest, there is a certain slowing in the pace of the NHS review, will he take the opportunity to focus particularly on treatment of the elderly? Although I do not exclude the advantages that the elderly can gain from private health insurance, will my right hon. and learned Friend try to appreciate even more than he does now that the elderly rely perhaps more heavily than any other section of the community on provision by the NHS?

Mr. Clarke: We welcome all contributions to our discussions while they continue, and I certainly welcome any from my hon. Friend. One reason why demands on the NHS continue to rise so inexorably is that an ever higher proportion of the population are living into old age and need to have more recourse to the service. We have so far managed to keep ahead of that rising demand, and we must continue to do so.

Mr. Yeo: When my right hon. and learned Friend publishes his White Paper, will he address the question of AIDS? Bearing in mind the lack of accurate information about the rate at which the virus is spreading, will he introduce at the earliest opportunity a system of anonymous blood tests so that future policy can be formed on the basis of accurate information?

Mr. Clarke: As my hon. Friend knows, we are making available considerable resources to deal with the advance of this pandemic. We must continue to do so on the best estimates we have of the continued increase in patients. We are actively considering anonymous testing as a contribution to studies of the epidemic, but it raises a number of difficult ethical and legal problems.

Mr. Robin Cook: In reaching his conclusions on the review of the NHS, will the Secretary of State bear in mind the warning provided by the experience of Mrs. Veronica Barnes, who, despite paying 40 years' subscriptions to Private Patients Plan, has had her cover for treatment for cancer withdrawn. Will he give weight to her observation:

"Private insurers seem keen enough to get you when there is nothing wrong with you, but as soon as you are really ill, they don't want to know."

Does not her case demonstrate the danger of running down the NHS to boost private medicine and show precisely why we need to keep the service free to everybody when they need it?

Mr. Clarke: It is ridiculous to say that the Government are running down the National Health Service, when one compares our nine-year record with that of our predecessors. I only hope that the hon. Gentleman's random question, with a letter from one person, is not part of his support to his junior spokesman, who is still conducting attacks on private medicine more suitable to the politics of the 1960s than today. It is obvious that in a more prosperous society an ever-higher proportion of the population will look to private insurance for part of their health treatment. That is a good thing, because it relieves pressure on the National Health Service.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Ms. Walley: When the take-up of family credit is as low as one in three, how can the Prime Minister justify the sacking of 4,400 civil servants? Does she agree that those people would be best employed increasing the take-up of benefit in places such as my constituency of Stoke-on-Trent, North?

The Prime Minister: No. The work of the social security officers in dealing with the unemployed has reduced substantially. I am sure that the hon. Lady is very pleased about that. That also applies to social security offices. There is no point in keeping on people who have no work to do. Where we need extra efficiency, we are trying to get it by improved use of all the latest office equipment. Where we need people to do specialist work we shall take them on, but we shall take on only a particular kind of person.

Q2. **Mr. John Townend:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Townend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those who have benefited most from the substantial

reductions in income tax, particularly those on high incomes, should be prepared to accept the personal responsibility of paying for their own eye tests and dental examinations? Will she make it clear that it is not Government policy, it never has been and it never will be, to levy charges on children, the low-paid and the partially blind? Will she confirm that 20 million people will be exempt from such charges?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is correct in saying that some 20 million people—more than one third of the population—will be exempt from charges on sight tests and dental examinations. Most people can pay small charges for dental and eye examinations. They are very willing to pay small charges. They cannot pay the big charges for operations for cataracts, hip replacements and so on. *[Interruption.]* Small charges amount to a very considerable sum which enables us to have reductions in waiting lists, such as the initiatives we have had in the past. If we are deprived of those small sums, people will not be able to get the operations they really need as soon as they otherwise would. Many people would be quite put out if they were not allowed to pay—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister has not finished answering the question.

The Prime Minister: Many people would feel that it was quite wrong if they were not allowed to pay the small sums which they can well afford, to enable substantial developments in the Health Service to take place.

Mr. Kinnock: There is now conclusive proof that family credit reaches only 30 per cent. of eligible families. When a targeted benefit misses 70 per cent. of the people it is supposed to help, had the Prime Minister not better do something about her aim?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has said that we shall have a major effort to get more people who are entitled to family credit to receive it. That will mean, among other things, a major programme of television advertising. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not then object to that expenditure.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister not aware that, at the outset of family credit, the Government budgeted for only 60 per cent. take-up? Actual take-up has been half that. Does that cause the Government and the Prime Minister any regret, or is it yet another attempt to ensure that money can be saved at the expense of the poor?

The Prime Minister: More money is being spent on the poor and not on better-off people. The right hon. Gentleman is aware that people can claim family credit with a family of two up to an income of £9,300 a year. I would have hoped that the right hon. Gentleman would join in trying to get people who are entitled to family credit to go along and claim it. If he will not, why not?

Mr. Kinnock: I am rather more in favour of the poor getting money than is the Prime Minister, on the basis of her record. Last week the Government again froze child benefit. They spent £70 million on family credit. If the Prime Minister is so keen to provide money for the poor, why did she not spend the whole £206 million previously earmarked for child benefit on providing family benefit for people who are most greviously in need of it as a result of the means tests that the Government have applied to them?

The Prime Minister: Never has more been spent on social security payments and the Health Service, because the wealth created by enterprise under this Government has enabled us to do that. Family income supplement, as it used to be, was introduced by a Conservative Government. Family credit—an enormous improvement which helps people on low wages—was also introduced by a Conservative Government. There have been no such things under Labour.

Mr. Adley: I welcome my right hon. Friend's continued support for the Channel tunnel project. Is she aware that there appears to be no co-ordination between the British Government through British Rail and the French Government through Societé Nationale des Chemins de fer Francâis of the investment criteria governing the construction and development of rail services at each end of the line? Does my right hon. Friend think that this is necessary? If so, will she please arrange for the two Departments of Transport to meet soon to discuss the matter?

The Prime Minister: I would not necessarily accept that. I think that there is co-ordination. I think that my hon. Friend is probably referring to the fact that the French need the high-speed train in any event, whereas we do not have the same need for it on this side of the tunnel for services to London. I will, however, look further into the matter.

Sir Russell Johnston: Is the Prime Minister aware that those of us who struggle with tobacco addiction—it is some struggle, as I am sure the Leader of the Opposition agrees—are interested to read speculation that she is contemplating some legislation in this area? Is she aware that in West Germany for example, tobacco companies are compelled by law to print on cigarette packets the nicotine and carbon content of cigarettes, thus at least enabling people to choose the least injurious? Will she consider leaning on tobacco companies to do that voluntarily in the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of any further legislation. The health warning on the packet does not seem to have had very much effect. Persuasion is a far better weapon than legislation on this issue.

Single European Act

Q3. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the question of the use by the Commission of the powers given it in the Single European Act.

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. The Single European Act did not confer additional powers on the Commission and the power of final decision remains with the Council of Ministers. The Commission has used its existing powers to bring forward proposals for the completion of the internal market, as required by the Single European Act. I do not see a need for any increase in its powers.

Mr. Taylor: Does not the message of my right hon. Friend's splendid speech at Bruges point out the real danger that the much publicised free trade in 1992 will be

a major disappointment and let-down for Britain so long as the Commission, under Mr. Delors, uses the powers of the Single Act to promote pointless measures of harmonisation instead of putting forward the real free trade measures so very much required by British industries such as the insurance industry? Is there really nothing that the British Government can do to stop the Commission from using its anti-dumping powers as a measure of blunt protectionism?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that this is a matter on which we must remain watchful. We want the single market and the Common Market to come into effect by 1992. We do not want to see highly complex regulations or new barriers set up around the Community. We want freer trade and the restraints on trade removed. We shall be watchful so that we do not have a complex plethora of new regulations. Where the regulations are particularly important, as in tax and the movement of peoples, all of us in the European Community have arranged to require unanimity to bring those directives into effect.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Prime Minister realise that Mr. Delors was wrong in the 80 per cent. forecast? Is she not aware that we have already, since 1958, reached that forecast of EEC legislation, let alone the amount in 10 years' time? Does that not suggest that the prime problem is not a future United States of Europe, but the legislative competence which is already enjoyed by the unitary but interlocking institutions of the EEC? What legislative competence for originating legislation is beyond that of the Commission today?

The Prime Minister: The Commission is committed to carrying forward all the programme of some 300 measures in its 1985 White Paper. The hon. Gentleman is very much aware of that. Where there is an extremely important directive, for example on tax matters, there must be unanimity, and therefore we would have to vote for it. Where there is any change in legislation in terms of the treaty, that matter, too, must come before the House. I know that the hon. Gentleman is keen that we should have maximum scrutiny of all these orders. It is very necessary that we do.

Sir Ian Lloyd: My right hon. Friend has opened up in her characteristically forthright and effective way a major debate on the future political structure of Europe. Does she ever envisage a time when a representative of the Council of Ministers stands before the Dispatch Box of the European Parliament as she does at the Dispatch Box here, answering for the policies and actions of that Council over which national Parliaments no longer have effective control and over which the European Parliament has not yet gained any influence?

The Prime Minister: I would not quite like to forecast that, but it has been impressed upon me that the Parliaments in other countries belonging to the European Community do not seem to have quite the cross-examination process to which Ministers are subjected in this country. Therefore, Parliament does not play such a central role in some of those countries as it does in ours.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Will the Prime Minister confirm that Commonwealth citizens who presently have the same status as British citizens——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the question is on the Single European Act.

Mr. Grant: My question is on the European Act. Will the Prime Minister confirm that those citizens will have the same status after 1992 as they do now—the rights to vote and to stand for Parliament, and so on?

The Prime Minister: As far as I am aware, the 1992 Act does not alter that. We are concerned that the immigration rules which we have now shall not be affected by the Single European Act. We are concerned to keep controls at borders to ensure that that is so.

Q4. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Patnick: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the growing action of local communities, highlighted by the *Daily Express*, in removing litter, graffiti and fly posting from our streets? Should that not be encouraged and more people involved so as to rid this blot from our streets, towns and cities?

The Prime Minister: I wholly agree with my hon. Friend. There could be a major improvement in the appearance of our towns and cities if people did not throw down litter, if any litter thrown down was promptly picked up and if people did not leave large black refuse bags outside restaurants and shops in London. I congratulate Tidy Britain Group on its efforts. I also congratulate the *Daily Express* on its effort and I am delighted that so many groups have been organised to keep Britain tidy.

Autumn Statement

3.30 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement.

Cabinet today agreed the Government's public expenditure plans for the next three years. I am therefore taking the earliest opportunity of informing the House of the contents of the Autumn Statement: that is to say, the public expenditure plans for the next three years, and the expected outturn for this year; proposals for national insurance contributions for 1989-90; and the forecast of economic prospects for 1989 required by the Industry Act 1975.

The main public expenditure figures, together with the full text of the economic forecast, will be available from the Vote Office as soon as I have sat down. They will also appear in the printed Autumn Statement, which will be published next Tuesday.

I turn first to public expenditure. For the current financial year, 1988-89, the public expenditure planning total now looks likely to amount to some £153¼ billion, or some £3¼ billion less than was allowed for in the last public expenditure White Paper. In other words, only around £¼ billion of the £3½ billion reserve I provided for is in fact likely to be needed.

The main reasons for this shortfall are an extra £1 billion in privatisation proceeds, a reduction in social security spending of almost £1 billion as a direct result of the sharper than expected fall in unemployment and a saving of some £¾ billion largely due to extra housing receipts under the right-to-buy programme. Taken together with the strong growth in the economy this year, and the containment of debt interest now that the Budget is in surplus, this means that total public spending this year, even excluding privatisation proceeds, will be less than 40 per cent. of national income—the first time this has happened for over 20 years.

Not so long ago, the share of national income spent by the state seemed to rise inexorably. Over the past six years, that trend has been decisively reversed. Since 1982-83, public expenditure, excluding privatisation proceeds, expressed as a share of national income has fallen by seven percentage points—the largest and longest sustained fall since the wartime economy was unwound. Over the whole decade since this Government first took office, from 1978-79 to 1988-89, public expenditure has grown by under 1½ per cent. a year in real terms. This is exactly half the rate at which it grew over the whole of the immediately preceding decade.

Looking ahead, Cabinet agreed in July that public spending over the next three years should keep as close as possible to the existing planning totals, and should continue to fall as a share of national income. The plans I am about to announce meet both those objectives.

For 1989-90, the planning total published in the last public expenditure White Paper was £167 billion. It will remain at £167 billion. This important outcome has been made possible, despite the many claims for increased public spending, by a rigorous reassessment of priorities, coupled with the continuation of two of the factors that have contributed to this year's shortfall; that is to say, benefit savings from lower unemployment and increased receipts from council house sales.

For 1990-91, however, though these two factors will persist, the planning total has been set at £179½ billion, some £3½ billion more than the previously published figure. For 1991-92, the planning total has been set at £191½ billion. These totals all include the same level of reserves as in last year's plans; that is to say, £3½ billion in the first year, £7 billion in the second year, and £10½ billion in the third. They also incorporate an unchanged estimate of privatisation proceeds of £5 billion a year.

Over the three survey years as a whole, the real growth in spending on programmes will be over 3 per cent. a year. This can be afforded only because of the fall in the burden of debt interest brought about by the dramatic improvement in the Government's finances from Budget deficit to Budget surplus. As a result, overall public spending, excluding privatisation proceeds, will rise by less than 2 per cent. a year, well within the prospective growth of the economy as a whole. In other words, total public spending, excluding privatisation proceeds, will continue to decline as a proportion of national income. At the same time, substantial additional funds have been made available for the Government's most important public expenditure priorities.

The figures which I am about to give all represent increases over the plans in the last public expenditure White Paper.

First, health. An extra £1¼ billion—£1¾ billion—is—*[Interruption.]* An extra £1¼ billion—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a very important statement, and I am sure that the House wishes to hear it.

Mr. Lawson: An extra £1¼ billion is being provided for the National Health Service in England in 1989-90—*[Interruption.]* The Opposition may not be interested in the National Health Service, but we on this side of the House are interested in it and are providing a lot more money for it.

An extra £1¼ billion is being provided for the National Health Service in England in 1989-90, and an extra £1¼ billion the following year. There will be corresponding increases in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. On top of that, health authorities are expected to receive an extra £100 million a year from sales of surplus land. Continuing the rate of cost improvement savings achieved in recent years will produce an extra £150 million in 1989-90 and an extra £300 million the following year.

In addition, the Government are accepting the recommendation of the Government Actuary, in a report published today, that NHS employers' superannuation contributions in England and Wales should be reduced, which will save the Health Service a further £300 million a year.

In total, the increases for the Health Service in the United Kingdom as a whole will be over £2 billion in 1989-90 and over £2½ billion in 1990-91. These are by far the largest increases the Health Service has ever received. Comparing next year with this year, the increase in real resources for the NHS should amount to some 4½ per cent.

Second, roads. An extra £220 million is being provided next year for building and repairing motorways and trunk roads, and for strengthening bridges, with a further £250 million the following year.

Third, housing. Gross provision for public sector housing investment is being increased by around £440

million in 1989-90 and £340 million the following year. But thanks to the success of the Government's right-to-buy policy, this is more than financed by extra receipts.

Fourth, law and order. An extra £290 million has been made available in 1989-90 and £430 million in 1990-91, principally for a further expansion in the prison building programme. This will provide a further 3,000 places by 1991-92. Provision for local authority spending on the police has been increased by £240 million.

Defence spending is to be increased by £150 million in 1989-90 and by £600 million in 1990-91. These significant increases are designed to provide a firm framework for the next three years within which our defence programme can be planned with confidence.

So far as the massive social security budget is concerned, lower unemployment has saved more than £1½ billion in both 1989-90 and 1990-91. But substantial increases in planned spending on other benefits, particularly for the disabled, mean that the social security programme will be only marginally reduced in 1989-90 compared with previous plans, and some £1·7 billion higher in 1990-91.

On science and technology, we have altered the balance of public support within an increased total. In particular, provision for spending by the Department of Education and Science has been increased by £120 million a year, with the DES science budget up by 16 per cent. in 1989-90 compared with 1988-89. This reflects the importance the Government attach to basic and strategic research.

The new plans imply an overall increase of £2¼ billion in public sector capital spending in 1989-90. This includes extra investment in hospitals, housing, prisons, and roads. There is provision, too, for higher investment by the nationalised industries, including further anti-pollution investment by the water authorities.

That the Government have been able to strengthen their priority programmes within an unchanged planning total for 1989-90 is, in large measure, a reflection of the success of their policies. The improved performance of the economy has eased pressures on a number of programmes, giving the Government more scope than ever before to shift resources where their own priorities, rather than circumstances, dictate. The details of these and other changes are provided in the material in the Vote Office and more details will be published in the printed Autumn Statement next week.

I turn next to national insurance contributions. The Government have conducted the usual autumn review of contributions in the light of advice from the Government Actuary on the prospective income and expenditure of the national insurance fund, and taking account of the statement on benefits which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security made last week.

The lower earnings limit will be increased next April to £43 a week, in line with the single person's pension, and the upper earnings limit will be raised to £325 a week. The upper limits for the 5 per cent. and 7 per cent. reduced rate bands will also be increased, to £75 a week and £115 a week respectively. The upper limit for the 9 per cent. rate for employers will be raised to £165 a week.

Over recent years, we have steadily reduced the Treasury supplement, the taxpayer's contribution to the national insurance fund. From 18 per cent. in 1979, it now stands at 5 per cent. My right hon. Friend and I now propose to carry this policy to its logical conclusion and to abolish the supplement altogether. The necessary legislation will be introduced early in the new Session.

However, because of the healthy state of the national insurance fund, this decision will not require any increase in contribution rates. Thus, the main class I contribution rates will remain unchanged at 9 per cent. for employees and 10·45 per cent. for employers.

Finally, I turn to the Industry Act forecast. Growth this year looks to be turning out at 4½ per cent. compared with the 3 per cent. growth forecast at the time of the Budget. Investment is particularly strong, growing twice as fast as consumption, with manufacturing investment expected to show the biggest rise of all, at 18 per cent. Indeed, it is striking that total investment has grown almost twice as fast as total consumption over the whole of the past five years.

The continuing vigour of the British economy is testimony to the transformation that has taken place in the supply side of the economy, a transformation which has enabled the seven years to 1988 to record a combination of strong and steady growth unmatched since the war.

As a result, unemployment has been falling rapidly. Since the middle of 1986, it has fallen by very nearly 1 million—the largest fall on record. Over the past year, unemployment has fallen faster in the United Kingdom than in any other major country.

Inflation, as measured by the retail prices index, is likely to be a little over 6 per cent. in the fourth quarter of this year. Part of the rise in recorded inflation reflects the impact on mortgage payments of the higher interest rates needed to tighten monetary policy and thus get inflation firmly back on a downward trend. Excluding mortgage interest payments, the RPI in the fourth quarter is likely to be around 5 per cent., compared with the 4 per cent. rise in the RPI forecast at the time of the Budget.

Exports have continued to perform well, with manufactured exports up 7½ per cent. over the past year. Over the past seven years, the United Kingdom's share of world trade in manufactured goods has remained steady after decades of decline. However, with investment booming, and consumer spending increasing fast, total imports have grown even faster than exports, rising by 13 per cent. in the year to the third quarter. This has led to a substantially greater current account deficit than forecast at the time of the Budget. For 1988 as a whole, this now looks like turning out at some £13 billion, equivalent to 2¾ per cent. of GDP. The stronger than expected economic growth this year means that total tax revenues are likely to exceed the Budget forecast by £3½ billion. Both income tax and VAT have been particularly buoyant.

In the Budget, I set a public sector debt repayment—or PSDR—for 1988-89 of £3 billion, equivalent to around ¾ per cent. of GDP. With higher than expected Government revenues and lower than expected public expenditure, this year's PSDR now looks likely to turn out at some £10 billion, equivalent to over 2 per cent. of GDP.

This will be the second successive year of debt repayment, something that has not hitherto been achieved since records began in the early 1950s. Moreover, this year, the Budget would still be in surplus, by some £4 billion, even if there had been no privatisation proceeds at all. No other major economy has such sound public finances.

Looking ahead to 1989, the economy is forecast to grow by a further 3 per cent., with domestic demand also up by

[Mr. Lawson]

3 per cent. Once again, investment is expected to grow considerably faster than consumption, and once again unemployment is expected to fall.

The slower growth forecast for 1989 inevitably implies a marked deceleration during the course of the year, particularly so far as domestic demand is concerned. Thus, comparing the second half of next year with the second half of this year, overall growth is forecast at 2¼ per cent., and growth in domestic demand at only 1½ per cent.

The current account deficit is likely to fall only slightly, to some £11 billion, or 2¼ per cent. of GDP.

Inflation, while it will inevitably continue to edge up for some months to come, is forecast to peak at some point in the middle of next year before falling back again to 5 per cent. by the fourth quarter.

In short, after two years of unexpectedly rapid expansion, growth next year is forecast to return to a sustainable level, and one which compares well with the economic performance of the 1970s, while inflation will resume its downward path.

The public finances are in substantial surplus and will remain so, with public spending on priority programmes continuing to increase, while overall public spending continues to fall as a share of GDP, to a level in 1991-92 not seen for a quarter of a century.

The prospect that lies before us is yet further testimony to the success of the policies we have been pursuing these past nine and a half years and will continue to pursue, and to the economic transformation that those policies have wrought.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): With the Chancellor's admission just before he sat down that inflation will rise beyond 6 per cent. by Christmas and that the balance of payments deficit will be an unparalleled £13 billion by the end of the year, will the Chancellor concede that the economic prospects that he promised us in the spring were not the economic realities of high interest rates, high deficits and higher inflation that we face in the autumn?

With imports rising this year by an astonishing 12 per cent. but exports by only 1·5 per cent., with our trade deficit of £2·5 billion now quadrupled for each of the next two years and with the deteriorating trade gap that is the Government's distinctive trade mark, will the Chancellor confirm that the trade deficit that he defends is almost as big a share of our national income as was the American deficit that he once so deplored?

Will the Chancellor confirm that inflation is running at almost twice the level of January, that it is more than twice as high as in our competitor countries—France, West Germany and Japan—that Britain will have the highest inflation rate of our competitor countries in 1988 and well into 1989, and that, far from being a temporary blip, 1989 will be the fifth year in a row when inflation will be above the European average? Does the Chancellor recall his objective, set out in 1984 and 1987, of zero inflation? Does he think that that promise is still credible when, after five Budgets and six Autumn Statements, inflation is now higher than when he became Chancellor?

Last November, when inflation was 4 per cent. and falling, the Chancellor told us that the minimum figure for public spending for next year would be £167 billion. After adjusting for the extra inflation that the Chancellor has caused, that figure should be £172 billion. Now that the Chancellor tells us that he will provide only £167 billion and that there is therefore a shortfall in real terms of £5 billion, will he confirm that by failing to compensate for inflation there will be a real deterioration in our essential public services and that over the next year this Chancellor will preside over cuts in housing, essential services, investment and the environment?

Opposition Members welcome any additional resources for the National Health Service and any plan to break down the appallingly high waiting lists. However, is it not the case that the nurses' and doctors' pay rise will cost almost £1 billion in 1989 and that inflation adds another £1 billion to the Treasury's own figures? When health costs are rising faster than even ordinary inflation, the sum that the Chancellor has provided today will barely cover the basic inflationary pressures that the health authorities face, far less deal with their huge backlog of structural repairs. I ask the Chancellor to confirm specifically that even after his announcement today we will still be spending, throughout 1989, a smaller share of our national income on health than almost all our major competitors.

Is there anything more revealing of the Government's priorities than the fact that in the month when the Chancellor went to the Conservative party conference to affirm a new round of top rate tax cuts for those who are already rich he still refuses to find even the tiny amount that would save free eyesight tests and free dental check-ups, even for pensioners?

This is the first financial statement since the Prime Minister announced that she was converted to the cause of the environment. However, it is clear from today's figures, which show a cut in spending on the environment, that the Prime Minister has not converted the Chancellor. Will the Chancellor confirm that there will be not just cuts in spending on the environment, but huge reductions in housing investment, which will be virtually halved over two years, which will mean that thousands of young couples will have to keep on waiting for their first home?

Will the Chancellor also confirm the cuts in educational investment which will widen the training gap between Britain and our competitors at a cost of economic efficiency and our future prospects?

When, last week, Ministers awarded a 5·9 per cent. increase for pensioners and only a 4·7 per cent. increase for families on income support, did they know that they would have to come to the House this week to announce that inflation was above 6 per cent., and still rising, and that therefore the standard of living of millions of our citizens would inevitably fall? Is it not obvious for everyone to see that in this, as in so many other areas, the top rate tax cuts that the Chancellor gave to a few individuals in the spring are now being paid for by reductions in public investment for all our communities this autumn?

This is an Autumn Statement which compounds rather than corrects the errors of the Budget. It is an Autumn Statement which condemns an already congested Britain to further deteriorations in our public services. It is an Autumn Statement which, by the neglect of investment and a policy of high interest rates, leaves the British economy ill equipped and ill prepared for the challenges of the 1990s.

Mr. Lawson: It is apparent, I think, to the whole House that the hon. Gentleman had carefully written all that out before he had seen or heard the statement that I have made. Let me reply to the various points he made.

The hon. Gentleman said that next year, in 1989-90, there would be a real deterioration in public services. That is what he said. It is nonsense. If he looks at the figures, spending on programmes next year is due to rise by 2¾ per cent. in real terms. That is the truth of the matter.

Secondly, as far as the Health Service is concerned, the hon. Gentleman failed to listen to what I told him—and I explained carefully how this was arrived at. Real resources for the National Health Service next year will be 4½ per cent. higher than this year, far and away more than anybody has ever hitherto suggested. And I may say, spending on health as a proportion of total public spending is far higher today than it ever was under Labour.

As for housing investment, the hon. Gentleman alleged that there would be cuts in housing investment. That again is totally untrue. What he is talking about, of course, is the right-to-buy programme, but gross housing investment by local authorities and new towns will be up in real terms as well as in money terms. He said public investment will be down. In fact, public investment will be up by £2¼ billion. It was the Labour Government—the last Labour Government—who slashed public sector investment and we have maintained it and, indeed, outside the housing sector, it has increased under us.

The hon. Gentleman also called for more investment. As I pointed out to the House in my statement, over the past five years, total investment in this country has risen almost twice as much as total consumption. Indeed, taking the whole of our period of office since 1979, investment has risen more than consumption. Under Labour—they had admittedly a much smaller increase in consumption—the increase in investment was infinitesimal, only about one eighth of the increase in consumption. That is what happened when they were in office. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman's account of the economy showed again that he has no contact whatever with reality.

The hon. Gentleman talked about inflation. I am not going to take any lessons on inflation from the hon. Members opposite, when inflation, when they were in office, averaged 15½ per cent. and never once—not in one month, not in their most favourable month—was it ever as low as it is at the present time, even though it is still too high and it has to come lower; nor did he mention once record exports, record productivity, record investment, record output and record employment, too. I would have liked to have heard some acknowledgment of that from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I am grateful for the additional funds that the Government have provided for the National Health Service, but am concerned that the Chancellor is taking more money out of housing through local authority council house sales revenues than he is, on his own admission, putting back into it. Is he not singing, "Don't worry, be happy", when he is presiding over a high-risk strategy with interest rates which will remain high and feed through into mortgages and pay claims, with inflation which could touch 8 per cent. even within the forecast that he has given, with a balance of payments deficit which will not go down significantly so far as the eye can see, with the risk of a sterling crisis and with the money supply not within the target range? Is it not obvious that, instead of merely introducing an autumn statement, he should have brought forward an autumn Budget at the same time or, at the very least, indicated that he would not make further tax reductions in his next Budget, or does he not expect to introduce another Budget?

Mr. Lawson: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for letting me know about the difficulties of conducting economic policy. I have to tell him that I was already well aware of them and am already satisfied that the policies that we have in place are adequate to the situation, as, indeed, they have been for the past nine and a half years. There is no question of an autumn Budget, I can tell the hon. Gentleman. That only happened under the Labour Government which he supported.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): The House will agree that my right hon. Friend would be well advised to ignore the carping criticism of the Opposition, particularly with their record of the management—or mismanagement—of our economy when they were in office. Does he agree that his statement will be welcomed, not only in this House, but in the country? I hope that he will emphasise the fact that the Government are unique in that they have cut taxation, increased public expenditure in real terms and have been repaying the national debt. Those are three very good things.

I am sure that the House will wish to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on the admirable way in which he has dealt with the £167 billion. It will be welcomed that the percentage of national income going on public expenditure is now below 40 per cent. and is going lower. It is an achievement to have stuck to the £167 billion and he deserves our congratulations.

Mr. Lawson: I agree with everything that my hon. Friend said and, in particular, with his congratulations to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary. Of course, I have to confess to the House—I did not expect my statement to be welcome to the Benches opposite. I did not expect them to welcome the fact that we have succeeded in holding the planning total at £167 billion. I did not expect them to welcome the fact that we have got total public expenditure below 40 per cent. of GDP for the first time in over 20 years because, of course, the only thing they know about is increasing public expenditure, increasing it faster and faster, and faster than the economy can afford, and we know where that led to. It led to the humiliation of having to go cap in hand to the IMF, and they have learnt nothing from their experience last time.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Is the Chancellor aware that, by his performance today, he has confirmed the Prime Minister's assessment that he is not leadership material? Is he also aware, in the light of his confident statement, that last Thursday the Shropshire health authority confirmed a large hospital closure programme for want of £3 million? If he is now putting his money where his mouth is, will he please write to the Shropshire health authority, telling it that it is no longer necessary for it to undergo those cuts because he is in fact proposing a real increase in income?

Mr. Lawson: As the hon. Gentleman knows—even though he has had to switch constituencies, I think he is probably now reasonably familiar with his new one—

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unlike the slashing cuts in hospital spending under the Government that he supported, there have been substantial increases in hospital building programmes under this Government, not least the large new general hospital at Telford.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): I welcome an autumn statement which shows that it is possible to combine the tax cuts of the last Budget with substantial increases in public expenditure and a far greater repayment of the public debt than anyone expected at the time of the last Budget.

Clearly, a growth rate of 4·5 per cent., which was also higher than predicted, is not sustainable. Is it now my right hon. Friend's intention to keep the growth in demand in line with the productive potential now being achieved?

Mr. Lawson: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. Yes, indeed, it is necessary that we should keep the growth in demand in line with productive potential, and the growth in productive potential, fortunately, is the success of the supply side policies of this Government. The growth in productive potential now is greater than we have ever known in the past, but, of course, it is not as large as 4½ per cent. and there has to be a slowing down. That is right.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): I ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to be more specific. In the economic prospects for 1989, he forecasts that there will be a slightly smaller current account deficit than £13 billion. Will he put a figure on that? Is it £12 billion or £11 billion? He goes into the question of a 5 per cent. inflation rate in the fourth quarter of 1989 and warns that it will peak in mid-1989. Is he talking of an 8 per cent. rise in the second or third quarter? The Chancellor also forecasts that unit labour costs will grow more rapidly than 1 per cent. over this year. What figure is he estimating for unit labour costs?

Mr. Lawson: On the last point, I do not have in my head the figure for the expected increase in unit labour costs, but the right hon. Gentleman will be able to find that in the material that is published today. It is, of course, only a forecast, and has the same status as other forecasts made by anybody. As regards the current account of the balance of payments, I did quote the figure that is being forecast for the current account deficit next year. It is a deficit of £11 billion. I am not surprised that the right hon. Gentleman did not hear it because of the barrage of noise that was coming from the Opposition Benches, which is such a deplorable feature of the House of Commons these days.

Mr. Leon Brittan (Richmond, Yorks): May I join in congratulating my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on his formidable achievement in continuing the downward path of public expenditure as a proportion of national income while at the same time providing extra resources for priority areas of expenditure? Does he agree that if top priority is to be given to reducing the present levels of inflation, fiscal policy must reinforce monetary policy? That means envisaging an even higher level of debt repayment in the coming year than would otherwise be necessary.

Mr. Lawson: My right hon. and learned Friend obviously speaks with the particular authority of a former Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and I take note of what he says. The fiscal policy—the fiscal stance that we have now in the United Kingdom—is exceptionally tight, and looking at the fiscal stance one has to look at both sides, taxation and public expenditure, and, indeed, at the surplus, which is the difference between those two. As for the question of the Budget judgment, my right hon. and learned Friend will understand that I am not going to be tempted on to that ground now. The Budget judgment is something that I will take at the appropriate time in the normal way.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on Trent, South): Will the Chancellor of the Exchequer please take note of the fact that yesterday I received a letter from a man who is paralysed from the neck down—a tetraplegic. He said that, as a result of the Government's cost-cutting social security changes in April, he is £13 a week worse off despite transitional protection. Will the right hon. Gentleman write to this man and thank him for contributing to his pot of gold in the form of a budgetary surplus? Will he console him with an assurance that, despite the appalling fall in his income, the British economy is bigger, stronger, more successful and so on?

Mr. Lawson: Well, of course, I do not know about the particular circumstances of the individual case that the right hon. Gentleman spoke about. What I do know is that spending on the disabled has increased by 90 per cent. since this Government took office, and there is provision for a further substantial increase in spending on the disabled in the public expenditure plans which I have published today.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend and his Treasury colleagues on withstanding the blandishments of some of their high-spending colleagues and keeping the planning total down to the level that was published last January? Does my right hon. Friend agree that repayment of the national debt, much of which was incurred by the profligacy of the last Labour Government, brings continuous benefit to our children and grandchildren? What is his long-term target for reducing public expenditure in terms of gross domestic product? Will it be reduced to the level of the 1960s, when we had another successful Conservative Government?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right about the enormous value in having a Budget surplus and repaying the national debt year by year. There is the benefit in the short term that we see—being able to spend more on public expenditure programmes because debt interest is taking a smaller amount of the total public expenditure cake. It also, of course, is very important for future generations—reducing the burden of debt interest that future generations have to bear. It was the Labour Government who were entirely, if I may coin a phrase, a "me now" Government.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The Chancellor of the Exchequer partly attributed the increase in inflation to the increase in interest rates and the effect on mortgages. Does not he realise that eight of the 10 large building societies are not increasing mortgage payments until April 1989? That means that a political and economic time bomb will hit inflation in April, May and June 1989, just in time

for the European elections. Will he reconsider the use of interest rates as a short-term lever, and will he tell the House what his assumptions on interest rates are for the next two years?

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman is under a misapprehension about what he calls the political and economic time bomb. The way the RPI is constructed, the increase in mortgage rates is fed into the RPI immediately the building societies announce it. It does not wait until they implement it. Therefore, there is nothing further to come in April. It does mean, of course, that because one or two building societies, notably the Halifax, do not in fact require the people it is lending to to pay more until April —some of them do it much earlier and, of course, for new mortgages it is earlier—the tightening in monetary conditions that occurs as a result of putting up interest rates, and mortgage rates going up, is not something that happens instantaneously. It happens progressively, and there will be a progressive tightening for the very reason that the hon. Gentleman said, but the effect on the RPI is immediate.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Does my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer recall that when he made his Autumn Statement last year there was well-founded apprehension that the crash in world stock markets would have a damaging effect on the British economy and the world economy generally? Will he accept that today's statement is a great tribute to the underlying strength of the British economy and to the timely measures that he took to ensure that the effects of the crash did not have a damaging effect on the British economy? Only the churlish would use hindsight to say that he was wrong in taking those steps in terms of ensuring adequate liquidity, or would criticise the measures that he has now taken to tighten monetary conditions so as to squeeze inflation out of the system.

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. I do vividly recall the very different circumstances in which I introduced last year's Autumn Statement. I believe that the measures that we took to avert a world recession at that time were fully justified, even though, as I have said on another occasion, they may have stored up some problems later on. What I do recall is that the Labour party was urging me to cut interest rates far more and to expand far more than I thought it prudent to do at the time. I also recall more recently, incidentally, in our Budget debate that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said:

"current taxation revenues without privatisation receipts should exceed current expenditure, he did not balance the Budget last year or this year, and he will not balance it in years to come."—[*Official Report*, 21 March 1988; Vol. 130, c. 103.]

I hope that he will now concede that that is precisely what I have done.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): Will the Chancellor of the Exchequer confirm that the base from which his announcements on the Health Service funding were predicted was £25·683 billion? That has been increased already by the announcements made over recent months to £26·571 billion. Contrary to what the right hon. Gentleman said to my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), this means that, taking into account the Government's optimistic prediction of 4·7 per cent. inflation and the dubious statistics on once-off sales of land and superannuation changes, the Government will be short of £200 million in meeting the 4·7 per cent. increase in inflation for the Health Service. If this is not a sleight of hand, it has to be misleading and mischievous given the impact that it will have on those working in the Health Service and on those who receive the services that are provided by it. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that there has been a decrease, not an increase?

Mr. Lawson: I confirm no such thing. For example, it is absurd to suggest that the £300 million a year superannuation contribution—which NHS employers used to have to pay and will no longer have to pay and therefore the money will go straight into providing health care—should not be counted. That is an absurdity. That is £300 million of extra money. As I said, even after taking into account inflation, the real increase in health spending next year is around 4½ per cent.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his reduction in income tax rates have helped to fuel extra taxation revenues and that the highest rate taxpayers now pay a larger proportion of those revenues than they did under a Labour Government? Will he also agree that, with the extra 3 per cent. above inflation for future spending programmes, the Conservative party has more humanity, more justice and more ability than the Labour party ever possessed?

Mr. Lawson: Certainly the Conservative party in government has a great deal more success in achieving economic growth as well as getting inflation down, therefore enabling more resources to be put to the purposes which I understood the Labour party was in favour of. Of course, the Labour party is totally oblivious to the facts and, after five and a half years as Chancellor of the Exchequer, I am beginning to believe that it is extraordinarily difficult to educate Labour Members.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): While it may be true that the British economy weathered the stock market crash in the autumn of 1987, it has weathered less well the chaotic and catastrophic handling of the exchange rate and the tax reductions for higher earners introduced in the Chancellor's Budget this year. Will the Chancellor confirm that he is relying on the speculative movement of capital into this country to finance the deficit in our balance of payments which is now four times what it was forecast to be in last year's Autumn Statement? If that balance of payments deficit is to continue into the 1990s, how will it affect public, national and international confidence in our economy? If interest rates are to be the only barricade against the loss of confidence, how high will they have to go to maintain that international confidence?

Mr. Lawson: Clearly, so long as there is a deficit on the current account of the balance of payments, there must equally be an inflow of capital from overseas because the balance of payments must balance. Some of that inflow capital will be money that is lent and is securing interest. Some of it will be direct equity investment in this country. There will be and there are both kinds. More and more mobile funds today are looking for a good home and for a home where they have confidence in the political stability and economic policies of the Government concerned. That is why there is so much capital actively seeking a home in this country. The deficit on the current account of the balance of payments will in due course diminish quite

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significantly, but in the meantime, as the markets show very clearly, there is complete confidence in this country and no problem whatever in financing the deficit that we have.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): While dealing with the many large and justified claims on the public purse, was my right hon. Friend this year able to accommodate a small one, and remove the injustice suffered by colonial service pensioners who are not allowed to count war service in their pension entitlement?

Mr. Lawson: I certainly recognise the very determined work of my hon. Friend and some others in lobbying for this. I am pleased to be able to tell them that provision has been made for war service credit in the calculation of pensions of ex-colonial service men. Up to 6,000 pensioners should benefit from that.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): When does the right hon. Gentleman expect the balance of payments to come back into surplus?

Mr. Lawson: Fortunately, under the Industry Act 1975 I am not required to forecast any further than the year ahead. It will not come back into surplus in 1989.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): I know that my right hon. Friend is a very kindly and sympathetic man. His statement sets out the most magnificent record of economic management and very reassuring prospects for our economy. Will he spare a thought for the appalling problems that he has caused the Opposition? It is quite impossible to argue with such a record and say anything remotely sensible, as was demonstrated from the Opposition Front Bench. The prospect of £10 billion of public sector debt repayment next year is splendid, but its effect on demand will be negated if it is compensated by net household dissaving. I know that my right hon. Friend is concerned about this and that is why he has raised interest rates. Will he give us some estimate of how he sees the savings ratio moving over the next 12 months?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is clearly a most perceptive observer of the political scene. It is essential that there should be an increase in the savings ratio and that is why I increased interest rates quite substantially which will both deter borrowing and increase the incentive to save. It will incidentally provide an enhanced income for savers among whom, in particular, pensioners tend to be numbered. That is something which the Opposition have failed to acknowledge at any time during our debates. As for when the savings ratio will turn, that is one of the hardest things to forecast, but I expect that it will not be too long before we can see a turn up in the savings ratio.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): The Chancellor told us today that the RPI increase will be about 5 per cent. in the fourth quarter assuming that mortgage interest payments are excluded. If they are included in that equation, will pensioners receive a 5·9 per cent. increase or less?

Mr. Lawson: As I have said, RPI in the fourth quarter is likely to turn out at 6¼ per cent. Under this Government pensioners have had an uprating every year and will continue to have that, according to inflation in the previous years. They will not, as occurred under the last Labour Government, be cheated by the switch from the historic basis for uprating to uprating on the basis of some spurious forecasts.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on granting an additional £120 million for basic research in the United Kingdom. That will be a tonic to British science and we hope that he will bear it in mind in future contributions. How much of this money will be applied to our international commitments in CERN and in space?

Mr. Lawson: I know my hon. Friend's long-standing interest in this and a number of other scientific and energy matters. I am afraid that I cannot answer his question, but I am sure that if he puts his question to the Minister responsible for these matters he will receive an answer.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): I congratulate the Chancellor on a wonderful statement and speech but may I tell him—*[Interruption.]* The figures surely represent lies, damn lies and Tory propaganda. If he does not understand that, there is something wrong. The reality is all around us. There is a major crisis in the economy and that will not be resolved simply by juggling the figures or by the Chancellor making pretty statements here.

The Chancellor has not mentioned Scotland. We appreciate in Scotland that there is a struggle going on against the poll tax, a very regressive tax which obviously benefits the rich at the expense of the poor. Will he not appreciate that, unless that tax is removed or controlled in some way, there will be a major challenge next year? The Chancellor must understand that increasingly more and more Labour Members will be backing the struggle even if that is against the law. It is the Government's law, an unjust law and a class law.

Mr. Lawson: This particular occasion is one on which we talk about public expenditure. Therefore, I shall content myself with informing the hon. Gentleman that public expenditure per head in Scotland is far far higher than public expenditure per head in England or Wales.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is now clear that the British economy is heading not for the crash landing for which the Opposition are so desperately hoping, but for what economists are apparently wont to call a soft landing? Is not the remarkable thing about that so-called soft landing that it involves a growth rate next year of 2·5 per cent., which is extremely respectable by both international and historic standards?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right in what he says about the Opposition. It is a matter for considerable concern that the Opposition should all the time be hoping and wishing to see economic disaster. What is causing such frustration on the Opposition Benches is that year after year since they have been in opposition they have predicted it, and year after year it has failed to turn up and it will continue to fail to turn up.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Chancellor give us some insight into certain aspects of the international economy, particularly the movements in the price of oil, which vitally affect his tax-raising powers? Secondly, if a growth rate of 4·5 per cent. is not sustainable, due to certain elements of overheating which

particularly affect the midlands and the south-east, and we are reduced to a growth rate of 2·5 per cent., which leaves Scotland with high and unacceptable levels of unemployment, how will his policy correct the disastrous regional imbalances which persist in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Lawson: On the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, the British economy's dependence on oil and oil tax revenues was never nearly as great as many people imagined. Indeed, since the collapse in the oil price in 1986, the importance of oil tax revenues to the Exchequer's total revenues is really very slight indeed. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman need lose no sleep over that. What I think we would obviously most like to see is the absence of a high degree of volatility in the oil price because that makes it rather harder for the oil companies to plan their investment programmes. As for regional imbalances, the Scotish economy is doing better now than it has ever done before. As the hon. Gentleman knows, continuation of that improvement is overwhelmingly in the hands of the Scottish people themselves.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Has the Chancellor any idea of what the regional breakdown in the expenditure that he has announced will be? For example, in the inadequate amount of public sector capital investment that he has announced, will there be any guarantee that the regions will get the direct links to the Channel tunnel that they badly need?

Mr. Lawson: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has received a particularly large percentage increase in his programme. A substantial amount of extra money will be spent on roads, but how that is allocated between different road projects is, to a considerable extent, a matter for him.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Is it not disturbing that even in the third quarter of this year the clearing banks lent a record £5 billion on mortgages? Does that not clearly show the extent of the overheating in the economy and how long and hard it will be to contain inflation?

Mr. Lawson: The battle against inflation is one that has to be waged all the time and is always a struggle, but I think that my hon. Friend should realise that what has been happening lately is that the banks have been securing an increased share of the market at the expense of the building societies and in looking at the mortgage market it is necessary to look at the banks and the building societies together, not just one part of the whole market. It is fairly clear—most people who are close to the housing market are aware of this—that the housing market has softened considerably since the summer of this year.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will my right hon. Friend accept that these figures are truly remarkable and better than many of us expected the outturn to be, and that many of us are extraordinarily pleased about the extra money being given to the overseas aid programme, particularly bearing in mind the tragedies that have happened in the past 12 months? Do the National Health figures, which are much more than the leaked figures that we all heard yesterday, mean that Her Majesty's Government will encourage the Department of Health to spend more on preventive medicine, and will that help the outcome of tonight's debate?

Mr. Lawson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his earlier remarks. Priorities within the health programme are, in the first instance, a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The whole question of improving further the NHS is very much at the heart of the review of the Health Service and health care that we are conducting under the chairmanship of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

As for the outcome of tonight's debate, I very much hope that the measures that the Government are proposing, which are desirable and right on their merits, will be approved by the House. But I have to make it clear that if, by any mischance, that were not to be the case, there would be no question of additional funds being made available for the NHS over and above the massive increases that I announced earlier today.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard to the subsequent debates that the Chancellor has just mentioned, and we also have a ten-minute Bill today. I shall allow questions on this important statement to continue for another 10 minutes and then we must move on.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Chancellor proud of the fact that since the Government have been in office there have been cuts in housing public expenditure of nearly 70 per cent. which have resulted in a great deal of housing misery and which could be seen by the Chancellor in a five-minute walk from Downing street to the Embankment? Does not he recognise that so many of those people in housing need cannot afford a mortgage and certainly cannot afford the market rents that will arise from what is now being proposed in the Housing Bill? If all is so well in the economy, why does the Prime Minister take the view that the Chancellor is not the person to succeed her? Is he not at times humiliated by the way that he is treated?

Mr. Lawson: The Government's housing policy has two main planks. One is to switch resources from the public to the private sector, and that we have done with enormous success by private sector housebuilding increasing very substantially and, of course, by the right-to-buy programme—the purchase by council tenants of their own homes. The other element which has come to the fore more recently is the resuscitation of the private rented sector. That again is of the first importance and that was why the new business expansion scheme arrangements were put in place in this year's Budget and they are again proving extremely successful.

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): My right hon. Friend correctly identifies the preoccupation with inflation. Therefore, does he agree that it is doubly important that the Opposition should not egg on every wage claim for the next 12 months? Further, will he make it clear to industry that it cannot count upon a progressive deterioration of the exchange rate to compensate for any failure to control industrial costs?

Mr. Lawson: I underline that. I believe that that is a point I have made on a number of occasions over the past two years. I happily reiterate it now. It is, after all, of the first importance that businesses have to control their own

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costs in order to remain competitive, and that means controlling their own wage costs. They will not be bailed out by a devaluation of the currency.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Does the Chancellor of the Exchequer accept that the Autumn Statement shows high interest rates and a high pound, which have inflicted so much damage on manufacturing and commerce, and does he also accept that, having inflicted damage on our public services, the future is bleak? If not, what is the future?

Mr. Lawson: I know what the future would be if there were ever to be a Labour Government, which there will not be, based on the recipe which the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) has put forward. It would be certainly a much lower pound, lower interest rates in the short term but then having to rocket up later, an economic crisis, and raging inflation. That is what we would see if the policies which the hon. Gentleman is advocating were pursued.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): I hope that my right hon. Friend accepts the fact that the views of the Opposition are blinkered. There has, as a result of my right hon. Friend's economic policies, been massive private sector investment in north-west England, to the benefit of all concerned.

I wish to ask my right hon. Friend about National Savings—another product of the north-west. In the light of his excellent tax revenues, I seek his assurance that National Savings products will continue to be developed, to assist savings.

Mr. Lawson: I appreciate my hon. Friend's continued interest in the National Savings department. Indeed, it will have a continuing role to play. He will recall that I announced at the Conservative party conference in October of this year that we will be launching in January an entirely new National Savings instrument, the capital bond, which I hope will prove to be extremely attractive.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): The Chancellor of the Exchequer made no mention of interest rates—his sole regulator—or of monetary growth, which is truly alarming. Given his deteriorating balance of payments deficit, is it not certain that one crucial question that should be asked of his statement is how soon it will propel him into yet another round of interest rate rises? What assurance can the right hon. Gentleman give the House, in view of today's reinforcement of domestic demand, sustained monetary growth, and the world trend towards interest rate rises?

Mr. Lawson: I am always particularly interested in what the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) has to say, not least because it is always in complete 180-degree contradiction to everything that his hon. Friends have to say. As I have always said, the level of interest rates will be whatever is necessary in order to keep downward pressure on inflation, and they will be kept at that level for as long as it is necessary to do so.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is a huge gulf between his Autumn Statement and the series of mini-Budgets and almost monthly crises that studded the last Labour Government? Will he bear in mind that there are millions of savers in this country as well as borrowers; that those savers need to be encouraged; that higher interest rates encourage saving and will improve the savings ratio—in marked contrast to the situation in the 1970s, when savers found their returns continually outpaced by inflation?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) is absolutely right. It was the last Labour Government which robbed the savers, and the elderly in particular, by inflation—which not only gave them profound anxiety as to what their pension would buy next month, next week, whatever it happened to be, but also of course meant that they had a negative real return on the savings they had. Now the real return is positive. It has been positive for many years past, and it has now been increased. That is something which is very important to savers, and it is important at the present time to the health of the British economy.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): The Chancellor has berated the Opposition for waiting for an economic disaster to happen. I put it to him that what really concerns us are two aspects of the Government's economic policy. First, unemployment is still twice what it was when the Government came to office. If there had been the supply side miracle to which the Chancellor has referred, that would not be the case after nine and a half years. Secondly, the Chancellor said that the cumulative balance of trade deficit for the fiscal years 1988, 1989 and 1990 will total well over £30 billion and possibly £35 billion, thereby taking up most of the £50 billion oil price cushion that has been built up in United Kingdom assets owned abroad. The Chancellor is surely really saying that he is waiting for a supply side miracle.

Mr. Lawson: The supply side miracle has already happened and we are seeing the benefits of that. As for unemployment, I will tell the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) that there are more people at work in this country today than ever before in our history.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his admirable statement. Bearing in mind that the personal ratio of debt to assets has increased to about 33 per cent. and that the principal instrument that he is using is interest rates, will he give consideration to the possibility of controlling personal finance through, for example, urging the credit card companies to increase the minimum return on a monthly basis and by controlling hire purchase? The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux says that almost 1·4 million people approached its offices last year with debt problems. With that in mind, will my right hon. Friend give urgent consideration to the other mechanisms that I have mentioned?

Mr. Lawson: I do not think that what my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) says would really help in the present situation—not least because personal borrowing and household borrowing is overwhelmingly borrowing on mortgages. Both credit cards and hire purchase are a very, very small proportion of the total —it is overwhelmingly borrowing on mortgages. No, there is no escape from the need to raise interest rates, and that is why I have raised them and will continue to keep them as high as they need to be for as long as is necessary.

As for what my hon. Friend says, however, that does not mean that there is not a responsibility—there is—on

both lenders and borrowers: for lenders not to lend to those whom they think might get into difficulties, and for borrowers not to borrow beyond their capacity to repay and to service.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: By leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the five motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered.

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) Amendment No. 4 Order 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1881) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Criminal Justice Act 1988 (Offensive Weapons) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Weights and Measures (Miscellaneous Foods) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Weights and Measures (Intoxicating Liquor) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Education Support Grants (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

London Local Authorities Bill

4.46 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This point of order arises out of the first matter of this afternoon that you, Mr. Speaker, asked to be taken now, in relation to the London Local Authorities Bill, about which you may have been alerted.

I objected to the motion this afternoon and obviously the matter has been put back. This matter arises from the last occasion that the Bill came before the House. It was objected to on the first occasion, and on the second occasion my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) objected to it as well—but I understand from inquiries I have made that that objection was not heard.

I wonder whether it is possible, on the grounds that I understand exist in "Erskine May", when a stage of a private Bill is taken by mistake, for the order that the Bill has been read a Second time to be discharged and the matter be remitted so that the Second Reading can again be put before the House and proceeded with as though the objection had been taken.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) for giving me notice of his point of order.

Unfortunately, the events about which he is concerned took place as long ago as 20 October. If a right hon. or hon. Member objects to a stage of a Bill when it is called, it is up to him to make sure that his objection is heard by the Chair. If the occupant of the Chair proceeds to put the Question and subsequently declares that the Ayes have it, as I did on that occasion, then the right hon. or hon. Member wishing to object has missed his opportunity and there is nothing that can be done about it on a subsequent day. I regret that there is nothing that I can do to help in this matter.

Trade Descriptions Act 1968 (Amendment)

4.48 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to extend the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 to require the labelling of furs procured by means of the trapping of wild animals and for related purposes.

My aim is to make the potential British purchaser of furs at least aware that a fur has come from a trapped animal that has probably suffered a long drawn out and agonising death.

It will be remembered that earlier this year the Government introduced a similar amendment. Then, prior to the Toronto summit, which itself followed a debate on this issue in the Canadian Parliament in which some Canadian Members called for economic sanctions against our country, the Government dropped the proposed Bill because of legal technicalities.

One technicality was the legal definition of the term "commonly caught" by trapping. I have tried to overcome this technical difficulty in the drafting of the Bill.

Trapping is cruel, indiscriminate and unnecessary. It is not just cruel, but brutally cruel. It is bad enough for a man to be caught in a trap in the wild, but can you, Mr.

[Mr. John Browne]

Speaker, or any right hon. and hon. Member imagine the mental trauma of a wild animal caught in a trap—the feeling of sheer terror, of wild panic and mental and physical agony? A trapped animal's first reaction is to bite and to fight the trap itself, which of course is made of metal, so it invariably breaks its teeth and even its jaw. When it gives up that fight against an inanimate object, it starts to pull and gnaw off its limb that is caught in the trap to try to break free.

If it is still alive after two, three, seven or even 10 days of absolute agony and mental desperation, weakened severely by lack of water and food, the animal is then killed by the trapper. It may, if it is lucky, be shot, but shooting spoils the fur. Shooting is relatively expensive. Shooting involves the trapper in a risk of ricochet—of hitting himself—when firing at a target at such close range, as the bullet may hit a stone. So most of the animals are either clubbed or suffocated to death.

Clubbing is a very drawn-out way of killing an animal, but suffocation is even more grotesque, judging by the instructions that are found in trapping magazines. One example is the instruction to lay the exhausted animal out with one foot on its open throat and the other on its rib cage, using what is described as a rocking motion, to drive the air out of the animal's lungs while letting air out but none in by means of the foot pressure on its throat. Gradually—gradually—the animal dies, in a space of time, depending on its health at the time, of between five and 15 minutes. It is a grotesque form of death. I have pictures of these various forms of death which I shall make available for right hon. and hon. Members in the Library.

Trapping is nothing more or less than obscene, brutal and drawn-out cruelty to animals. It is also entirely indiscriminate. It is impossible to target a trap. Birds of prey are caught; endangered species are caught; even hunting dogs or the pets of people wandering in the forest and the outback are caught.

What is more, trapping is actually unnecessary. Yet it is defended vociferously as vital to indigenous life in the outback. It is estimated that more than 20 million animals are killed by trapping each year in north America alone —there are no statistics for the Soviet Union—and that there are more than 500,000 registered trappers in north America alone. They constitute a very well-organised and powerful lobby.

Yet the estimates of what I term the "native" trappers —the trappers who genuinely hunt animals by trapping for their living—are relatively small. Native trappers really exist today only in the Yukon and the North-West Territories of Canada, and in those provinces they represent fewer than 5 per cent. of registered trappers. The native trapper is in a very small minority.

Evidence shows clearly that trapping is overwhelmingly a hobby—a grotesque hobby. So let us see what the British public think of it. In a major poll conducted in March 1987 by Research Surveys of Great Britain Ltd., the statement that there should be a ban on the import of all fur and fur products made from trapped animals attracted an overwhelming 72 per cent. support. The tougher statement that there should be a complete ban on trapping animals for their fur attracted 74 per cent. support. When the sample was taken just from women—the main beneficiaries of furs in this country—a staggering 83 per cent. supported the ban.

Let us see how that public opinion has been translated politically. In this Session of Parliament we have had two early-day motions, No. 978 in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), and No. 287 in the name of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). Each of those early-day motions attracted about 200 signatories from the Back Benches, although the Government had dropped their proposed legislation.

I am proud to say that the British Government have made trapping illegal in the United Kingdom. I am also proud to say that the British Government have signed the Berne convention, and I am very pleased to hear that the EEC Commission strongly supports legislation such as that originally proposed by Her Majesty's Government and now proposed by me, along with my sponsors.

Public opinion in the civilised world demands action against trapping. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State needs this Bill so that he can inform individual people and so allow each person to take his own individual actions within our country.

Of course the Bill treads on many rich and politically powerful toes, but I emphasise to you, Mr. Speaker, and to my right hon. Friends in Her Majesty's Government, that when the abolition of slavery was first proposed in this House it also met massive resistance from rich and politically powerful vested interests. Yet the Members of this House stood firm, and England led the world in abolishing slavery. It is in that spirit that I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. John Browne, Mr. Harry Cohen, Sir John Farr, Mr. Tony Benn, Mr. Churchill, Mr. David Steel, Mr. Sydney Chapman, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock, Mr. Donald Anderson, Mr. John Hannam and Mr. Alan Beith.

Trades Descriptions Act 1968 (Amendment)

Mr. John Browne accordingly presented a Bill to extend the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 to require the labelling of furs procured by means of the trapping of wild animals and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 221.]

Orders of the Day

Health and Medicines Bill

Lords amendments considered.

4.58 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think it would be generally agreed that it is very difficult for hon. Members to relate what is actually happening to the various papers before them today. I do not expect you to reply to me substantially today, but my question is this. Does it lie within your power to order that the paper called "Consideration of Lords Amendments" be consolidated with the actual list of Lords amendments, so that we know what action is proposed by amendment in the case of each Lords amendment rather than having two different papers relating to the Bill? Or does it require a positive examination and report by the Procedure Committee before such action can be taken? I respectfully submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that the chaotic papers today give the best example there could ever be of the need for reform of this matter so that hon. Members actually know what they are doing.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is right. The House often feels that it is difficult to relate the amendments to the Lords amendments when they are on separate papers. I shall look into what the hon. Gentleman has said with a view to seeing if there is anything I can do in the matter. If I cannot do anything, the matter might be referred to the Select Committee on Procedure with a view to changing the practice. Today, however, as we proceed, the occupant of the Chair will make it as clear as possible what amendments we are debating and relate them to the Lords amendments.

The first Lords amendment falling for debate this afternoon is Lords amendment No. 1. I must inform the House that the amendment is affected by privilege. With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 2 to 4 and Lords amendments Nos. 36, 37 and 44.

Clause 1

VESTING OF PROPERTY ETC. OF CORPORATION IN A COMPANY NOMINATED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND DISSOLUTION OF CORPORATION

Lords amendment: No. 1 in page 1, line 20, at end insert "or rights to subscribe for any such securities"

5 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

I shall do my best to pick my way through the forest of amendments. I put on record our appreciation of the detailed revision work on the Bill carried out in the other place.

The first group of amendments refers to clause 1 which refers to the General Practice Finance Corporation. Clauses 1 to 6 provide for the abolition of the GPFC as presently constituted, and for its property, rights and liabilities to be transferred to a company incorporated under the Companies Act 1985, which I shall call the successor company.

In reply to the question why we should do that, I would refer to the original context and role of the GPFC and how that has changed during the past 20 years. As independent contractors, general medical practitioners are responsible for providing surgery premises. Back in the 1960s some doctors found it difficult to raise the capital required so that GPFC was set up under the 1966 Act with powers to make long-term loans to doctors for the purposes of acquiring or improving practice premises. Those powers were extended by the Health Services Act 1980 to include the acquisition and leaseback of premises.

The lending scheme operated by the corporation allows loans up to 100 per cent. of the cost or valuation of surgeries over a term of up to 20 years at fixed or variable rates of interest. Before making a loan, the GPFC must be satisfied that the premises have been approved by the local family practitioner committee and will be used regularly and substantially for the provision of general medical services under the NHS.

The GPFC is a non-profit making and entirely self-supporting organisation. It charges all borrowers a rate of interest sufficient to cover its own borrowing and administrative costs. It obtains funds by temporary borrowing and by issuing stock under Treasury guarantee, all of which to date—£125 million—has been taken up by the National Investment and Loans Office. The GPFC's borrowing net of repayments to NILO is classified as public expenditure and as a result contributes to the PSBR, hence our interest in removing it from that consideration. We feel that such a financial service was thought necessary in 1966, but, given that such financing is a well-established private sector activity, we need to ask why we need to make special provision for it in the public sector in respect of family doctors. I believe that the answer is that we do not.

Plenty of GPs already raise funds for their practice premises from other financial institutions. On various occasions they have been proud to show off those premises to me, and there is no reason to believe that they would be less likely to use the GPFC if it were privately owned.

Funds are readily available and there is healthy competition among lenders. In such circumstances, it makes obvious sense to concentrate our public resources on those things which only the public sector can do. In transferring the corporation to private ownership, we shall be giving a major reputable financial institution the opportunity to acquire the GPFC. We shall not be giving it away; we shall acquire some money for it and we expect that institution to administer it in the interest of doctors and patients.

As well as commanding the confidence of private sector investors, we wish to retain the interest and involvement of our family doctors. To that end we are undertaking discussions with their representatives and with the corporation about how best that might be achieved. We certainly hope and expect to see family doctors on the board of the new company so that they can contribute their knowledge and experience to the management of its affairs. We are also seeking powers to influence the content of the memorandum and articles of association so as to safeguard the main objectives of the present corporation through the successor body. We are also increasing the corporation's current borrowing powers from £150 million

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

to £160 million to ensure that it remains actively in business pending the conclusion of the new arrangements that we propose.

The four amendments to clause 1 are important but essentially technical. They are designed to smooth the passage of the GPFC into the private sector. Amendments Nos 36 and 37 to clause 23 refer to the date when the GPFC clauses start to operate on Royal Assent.

I shall now turn to the individual amendments. Clause 1(3) enables the Secretary of State, with the consent of the Treasury, to acquire, hold and dispose of stocks, shares and other securities of the successor company. It does not refer to the rights to subscribe to securities. In other words, it does not cover rights issues. Lords amendment No. 1 seeks to ensure that it does so. It is precedented in section 52(1)(b) of the Gas Act 1986.

Clause 1(12) provides that any sums received under paragraphs (a) and (b) of it shall be paid into the consolidated fund. However, it may be necessary for the Secretary of State to discharge the liabilities either of the corporation or of the successor company and pay the balance into the consolidated fund.

Lords amendment No. 2 and Lords amendment No. 3, which is consequential upon 2, admit payments elsewhere. Lords amendment No. 4 is a technical amendment referring to a new schedule to the Bill which is Lords amendment No. 44. The purpose of the additional schedule to the Bill is twofold and I have no doubt that Opposition Members will welcome it. First, it ensures that any agreement made by the GPFC will have effect after vesting day as if made by the successor company. In particular, we wish to ensure that where the GPFC is a lessee subletting to doctors any covenant restricting assignment shall not prevent the substitution of the successor company as lessee in place of the GPFC.

Secondly, we wish to ensure that the transfer on vesting day will not operate so as to terminate the contract of any person employed in the GPFC and that the terms of the contract will not be varied in any way apart from substituting the successor company as the employer.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Good.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) says, "Good". It is nice to have some non-partisan support for what we are doing.

Both those objectives are secured by the amendment. I ask the House to support these technical amendments.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): In subsection (2), consequential on (1), which was mentioned, will the Minister explain what the consolidated fund is at the moment?

Mrs. Currie: Will the hon. Gentleman extend his question so that I can give it the due care and consideration which it obviously requires? Will he explain to me at a little more length exactly what he is talking about?

Mr. Fearn: So that the Minister can get the answer in time, I shall explain. Subsection (2) enables the balance of a discharge of liability to be paid into the consolidated fund. Originally, all moneys were to go into that fund. I am not sure whether that is good or bad.

Mrs. Currie: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising this most important point. As the Bill stands, clause 1(12) provides that any sums received by the Secretary of State under paragraphs (a) and (b) in connection with the reconstitution of the GPFC must be paid into the consolidated fund, which is, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows, the account into which all public money due to the Exchequer is usually paid. That is because it was envisaged that the GPFC's indebtedness to NILO would be repaid by the purchaser and not by the Secretary of State. The National Loans Act 1968 provides that all money raised by the creation of debt is payable into the national loans fund together with receipts representing repayments of loans made from the fund or, before that Act came into effect, charged directly on the consolidated fund, and interest on those loans. The national loans fund is the channel through which all the Government's borrowing transactions, and most domestic lending transactions, pass. It is still likely that the purchaser will repay the NILO debt directly, but there could be a premium payable for premature redemption which reflects the difference between the prevailing gilt redemption yields. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is following carefully. That will be only on fixed rate stocks—variable rate stocks will, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows, be repaid at par value.

The Secretary of State might have to pay the premium from the proceeds of sale, and it would go to NILO. It is against such an eventuality that we are taking powers to enable him to pay moneys into other than the consolidated fund. It is necessary that he should be able to discharge liabilities either of the corporation or of the successor company and pay the balance into the fund. I hope that that has answered the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Fearn *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman can speak only once in a debate on a Lords amendment.

Question put and agreed to. [Special entry.]

Lords amendments Nos. 2 to 4 agreed to. [Special entry.]

Clause 7

Extension of powers of Secretary of State for financing the Health Service

Lords amendment: No. 5, in page 5, line 18, leave out "powers" and insert

"the powers specified in subsection (1A) below; but for the avoidance of doubt it is hereby declared that nothing in this section authorises him or any body to which he gives directions under subsection (1B) below to disregard any enactment or rule of law or to override any person's contractual or proprietary rights.(1A) The powers mentioned in subsection (1) above are powers—"

Mrs. Currie: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 6 to 8 and 10 to 17.

Mrs. Currie: Lords amendment No. 5 refers to clause 7, which is about income generation. It might be helpful if I were to give a summary of what we are trying to achieve in clause 7. I am sure that it will help the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) as the

amendment covers different parts of the clause and it is important that the hon. Gentleman understands exactly what this group of Lords amendments would do.

In general terms, the clause gives health authorities wider powers to generate income for improving the Health Service. That is what the preamble to the clause says. From debates about the clause since the Bill was introduced to the House almost one year ago, I sometimes wonder what some people have read into those words. The clause allows health authorities to charge at commercial rates in the case of private patients and overseas visitors. I remember that, when the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden, who is now on the Opposition Front Bench, was a mere stripling of a Back Bencher, he called on us on Second Reading to do precisely what I have described. I cannot see that there is much for the Opposition to quarrel with, but they managed to spend a good few hours in Committee airing their arguments before eventually admitting how sensible the changes are.

The clause contains a strong safeguard to ensure that none of this new activity should be to the detriment of the NHS and its patients. Indeed, the purpose of the clause is to enhance the NHS, not to detract from it.

Existing legislation did not foresee health authorities wanting to use facilities other than for purposes directly concerned with the treatment of patients. I suspect that, by accident rather than by design, existing legislation can be read to permit authorities to pursue some income generation ideas, whereas others such as advertising, catering for outside bodies or running health clubs are clearly ultra vires. There is another group of activity about which the law is unclear. We have responded to the call from our own Health Service managers that we should clear up the matter. We agree that there is a clear need for legal provision which puts it beyond doubt that authorities can make full use of their facilities for income generation.

5.15 pm

The clause deals with three strands—income generation per se, private patient income and income from charges on overseas visitors. There is, however, a common theme—the provision of additional income for the Health Service. This is a good housekeeping measure intended to encourage health authorities to realise to the full the financial potential of resources at their disposal. It will provide health authorities with a valuable source of income while remaining no more than a marginal activity in the totality of Health Service funding. We have never claimed that income generation is any more than that. It never can account for more than a tiny fraction of total Health Service funding, and we have never suggested otherwise.

Clause 7(1) contains the meat of the income generation powers—the basic powers to acquire, produce and provide, for a charge, goods, land, accommodation and services, including training. It allows commercial exploitation of suitable Health Service innovations and developments. The powers were deliberately drawn wide, which I suspect is the reason for some of the fears that have been expressed at various stages of parliamentary consideration of the Bill, so that we would not be faced with the need to enact further legislation to permit activities which were inadvertently omitted from the Bill. The powers are permissive and are qualified by safeguards. They are not mandatory obligations. We shall not require all health authorities to set about manufacturing and selling all manner of things indiscriminately. The final part of subsection (1) provides for the issue, by the Secretary of State, of directions to health authorities about the use of these new powers.

Clause 7(2) and (3) provide that the powers may be restricted by directions issued by the Secretary of State. We have already issued guidance on income generation to health authorities. More will follow if it is the House's will that the Bill should become law. We have no reason to suppose that health authorities will act irresponsibly in their use of these new powers.

Subsection (4) provides that the wide powers introduced in subsection (1) do not apply to provision for private patients. Such provision is dealt with in the original legislation and in clause 7(7) and (8), which ensure that the rather tighter conditions surrounding the provision of services for private patients shall apply, particularly with regard to the authorisation of pay beds, in respect of which we have retained central control.

Perhaps I may be permitted to go a little more deeply into the safeguards against the misuse of these powers as it was a matter of some concern in the other place and it has given rise to some of the amendments before us.

Subsection (5) stipulates that none of the powers provided by clause 7 shall interfere with the duty to provide services under the NHS, nor be used to the disadvantage of NHS patients. I am sure that the House agrees that that is important. Income generation is to be a marginal activity, and I hope that hon. Members will not propose the notion that we seek these powers to make the NHS a monolithic trading organisation. We are not doing that.

The Secretary of State's duty to provide a comprehensive Health Service is not affected in any way by clause 7, and subsection (5) makes that clear. Subsection (5) also limits the charging powers in subsection (l)(h) to non-NHS matters. That is important and worth dwelling on as Opposition Members argued, especially in Committee, that the clause would open the door to new charges for NHS treatment or services. That is simply not true.

Subsection (7) concerns private patients. We decided that health authorities should be permitted to set their pay bed charges to make a profit. The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden felt that that was wise and sensible, so I believe that he will support us tonight. The number of authorised pay beds and their location will remain a matter for central approval. We believe that market forces should apply to the pricing of private treatment in NHS hospitals, and subsection (7) permits that by consolidating and simplifying previous legislation on private patients and enabling charges to be set on a commercial basis. The NHS should benefit considerably from that. As hon. Members will be aware, we did rather oversimplify some of the private patient provisions, as the British Medical Association and others on its behalf told us. The amendments which we brought forward in another place are intended to remedy that excess of zeal.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I have been following with great interest the excellent case which my hon. Friend has put up. In the private sector, it is possible to make arrangements whereby employees or managers who produce new ideas for generating revenue for the firm can have a percentage of the profits in the first year. It is right that the provisions which my hon. Friend recommends should enable the profits made to be kept by the Health

[Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop]

Service rather than go into the consolidated fund. Does this permit a local health authority, or the Minister, to make an arrangement whereby new ideas for income generation can benefit the NHS employee who suggests them?

Mrs. Currie: The key NHS employee in most district health authorities is the district general manager. Managers are now all on short-term contracts with performance-related pay.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: The system could work all the way through.

Mrs. Currie: We would be interested in extending that proposition to other members of staff, but for the time being this applies only to senior managers. We would expect that an NHS manager who was able to generate in wise and sensible ways considerable income for his health authority would have that ability and success recognised when he was next reviewed. We would expect that, if an NHS manager were totally incapable of undertaking that kind of activity, that would be taken into account. I take my hon. Friend's point—many businesses have reward schemes. We would not want to pronounce on that matter from the Dispatch Box. We would want to leave it to the common sense of the local people. My feeling, for what it is worth, is that knowing that the money generated is being put into even better health care in that district is normally, for the people who work for us, reward enough.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): My hon. Friend said that we can leave it to the local district. Do we take it that it would not be illegal if the authority chose to do that?

Mrs. Currie: As long as the money which is generated continues to be used in the NHS——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: To reward an employee?

Mrs. Currie: I am a little reluctant again to set out what I have said. The main opportunity to reward an employee lies in the grading of the district general manager and one or two other key staff.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: It could work right through.

Mrs. Currie: I take the point entirely. I would not be antagonistic to a suggestion that saw some kind of a reward, as long as the main benefit from such activity and improvement went straight into the Health Service, and therefore was seen to improve the health care of the neighbourhood.

As my hon. Friends know, most of the pay of the people concerned is either negotiated through the Whitley bodies or is offered to us through the review bodies. We do not at this time have the opportunity to vary the pay of individuals in quite the way that my hon. Friends suggest. I commend what they say to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health. We shall take on board those excellent suggestions.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Do the additional powers for financing the Health Service include the powers of leasing, placing money on the overnight money market and borrowing? If this is not readily clear, could consideration be given to this approach to generate income?

Mrs. Currie: The money voted to us for the NHS is to run NHS activity. About 70 per cent. of that money goes in pay. We would therefore expect that the money which we have voted for next year will be allocated in much the same way. How money is held before it is spent is a matter not just for the NHS but for all Government Departments. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) may like to refer that question in more detail to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. The way in which my right hon. Friend handles our money has been entirely beneficial, and we have all heard the results in the Autumn Statement.

Mainly our money is spent. We can spend every penny which is allocated. The purpose of clause 7 is to ensure that those opportunities which occur to a considerable extent in most health authorities can be used to generate income, bring in more money and make a profit where no profit is legal. Money is then available to that health authority to extend and develop its services as it thinks fit and to provide all the services that we would like in health care.

Mr. Fearn: Would the voluntary bodies which are already raising quite a lot of cash for the district health authorities be taken into consideration as well? Would that money be utilised in the melting pot?

Mrs. Currie: We are about to discuss in detail one of the amendments which refers to voluntary bodies and, if I may, I shall take on that point then.

Subsections (9), (10) and (11) provide that charges for NHS treatment of patients from overseas may be set by health authorities on a commercial basis in the same way as charges for private patients. These subsections were added during our earlier consideration of the Bill, largely, again I must confess, because of pressure from the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden. Perhaps we should have had him as one of the Bill's sponsors. This is an excellent Bill, as the hon. Gentleman has said a number of times. He even told us that he thought that the White Paper was very good, but whether that will help his career on the Opposition Front Bench is another matter. We welcome the hon. Gentleman's intelligent and sensible comments.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Get on with it.

Mrs. Currie: Such charges apply only to a small minority of foreign visitors. Most foreign visitors are covered by European Community arrangements—the E111—or are citizens of countries with which we have reciprocal agreements, such as the Eastern bloc countries. Nevertheless, we felt it right and proper that health authorities should be free to set their charges in the same way as they set their private patient pay bed charges.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Surely a large proportion of our overseas visitors are from the United States, with which we do not have such an arrangement.

Mrs. Currie: I think that that is right. Generally, we try to come to agreements with countries, where possible. It is worth bearing in mind that a large number of our people go abroad. In fact, we have one of the highest proportions of people who go abroad on holiday and then get care and

treatment overseas. We try to make arrangements between Governments so that there are offsetting arrangements wherever possible. I am not aware that we have a huge influx of visitors from the United States coming here for treatment. Generally, they get very good treatment in their own country, and I am sure that they are pleased about that.

I turn to the detailed changes made in another place which we must now consider. The key point is that all the Lords amendments to clause 7 now under consideration were welcomed or accepted by Lord Ennals, the Opposition health spokesman in the other place, and we hope that the same will be true tonight. The 12 amendments before us include three different issues. The first, which is dealt with in amendments Nos. 5, 6 and 10, relates to the general rights of the Secretary of State under clause 7, which is why I gave the House rather a long preamble to them. The second, amendment No. 7, is concerned with the role of the voluntary bodies. The third group, amendments Nos. 8 and 11 to 17, deals with private patients.

Amendments Nos. 5, 6 and 10 were introduced by the Government in another place to meet the concerns expressed there and earlier in the House that the powers which the Government sought in clause 7(1) were too wide. Particular concern was expressed that clause 7(1)(f), and to a degree paragraphs (g) and (h), would affect adversely the rights of academic researchers and others directly employed by the Health Service in respect of exploitation of their ideas and inventions. The opportunity was taken to have a debate, which was extremely valuable, about the revision in February 1987 of the standard Department of Health research contract. At that stage, the fundamental issue was the removal of the automatic right for researchers to publish. The hon. Members for Strathkelvin and Bearsden and for Peckham will recall that we had a long and useful debate about this in Committee. In the other place, however, there is a strong interest in academia and in the rights of inventors and I took the opportunity to listen to the debate there. The concept embodied in the amendments was offered to those leading the debate and became part of a package including amendment No. 9, which will be moved later by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State.

5.30 pm

In the light of the concerns expressed, we decided to introduce these amendments in another place. They make it absolutely clear on the face of the Bill that in using these powers the Secretary of State and health authorities acting under delegated authority cannot do anything which would take away anyone else's legal rights or property, and so on. We did not incorporate the provisions in the Bill at the outset because we did not consider it necessary, but we have bowed to the advice of their Lordships who regard it as necessary and we are prepared to accept the amendments.

Amendment No. 7 deals with voluntary bodies and inserts in page 5, line 32, the words

"(having regard to the existing work of voluntary bodies)".

When I have said a few words about this, I will give the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) the opportunity to make his point again so that it comes in the right place.

The purpose of clause 7 is to make more money available for improving the Health Service. Clearly, there might sometimes be a potential clash of interests with the voluntary bodies which work so selfless[ly] in support of the Health Service. Organisations such as the League of Friends and the Women's Royal Voluntary Service, help by running shops, cafeterias and so on in our hospitals. Their help is invaluable and allows the provision of a really useful service which otherwise might be difficult to provide, especially in isolated areas. Some Health Service managers, however, have ambitions beyond the services that such bodies can provide and believe that, with the right encouragement, private companies with expertise in areas such as mass catering or retailing might be willing to rent space in hospitals to run major shops or commercially viable cafeterias. A lot of money could be made by the health authority in terms of rent and additional facilities would be available for patients, visitors and staff.

One major London hospital has calculated that in a typical year the total number of people passing through its front door is about 1¼ million. That includes patients, staff and a very large number of visitors. If we can tap some of their activities and offer them opportunities to spend money with us, there is scope for considerable income generation, but we must ensure that in their zeal to set up such arrangements—arrangements which, broadly speaking, we would encourage—Health Service managers do not ride roughshod over the League of Friends, the WRVS and other organisations which might already be working in the area.

Account should be taken, for example, of any existing tea bar and there should be discussion with volunteers about the implementation of new policies. Those running the tea bar might agree that their efforts could be directed to a different form of help—for example, sitting with patients who do not have many visitors or who may feel lonely and depressed and distressed. In the future, as in the past and the present, for many volunteers this may represent a better use of their efforts in terms of making the patients' time in hospital more pleasant or at least less unpleasant rather than restricting voluntary effort to raising money when in many cases more could be raised through commercial activity.

We do not wish to alienate the marvellous people who work with us through the League of Friends and other voluntary organisations. We are ever grateful to the large band of dedicated voluntary helpers who support the Health Service in such a variety of ways. That consideration was foremost in our minds in bringing forward this important amendment, which insists that we have regard to the existing work of voluntary organisations. We hold that work in the highest regard and we commend it to the House. We therefore also ask the House to agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

With regard to amendments Nos 8 and 11 to 17, the Opposition tabled an amendment in Committee at the behest of the British Medical Association which sought to reinstate both the definition of a private patient and the right in statute for consultants to admit their own private patients. To this day I remain certain, and I always shall, that the hon Members for Strathkelvin and Bearsden and for Peckham did not realise the basic purpose and meaning of the amendments suggested by the BMA, but that is certainly what they meant.

Mr. Galbraith *indicated dissent.*

Mrs. Currie: If the hon. Gentleman does not believe me, he may care to ask his advisers at the BMA, but that is exactly what those amendments meant.

At the same time, on a completely different point, our lawyers advised us that the revision contained in subsection (7) could well render certain collaborative schemes that we would wish to welcome ultra vires or at least fail to provide a definition of a National Health Service private patient. We were therefore sympathetic to the Opposition amendment, which would have resolved our difficulties as well as theirs had it not been defective, and I undertook to bring forward a suitable Government amendment on Report. Our amendment was virtually identical but at the eleventh hour it, too, turned out to be defective and thus was not moved. I am therefore forced today, as it were, to do a Whitelaw—to apologise yet again to the House for not having got this right in the first place and for having had to withdraw our proposal on the last occasion. With the assistance of their Lordships, however, we think that we have now got it right.

The eight Government amendments tabled in Committee in the Lords reinstate the requirement for the giving of undertakings by private patients and thus provide a convenient definition of a National Health Service private patient. They also reinstate the discretion to make accommodation and services available to consultants for the treatment of their private patients in England, Wales and Scotland. They were accepted in the other House unopposed and it is my privilege today to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendments.

Ms. Harman *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I will call the hon. Lady in due course, but not until I have reminded the House that we have a lot of work to get through. I hope that hon. Members and Ministers will put their arguments succinctly.

Ms. Harman: I shall keep my remarks as brief and as crisp as possible. Unlike the Minister, who is clearly attempting a filibuster so that important items such as charges for eye tests and dental checks will not be discussed until the small hours of the morning, I shall keep my remarks to a minimum.

On amendment No. 5, the Minister was right to mention that DHSS contracts for research were debated at length in Committee in this House and in another place. The concern was that the Government might refuse consent for publication of research merely because the findings did not fit their dogma. In a written answer on 8 March this year, the Minister went some way towards clarifying the situation. I should be grateful if she would go a little further today. Will she confirm that the only reasonable ground for refusal to allow publication would be if the research breaches confidentiality, commits libel or contains factual error? Will the researcher be told which of those is alleged so that he will know why publication is not allowed? Will the researcher or the organisation sponsoring the research have a right of appeal?

We very much welcome amendment No. 7, which deals with voluntary organisations. Such bodies as the League of Friends provide not only services to patients but an important opportunity for the local community, on a voluntary basis, to be involved in the work of their hospitals. Links between a hospital and its community should not be trampled upon in the rush to commercialise the Health Service. We shall monitor whether the income generation unit abides by the caveat in the amendment. We hope that the Minister will report on how it is being observed and on how the interests of the voluntary organisations in hospitals and in the Health Service at local level are being respected.

I wish to clarify the position on private patients. The Bill originally left out the actual definition of a private patient, so without amendment there would be no definition. My hon. Friends and I felt that to be unsatisfactory and tabled an amendment in Committee to restore the original definition. Being of suspicious mind, we did not believe that the definition had disappeared by accident. We felt that it was more likely intended to clear the way for a further blurring of the distinction between health provision in the public and private sectors. We are satisfied that the definition will now be reinstated.

I hope that the Minister will deal with my points on amendments Nos. 5 and 7.

Mr. Fearn: As I said earlier, the voluntary organisations raise a great deal of cash, which is then used to provide a specific item for a hospital. I would not want that to be interfered with. I hope that, in future, that money will not simply go into the melting pot.

The WRVS is concerned that under the income generation scheme catering firms will take over and the making of profit will mean more than the kindness being offered by the voluntary services. I hope that that will be carefully monitored.

Mrs. Currie: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall reply. The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) mentioned three grounds on which there might be some dispute between the Secretary of State and the researcher, for whose material we had paid, about whether material should be published in a certain form. Indeed, she mentioned three very good grounds on which there might be some difficulty——

Ms. Harman: The Minister gave me that information.

Mrs. Currie: That is right. There might be other grounds—for example, if there was an error of fact we would want an opportunity to discuss that with the researcher. There might be a question of someone being defamed in some way and that, too, would be appropriate for discussion. Although we think that there are unlikely to be any grounds other than those that we have set out, we want to ensure that the Secretary of State has the right to deal with them should they arise. It also brings his powers more into line with the sort of contracts available in other Government Departments.

We would always discus such matters, through our officials, with the researchers concerned. It would never be our wish simply to take an arbitrary approach. We would want to know how the money we had allocated had been spent, because we have to account for that money. We do not have plans for a formal system of appeal, but I assure the hon. Lady that we would have full discussions with the researchers. Indeed, having commissioned the work we would be interested to know how the researcher was progressing.

We are attempting to tidy up the legislation on private patients and get it correct. We want to ensure that it will hold and bite in the way that we want. We agreed at the

outset that some of the definitions being offered were not adequate and would not stand up to scrutiny. We are, therefore, grateful to the other place for its work on that matter. We believe the new wording to be better than the original.

I welcome what the hon. Lady said about the leagues of friends. It is nice to hear that the Labour party is now all in favour of the volunteers who work so hard in the NHS. I hope that it will continue that stance. I am, however, bound to observe that on past occasions volunteers have been criticised by some of the hon. Lady's colleagues, who believe that volunteers and amateurs should not be involved in activities that they think would be better done by paid members of NUPE. I welcome the Labour party's conversion. All such conversions should be welcomed.

5.45 pm

The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) made an important point. He may recall that before I came to the House I was chairman of the health authority in Birmingham. I am on record as expressing exasperation because, at that time, voluntary organisations often raised money and bought pieces of equipment without consulting the health authorities, which put the authorities in some difficulty. Recently we have encouraged the health authorities and the fund raisers to sit down and discuss appropriate activities and campaigns. The result is that the fund raisers are providing far more useful pieces of equipment. Although that brings the criticism that fund raisers should not have to buy useful pieces of equipment, I prefer them to do that than to buy something that is quietly left in a box and not used. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would regard that as progress. We hope that the cash raised is used for appropriate purchases. To that end, we expect the health authorities to discuss with the voluntary bodies their exact plans for the use of any money raised.

I hope that with those explanations I have outlined the important changes that the amendments make to the clause, which we hope will generate a great deal of money for the NHS.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 6 to 8 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 9, in page 5, line 46, at end insert—

"(4A) The Secretary of State shall exercise the powers specified in subsection (1)(f) above only after consulting (to the extent that it appears to him to be practical) any person who appears to him to have an interest through his own previous research in the ideas or intellectual property in question as to whether he should exercise them and, if so, as to any financial arrangements."

The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. David Mellor) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful for my hon. Friends' touching sign of support, which I hope will subsist throughout the evening.

I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment was incorporated into the Bill with the acquiescence of the Government to address the concerns expressed in another place that there were occasions when patent law did not give adequate protection to inventors over, for instance, whether the invention—and I use that expression illustratively—should be exploited at all, or whether, for example, its worth was now much more than could reasonably have been expected when an original contract was signed.

Although we felt unable to go the whole way towards meeting the wishes of those who wanted a requirement to obtain the specific agreement of the inventor, we accepted that it would be fair to all parties if the Secretary of State had to take into consideration the views of the inventor over exploitation. That would give the inventor the opportunity to state his case if he had views about the appropriateness of exploitation, and would also give him the opportunity to seek further financial reward if that was an issue.

As I said, this was not a Government amendment in another place, but it was moved with our full support. I hope that it goes a long way to allaying any fears in the research community.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 10 to 17 agreed to.

Clause 10

DENTAL SERVICES

Lords amendment: No. 18, in page 9, line 8, leave out from "following" to end of line 15 and insert "subsections shall be inserted after that subsection—

"(1A) It is also the Secretary of State's duty to provide, to such extent as he considers necessary to meet all reasonable requirements—

(a) for the dental inspection of pupils in attendance at schools maintained by local education authorities or at grant-maintained schools;

(b) for the dental treatment of such pupils; and

(c) for the education of such pupils in dental health.

(1B) Schedule *[Provisions supplementary to s.1]* to this Act shall have effect.""

Mrs. Currie: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we shall discuss Lords amendments Nos. 19, 46, 47, 49 and 50. I draw the attention of the House to the fact that some of the amendments involve privilege.

Mrs. Currie: The amendment will replace the absolute duty that originally stood in the legislation on community dental services with a duty to provide dental services at a level to meet all reasonable requirements. I think that the profession will regard our concession as something of a victory, but I do not mind that in the least. In practical terms, the proposals will not change the requirement to develop the community dental service.

Labour Members will recall that we had extensive discussions in Committee on how the community dental service should advance. We believed that the community dental service should offer an improved service to those people who have difficulty in obtaining the services of a general dental practitioner. That would remove the requirement for the community dental service to duplicate the services that are already adequately provided by general dental practitioners. The Lords amendments will satisfy the concerns that have been expressed.

Ms. Harman: I want to make two points about Lords amendment No. 18, which concerns the community dental service. First, how much do the Government plan to spend under the new arrangements on the community dental service? Will existing resources be targeted to where they

[Ms. Harman]

are most needed, or will fewer resources be targeted to those who most need them? Secondly, how do the Government plan to ensure that district health authorities comply with the statutory obligation for the dental inspection of schoolchildren and the maintenance of the community dental service? The financial pressure that the Government are putting on district health authorities is so great that many district health authorities see the community dental service as a soft target. How will the Government keep district health authorities up to the mark in respect of the community dental service?

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): My hon. Friend will recall that when we discussed the matter in Committee I was keen to press the point that going to the dentist is a family activity. Primary responsibility for dental care falls on parents. There was a difference of opinion between the Government and the Opposition in Committee over the prospect that, following the line of argument that I had put forward, if the requirement that the Secretary of State should provide a comprehensive dental service for children of school age were removed, there might be areas in which the service would not be provided. That was the nub of the political disagreement in Committee.

I am grateful for the fact that we have come to an acceptable compromise. The Secretary of State will have the power to ensure that "all reasonable requirements" are met and, at the same time, it has been made clear that the responsibility to ensure that children receive dental treatment from either general dental practitioners or the service provided by the health authority falls basically on parents.

Mrs. Currie: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall reply.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) for his sensible summing up of where we stand on the issue. However, the Secretary of State will have more than a power in this respect. He will have a duty to provide the service as far as is reasonable. The word "reasonable" will be written into the Bill. It is a sensible compromise between those who insist that we should continue to run the community dental service in the old way—when the main problem was the poor dental health of children in particular—and those who see that the general dental practitioner service is first class and who believe that it is entirely right and appropriate that people should go to the dentist as a family, including such important people as the spouses of hon. Members and other people who regard dentistry as important.

The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) spoke about the mechanism for ensuring that the legislation is followed and that the law is obeyed. The mechanism is the review system in which Ministers review the regional health authorities and the chairmen of the regional health authorities and their colleagues review the district health authorities. As I mentioned at Question Time this afternoon, Basingstoke and North Hampshire district health authority is being reviewed today. We expect the quality of work that the community dental service does and the degree to which it responds to patterns of dental health to be taken into account in such a review and for the health authorities to be held accountable.

The hon. Member for Peckham also asked whether more or less money was to be given to the service. That is a matter for the district health authorities to decide. If the hon. Lady re-reads the White Paper, which sets out some of the provisions that we are discussing tonight, she will find that we have proposed other functions for the community dental service which need to be developed, such as the monitoring of levels of dental health and the care of special groups. It is not just a question of how much money we spend; it is a question of what we get for that money. Dental health in this country is improving extemely fast, and we have been able to identify and look after some groups that have had little dental care in the past. We are determined that the community dental service should fulfil that obligation and look after dental health in a much more general way.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 18 and 19 agreed to—[Special entry].

Clause 11

CHARGES FOR DENTAL APPLIANCES AND TREATMENT

Lords amendment: No. 20, in page 12, line 1, leave out subsection (7).

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The House will know that the amendment deals with the vexed question of charges for dental examinations. I shall seek to persuade the House this evening that their Lordships made an error when they sought to remove the power from the Bill, and that the Health Service can make extremely good use of the revenue that can be raised by the introduction of charges.

It is relevant first to consider the matter against the background of the Autumn Statement and the increased spending announced today. I know from discussions with some of my hon. Friends that that announcement may be used against me by some. The argument runs that, with so much money going into the National Health Service, we do not need to seek increased revenue from those of the population whom we judge can well afford to pay a modest sum for their dental examinations. It is certainly true that this debate is taking place against the background of a fairly dramatic increase in the spending available to the National Health Service next year.

Given the difficulty of absorbing the Autumn Statement, it is possible that not all hon. Members have yet assimulated the news that we have heard. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) described the announcement as a standstill budget. I do not understand that. It would appear from some of the hon. Gentleman's comments that he may be labouring under the misapprehension that the increased spending that we provided to fund in full the nurses' regrading exercise and pay increase is part of the £1·8 billion for England. I see that he is shaking his head, so he has appreciated that fact. What we are talking about by way of provision by the taxpayer is an increase in spending next year over and above the outturn this year, which includes all the money that we have provided for the nurses' regrading exercise and that will continue. Over and above what we have provided this year for the Health Service, and over and above the provision that we have made for the funding of the nurses' pay award, an additional £1·6 billion—£1,600

million—will be provided for the Health Service next year in England alone. On top of that, we expect continued efforts by way of cost improvement programmes and revenue generation—made easier by the Bill—to make available to the English National Health Service £1·8 billion.

The hon. Member for Livingston would not forgive me if I excluded Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland from my remarks about the Health Service. If those figures are included, the increased spending available to the Health Service next year amounts to well over £2 billion—4½ per cent. over and above the raised forecast for inflation announced by the Chancellor today. That figure includes increases in expenditure on primary health care, with which we are principally concerned this evening. At the moment, we are spending more than £5,000 million on primary health care. During this Government's period of office, the figure has risen substantially—by 43 per cent. over and above the level of inflation since 1979. Our public spending proposals include plans to increase spending on primary care services by a further £600 million over the next few years.

The National Health Service is faced with a splendid opportunity to expand its patient services—while maintaining the high quality of medical and nursing services that we know we can expect from it—to meet the increasing demands that today's population puts upon it. The relevance of that is that there may be a temptation among hon. Members on both sides of the House to say that because this money has been made available, thanks to the Government's choice of priorities in this year's public spending round, we can take it easy and relax a little.

Why do we need to look for the provision of further revenue for the Service by introducing charges for dental examinations? I hope that that reaction to the large increase in provision for the Health Service will not affect the House, and will not affect people in the National Health Service either. We will waste the opportunity that the present economic success of the country has given to us if we allow increased spending by the Health Service to be combined with easing off all that we have done to try to give priority to patient care and developing the Service from the resources that we have.

6 pm

The same mood could affect National Health Service managers. There will be a temptation in some authorities to defer a difficult closure decision, even if the hospital is redundant to Health Service needs and the money could be used elsewhere. There may be the temptation, which I fear will be encouraged by some members of the trade union and Labour movement, to ease off in our efforts to raise efficiency and to make better use of our manpower. That would be a mistake and would dissipate our opportunity. I believe that it would be a mistake for the House to reverse the decision that we took before the summer recess to give these powers to raise further revenue for the Health Service by charging for dental examinations. There is a choice in all things, and there is a clear choice when hon. Members decide which way to vote on this amendment.

We are talking about dental charges that will raise nearly £50 million in a full year. The best estimate that we can make for what those charges could raise is £49 million. The choice that faces us is whether we raise that £49 million and put it into improving the service to patients provided by the National Health Service or whether we allow it to stay in the pockets of that section of the population who would not qualify for exemption, those who are, by definitions better off. The sum of £49 million is not insignificant. The choice that their Lordships made in another place was to let the people who would otherwise pay keep the money and not to put that money into the National Health Service.

When one looks at what £49 million would buy, it is equivalent to at least one new district hospital each year. If one takes the average cost, it would pay for 21,000 hip replacement operations each year. It would pay for more than 65,000 cataract operations at the average cost, if that £49 million was put to what I regard as better use. To find out what can be achieved on the margin of the Health Service, one only has to look at the Government's recent waiting list initiative. By spending £30 million on the margin, we have been able to provide treatment for 110,000 more in-patients in hospitals. The £30 million for the waiting list initiative is dwarfed by the money that we expect to raise from dental examination charges.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Will my right hon. and learned Friend say whether the £49 million represents the number of people who are having dental examinations at this time, or is it an estimate of the number who may have them if the charges are imposed?

Mr. Clarke: I shall be coming to that crucial point in my speech. I do not believe that the dental charges will have any significant or noticeable effect on the number of people who have dental examinations. That is probably the issue that divides some of us most strongly this evening, but I believe that all experience is against that.

The £49 million is the sum at issue on this amendment for dental charges. It is no good saying that £49 million does not matter and that it is peanuts, and it is something that surely can be found from the Government's finances in their present state. It is not peanuts to the people who could have those extra operations or treatment in some other part of the Service if we allow this revenue to be raised and used properly. It is no good saying that, if the House reverses the decision that it took a few months ago and decides that, after all, it does not want to raise this revenue, we will somehow reopen the Autumn Statement and find the money to replace it. That is simply not on. I understand that an hon. Member put that to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer earlier. One cannot run a whelk stall that way, let alone a Government.

On this year's spending, the settlement that we have made in United Kingdom terms is more than £2 billion extra spending over and above this year's spending, over and above the nurses' pay settlement and over and above the £50 million that we are planning to spend, and which I certainly do not wish to forgo. I hope that that explains to my hon. Friends—it may come as a surprise to some of them, but it should not—why the discussions on this year's public spending round were not easy. I have the greatest respect for my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, who is also a personal friend. We discussed this matter for a long time. One meeting that we had lasted for five and a half hours. At the end of it, we had not settled very much, so we had to start again. Throughout those discussions I never reopened this question, because the Chief Secretary himself wanted to give higher priority to the Health Service and its patient care. They were friendly

[Mr. Clarke]

discussions, and neither of us wanted to go backwards and take out of the Service £50 million for dental charges, of which we believe the Health Service can make adequate use.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop *rose*——

Mr. Peter Griffiths: In the list of improvements that my right hon. and learned Friend has suggested could be made in the National Health Service from this £50 million, he has made no mention of any improvements in dentistry. Our right hon. Friend, the then Minister of Health, said in Committee—at column 262—that at least part of it would go into improved primary dental care.

Mr. Clarke: I know. I am trying not to repeat the arguments that my right hon. and hon. Friends have used extensively on Second Reading, in Committee and on Report, though I am bound to repeat some of them. Some money will be put into dental services, and that is something for which the Bill is paving the way. Measures are included to promote dental health and the prevention of dental disease, and to improve the quality and distribution of dental services. Those extend from more fluoridation to more training for the dental profession.

I must say to my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) that it is no good anyone thinking that they can vote against the new dental charges and not put any of those at risk. I am sure that we shall not be able to charge ahead improving dental services as the profession expects, quite rightly, that we shall do if the House decides to deny us £50 million that we believe we can legitimately raise from dental charges. We shall have to find the £50 million out of our previous intentions. The dental service need not think that it will be exempt, if the dentists have persuaded the House not to introduce these charges. However, I trust that we shall not come to that.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Is my right hon. and learned Friend telling the House, as a new Secretary of State in the Department, that his right hon. and learned Friend, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury so failed in his duty to him that he did not warn him that, when he met the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, he should do so on the supposition that there was a great probability that the original decision of the House would be reversed and that, the Lords having passed this amendment, it would very possibly be sustained by this House? Is he telling us that he had no advice whatever from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury on this matter? He has told us that he went into his meeting with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury not taking this into consideration. Did he or did he not have advice from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury on this point? If he did not, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury let him down severely.

Mr. Clarke: I have had a number of conversations on this subject with my right hon. and learned Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury since I took up my post. He, together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, took the measure through the House only a few months ago and received an adequate majority of, I believe, 81 for it. We know that since then people have reflected further, but the fact is that, although some of those hon. Members who now say that they are leading a rebellion against us voted in favour of these charges only a few months ago, they now claim to see great problems of principle. However, my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and myself have great faith in the logical approach—especially of our party—to these matters. We trust that when confronted with the use to which £49 million could be put—and, I hope, having considered whether there is any serious risk of people being deterred from treatment—we shall achieve that majority, or something like it, again.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way to my hon. Friend in a moment. The danger in these debates is that I shall be giving way all the time. I shall come to any deterrents later.

I would point out to my hon. Friends—this is also appropriate to the Labour party when it was in government—that in primary health care it has always been the policy of successive Governments that those who are comparatively better off when compared with the very poorest in society should contribute to the cost of optical, dental and pharmaceutical services. That point has not been raised as an issue of principle on all but the briefest of occasions since Nye Bevan found it objectionable in 1951, when the then Labour Government introduced charges. What has happened—not only during this Government's period of office—has been that those charges have been raised substantially. In our opinion, those charges are a proper contribution to the revenue that is required to support and improve primary health care services. I have already said that we have increased real terms expenditure on those services by 43 per cent. since we came into office.

At times I have taken part in the debates that have been held each year on health charges. I am afraid that at times I have regarded them as a bit of ritual and I believe that I have said so on occasions because when in opposition the Labour party makes ritual objections. On every occasion when we raise charges, people always say that that will have a deterrent effect on those people coming forward to seek treatment. I have no doubt that some hon. Members raised that point as long ago as 1976 when the Labour Government raised charges by 35·3 per cent. in one year and then raised them in the next year by 27 per cent. Our biggest increase was 32 per cent. in 1980 and in subsequent years we have always raised charges. The real terms level of those charges has always increased because the real terms cost of primary health care has always increased.

We have frequently had votes on those issues and some hon. Members have asserted that the old and the poor would be deterred from using the services if we carried on increasing the charges for non-exempt groups. However, it has never been the case that there has been any decline in the service. In fact, although Governments have increased the level of the charges every year, there has been a steady increase in the numbers of courses of treatment. Occasionally, there has been a small drop in the first part of the year, but by the end of the year—I have with me the figures for every year from 1975 to 1986-87—the numbers of courses of treatment have increased.

Mr. Churchill *rose*——

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Robin Cook.

Mr. Cook: I am obliged to the Secretary of State for giving way to me. For the guidance of the House, will the Secretary of State clarify whether the chief medical officer agrees with him that he would not expect people to be deterred by a charge for dental examination or has the chief medical officer offered the Secretary of State the medical advice that that would greatly damage an important preventive service?

Mr. Clarke: I regard the advice of the chief medical officer—as I regard the advice of all my officials—as confidential—*[Interruption.]* I also regard this issue as tedious. The hon. Gentleman raised it repeatedly with my predecessor. He should be careful because, although his reputation is justifiably high, he blew his attack on the Government and child benefit last week by becoming obsessed with a silly letter that someone had got for him, thus throwing away any opportunity to satisfy even his hon. Friends. If the hon. Gentleman wants to take us back through his exchanges of correspondence with my predecessor about the advice of the chief medical officer, he can occupy the time of the House in that way if he wants, but I am certainly not going to move away from the long-standing convention that such advice is confidential.

The key point is that there have been steady increases in the numbers of courses of treatment every time that we have raised charges. Some of those charges are now quite high—the present maximum being £150 for a treatment. We did not start raising charges—our predecessors did that—but we have never apologised for raising charges to pay for treatment. The cumulative effect is that during our period of office, from 1979 to 1987, courses of dental treatment have risen from 31 million per year to nearly 37 million per year. That is an increse of 19 per cent. and means that there are almost one fifth more instances of people using primary health care than when we started hiking up the charges. There has been an annual increase of about 2·7 per cent.

6·15 pm

Looking at the figures for the use of the dental service, what strikes me is that the group of the population which has raised its use of dental services more than any other is pensioners and retired people. Each year we have increased charges and each year the Labour party has gone through the ritual of opposing that, yet pensioners' use of dental services has risen faster than that of any other group. During the lifetime of this Government, pensioners' use of dental services has nearly doubled. There has been a 92 per cent. increase in the period from 1979 to 1987.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy) *rose*——

Mr. Churchill *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) because I think that he was first.

Mr. Churchill: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for giving way. He seems to be under the firm impression that by introducing or raising such charges he stimulates the uptake—*[Interruption.]*—or at least there is no decline. Is he going to tell us that he is about to introduce charges for breast cancer screening and for cervical smear testing and that that would not have a deleterious effect on the uptake? If he does, quite frankly not many people will believe him.

Mr. Clarke: With great respect to my hon. Friend, who is a colleague of long standing, he does not do me a service by slightly parodying my argument. Of course, I was not saying that levying charges would in itself encourage a greater uptake—*[Interruption.]*—well, some people might be tempted to. It is not usually the experience that people have less regard for something that they pay for than for something that they get free. However, I have not used that argument. I am saying that against the history of some pretty steep increases in the costs that people expect to face when they cross the threshold of a dentist's surgery, the public are making ever more use of the dental service—pensioners most spectacularly.

Dr. Moonie *rose*——

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: No. Of course, we are not introducing charges for those other things. I am putting the current position firmly in the context of the long-standing charges for optical, pharmaceutical and dental services. We have absolutely no proposition to put forward charges for those other screening tests.

Dr. Moonie: The Secretary of State has correctly described the long-term trend in the use of the service. Will he confirm that on every occasion in the past 10 years on which charges have been raised the level of usage immediately thereafter has fallen?

Mr. Clarke: I think that I have said that. What usually happens is that its use falls off for a short time, but uptake then catches up. I will not labour that point any further because the figures are plainly on my side.

The increase in the use of the dental service coincides with a period during which the dental health of the nation has been improving. The number of people who have rushed to the dentist for toothache, for extractions and for fillings is certainly not increasing—if anything, it is decreasing. However, people are making ever more use of the dental service for the most expensive treatment such as bridges and crowns.

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I should like to continue my case for a little longer and then I shall give way again. The case that I am making—and I am not putting it in the manner that my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme suggested—is that all our experience shows that quite sharp increases in charges under both Labour and Conservative Governments have not deterred people from going to the dentist. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that the impact of charges on this test will be any different from the impact made by those other charges.

I shall go further, because if there is any deterrent effect —I recognise that the hon. Member for Kirkaldy (Dr. Moonie) clearly does not believe that there has been no impact—on those seeking treatment, the impact of the charge that we are proposing for this test is likely to be much less—indeed, non-existent. *[Interruption.]* We shall have two debates and I shall deal with each test in turn because the arguments are slightly different.

[Mr. Clarke]

The charge that we are proposing for the dental test is tiny compared with most dentistry costs and is not a significant figure for the group of people whom we are discussing who are, by definition, not the very poor and are not exempt. We intend to apply to the test the same principle that we apply to other dental services. The charge represents three quarters of the cost of treatment or, in this case, the examination, so, under the present agreement with the profession regarding the level of reimbursement for the service, the charge will be £3·15 for those people who are not exempt.

That leads me to the key point, which explains why the charges for treatment have not deterred people from going to the dentist. There are more than 20 million people to whom none of this applies because they are exempt from any form of charge. About 38 per cent. of the population is exempt. I have been a little generous to my critics when I have occasionally talked about the one in three who are exempt and the two in three—the better off—who have to pay. That is under-selling our case a little. In fact, four out of 10 are exempt, and the better-off six out of 10 will have to face this enormous sum of £3·15 about every six months if they want to go to the dentist. The exempt groups are children under 16, students under 19, other young people under the age of 18, pregnant women and nursing mothers and people on low incomes, which means primarily people receiving income support or family credit.

Mr. Dykes: I am loth to interrupt my right hon. and learned Friend's beguiling advocacy, but, on reflection, does he not consider that he was a little unfair to our hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) who voiced Conservative Members' anxieties? Does he further agree—assuming that he wins vital votes for the Government tonight—that Conservative Members are anxious that, when the charges are imposed, they may be rapidly increased? I have the greatest respect for him and believe that, if the National Health Service were to be safe in anyone's hands, it would be safe in his, but is he not the victim of a long-term Adam Smith design to impose charges on all sorts of screening services in hospitals, clinics and other institutions? Why does he not acknowledge that anxiety and assure us that, if the use of screening facilities falls drastically—assuming that the Government win the vote and impose the charges—he will reconsider the matter in, say, a year's time? Will he also solemnly reassure the House that he does not intend to impose additional charges on other screening services?

Mr. Clarke: No, I have no intention of introducing charges on any other things. As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) may recollect from our previous exchanges about eye tests, I never say never in politics, so I will say now, as I said on those occasions, "for the time being". I am certainly not party to any desire to extend charges. *[Interruption.]* It would be a totally different argument if we did so.

I see what we are doing this evening as being consistent with a long-standing policy, which goes back 30 years, of imposing charges for optical, dental and pharmaceutical services. It would be a significant change of policy if we introduced charges for medical procedures such as those that have been cited. Certainly, the Government and I have no such present intention. The Autumn Statement contained no provision for any new charges, but that does not alter the case in respect of the dental examination charge for the 60 per cent. of people who are not exempt. That charge of £3·15 is incurred about once every six months by that section of the population who go to the dentist. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security made an announcement last Thursday about the uprating of benefit and, as a result of that, a further 90,000 people will be exempted from dental charges. It was a side effect of my right hon. Friend's welcome statement that that widened the category of people in receipt of benefit and who are, therefore, protected against this sum of £3·15.

It is not just the history of charges, but common sense that tells us that people will not be deterred by that sum. Common sense sometimes needs to be reinforced by research. Plenty of research cited in debate has been carried out among that section of the population which probably comprises quite a large number of hon. Members and who do not usually go to the dentist for a dental examination. When those people were asked why they do not go to the dentist, the cost of treatment, which can be up to £150, was ranked fourth among the reasons given, the principal reason being that many people do not see the need to do so. They also cite the pain, and the difficulty of finding a good dentist. Then comes the possibility that it might cost them money.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North) *rose——*

Mr. Clarke: Among better-off people, attending the dentist for a regular examination is largely a matter of attitude and habit. Those attitudes and habits are changing. In the past 10 years, the proportion of the adult population attending a dentist regularly has risen from 44 per cent. to about 50 per cent., despite the increases in charges.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that pensioners with no source of income other than their state pension, although they might have their own home or flat, will not have to pay dental or eyesight charges?

Mr. Clarke: I can certainly confirm that point and it is important that we do so. Concern is often expressed about pensioners in such debates, for reasons that we all understand, but the social pattern of the country has changed in recent years and it is no longer the case that everyone of pensionable age can be assumed to be in the poorest category. Some pensioners are pretty hard-up, but others have quite large disposable incomes.

We give the same protection to pensioners as we give to the rest of the population. That is based on the best possible foundation, that of their income and means. The people in the category described by my hon. Friend do not have to pay for dental tests and the poorest pensioners, certainly those relying solely on their retirement income, would qualify for income relief.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): In order to put the £3·15 charge every six months into perspective, in comparison with other costs for families, will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the family expenditure survey shows that the average family in this country spends £8 a week on alcohol and £3 a week on toiletries?

Mr. Clarke: The average family also spends £4·50 a week on tobacco. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend's point is perfectly valid. Given the expenditure pattern of any household in this country, an expenditure of £3·15 every six months is an infinitesimal part of the household budgets of all those people who do not fall into the exemption categories. We shall waste the resources available to the Health Service if we continue to provide this examination free to a large section of the population who would pay it without thinking seriously about it and thereby contribute a sum of £50 million each year to the resources of the Health Service.

That is my case. We are discussing a misplaced sense of priorities which suddenly seized their Lordships when they first considered the matter. Just as they exercised their undoubted right to send the measure back to us to reconsider it, I strongly believe that we should exercise our undoubted right to send it back to their Lordships for them to reconsider it when they see the consequences for National Health Service spending and treatment.

6.30 pm

The vast majority of the £50 million that we forgo—in my opinion all of it—is wasted. It will be a case of resources needlessly turned aside if the House votes against the Government. Those who occupy the Chamber do not constitute a typical cross-section of the population, but by definition all of us are not exempt from Health Service charges. If the House decides to agree with the amendment, everyone sitting in the Chamber will be able to continue having dental examinations scot free. I am sure that no hon. Member would argue that he would be put off by having to pay a charge of £3·15. I am sure that the majority of those whom we are talking about would similarly not be put off. The £50 million that we are forgoing is dead money that is not serving any useful purpose. It is a source of revenue of which the Health Service could make good use.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: No, I shall not give way. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] My hon. Friend and I are familiar with our mutual views. I am sure that I shall continue to exchange views with him on radio and television. He will have plenty of opportunities to express his views. As he feels so strongly about them, I am surprised that he has come in so late in the day. My hon. Friend is protecting those members of the population to whom I have referred against expenditure of £3·15 every now and again.

Labour Members have surprised me. I thought that they would be wedded to the principle that the better-off section of the population—we are talking about the comparatively better-off by definition—should contribute towards health services for the population as a whole. It seems astonishing that the Labour party should seek to protect higher-rate taxpayers from having to incur a penny piece of expenditure for their dental examinations. The Labour party is saying that the £50 million that might be spent each year on patient services should remain in the pockets of the non-exempt population. I trust that my right hon. and hon. Friends do not agree with that.

I am not prepared to agree with the argument that the National Health Service should cut its planned expansion to the extent of £50 million, or to any other extent, for the non-exempt categories. I believe that all those who are committed to the NHS and to the expansion of patient care, and who wish to see us continue to make further advances in increasing the quality and quantity of health care, will vote in support of the Government this evening, and in so doing disagree with the Lords in this ill-thought-out amendment.

Mr. Robin Cook: This is the first of two debates on a principle that has greatly exercised many hon. Members on both sides of the House. As it is the first of the two, it may be appropriate to begin by rehearsing the recent history of the Government's disturbing proposals. They have their roots in the Green Paper on primary care which the Government produced in April 1986. I am bound to observe that one needs to be the most keen and enthusiastic gardener to spot the roots in the Green Paper. There was not the slightest hint that the Government intended to introduce charges for dental examinations or eye tests. There was no suggestion of the most controversial proposal that the Government have brought forward on primary care.

The first question that I must ask the Secretary of State, especially after listening to his address to the House, is why, if the Government had it in mind to introduce the charges when they produced the Green Paper, they did not share the idea with the world at a time when the public and expert opinion could have commented on the proposal and perhaps saved the Secretary of State from the embarrassing and difficult position in which he now finds himself in defending what is a friendless proposal. No one put that in the Government's mind during the consultation period that followed the introduction of the Green Paper. In answer to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), the Government candidly stated that no one during the consultation period had suggested charging for dental examinations or eye tests.

The proposal surfaced, newly born but fully fledged, last year in a White Paper. Having produced proposals without consultation, the Government have refused to listen to what anyone has to say about them. I congratulate the Secretary of State and his predecessor on the unusual achievement of securing positive harmony, not merely a degree of unity, among the diverse Health Service lobby groups and professional organisations. They are united in condemning the proposals. Charges for dental examinations and eye tests have been condemned by the British Dental Association, the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Nursing, the Faculty of Community Medicine, the Royal Society of Health, the King's Fund Institute, the Society of Family Practitioner Committees—despite the fact that the Secretary of State has called for all future appointments to be submitted to him for political vetting—the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, the Patients Association, the National Consumer Association and the Association of Community Health Councils.

The Secretary of State told me that he regarded it as tedious to be asked to acquaint the House with the views of the chief medical officer. We all understood what he meant when he said that. I am prepared to give him the chief medical officer. I shall no longer press him to tell us what advice he gave. I merely invite him to name one reputable medical body that is supportive of the proposal to introduce charges for dental examinations and eye tests. By "reputable medical body", I do not mean those

[Mr. Robin Cook]

factories for ideological axe-grinding such as the Adam Smith Institute and the Institute for Economic Affairs, which are the only friends of the proposal left.

All medical opinion outside the Department and, as far as we can see, inside it has advised against the charges. We are told that the charge for a dental examination is to be only £3·15. Those who say "only £3·15" show a remarkable lack of understanding of what that sum means to somebody on £100 a week. There are those who talk about the price of a pint of bitter, and if any hon. Member pays £3·15 for one I shall be glad to invite him to my constituency, where he can be entertained much more cheaply.

We all know what happens to charges under the Government. As the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) has said, charges are increased or, as the Government would describe it, reviewed. Some of us remember when prescription charges were only 20p. Since then the cost of such a charge has multiplied 13 times. With that rate of inflation, we shall have a £40 dental examination charge within nine years. Such an increase would be rather faster than the rate of wage increases. It is ironic that the new charge is being imposed in the one area of health policy where the deterrent effect has been repeatedly proven.

The Secretary of State has denied that charges for dental treatment would result in any form of deterrence. I take issue with the right hon. and learned Gentleman. I shall give two examples that have arisen since the House debated the issue on Report in May. The first example is the result of the change in the age of exemption which was made in 1981. Until 1981, any youth under 21 years of age was exempt from charges for dental treatment. In 1981, the Government reduced the exemption level to 18. Until 1981, the number of courses of dental treatment for 17 and 18-year-olds was almost identical. There was only a marginal diference between the two age groups. In 1982, there were 710,000 courses of dental treatment for 17-year-olds and only 554,000 for 18-year-olds. It was not, as the Secretary of State would have us believe, a merely temporary effect to be wiped out by long-term trends. In 1986, the last year for which we have figures, there were 632,000 courses of treatment for 17-year-olds and only 495,000 for 18-year-olds. The figures are eloquent testimony to the fact that among this age group there was a marked deterrent effect following the introduction of dental charges.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): I have also seen the figures, but I place a completely different interpretation on them. They show the remarkable success of preventive dentistry and the fact that children's teeth over the years have become very much better.

Mr. Cook: I cannot express just how glad I am that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman. If he seriously believes that the success of the treatment of 17-year-olds explains the 30 per cent. drop in treatment among 18-year-olds, I have no doubt about which Lobby we will find him in when the Division bell rings.

I want to adduce another piece of evidence for our case which comes from the other end of the age spectrum where the effect of dental charges has been clearly established to have had a deterrent effect. My point relates to a study of dental treatment among pensioners published by Health Care UK in August. It showed that among pensioners liable to pay for their dental treatment, only half as many as were exempt were likely to opt for expensive treatment. There was a very clear and statistically clear difference. It is more worrying to note that the study showed that those pensioners liable to pay were four times as likely to require emergency treatment when they went for treatment. That shows that that group, because they knew that they had to pay, put off going to the dentist until the crisis occurred. How much more likely is that to occur if those pensioners now have to pay not simply for treatment, but for the check-up?

There is only one conclusion. As a result of the measure, we will see a serious reverse in the long, slow advance in preservation work by dentists. It is inevitable that there will be a tendency to an increase in extractions and loss of teeth as a result of people coming too late for successful intervention.

The Secretary of State made much of the fact that he was saving the Health Service money. He said that he would save £49 million which could be spent to improve primary care. There can be no better way of spending £49 million on primary care than to ensure that people are encouraged to go regularly for a dental check-up and have no disincentive to do that.

I do not want to embarrass the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), but I strongly endorse his observation. Every argument of principle used by the Secretary of State to defend the charge could be applied to every other case of preventive medicine. As I listened to the Secretary of State's arguments, I thought that the same arguments would sound equally valid and nonsensical were the Secretary of State to come to the Dispatch Box and say that he was proposing to introduce a charge of £3·15 for a cervical cancer smear. We can see all the arguments that could be adduced: it is not much, it is the price of three or four gin and tonics; there is no evidence that it would stop people coming forward; women surely value their lives more than £3·15 and, indeed, encouraging them to pay £3·15 might make them value the smear all the more. Were the Secretary of State to do that, he would be drowned in a gale of derision because the whole point— *[Interruption.]* If my hon. Friends will allow me, the Secretary of State would be drowned in a gale of derision from the Opposition Benches.

I want to refer to Conservative Back Benchers. When the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) intervened in the Secretary of State's speech, I was fascinated to hear the right hon. and learned Gentleman say that the hon. Gentleman's arguments were "perfectly valid." The hon. Member for Pembroke played a distinguished part on Report when we debated this issue. Sixteen Conservative Members took part in the debate and the hon. Gentleman was one of only two who supported the proposals. I warn the Secretary of State that the hon. Member for Pembroke was engagingly frank about why he supported charges. He made it clear that he was in favour of charging for everything provided by primary care—visits to GPs and the rest. That is the argument which the Secretary of State found "perfectly valid."

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I did not actually say that. I said that I was in favour of a charge for going to the doctor for those who could afford it. That is different from saying that every piece of primary health care should be charged

for. That is a perfectly reasonable case to put. It is not a case which so far has the acceptance of the Government, but that does not mean that Conservative Members cannot engage in a debate on where the Health Service is going.

6.45 pm

Mr. Cook: I do not want the hon. Gentleman to misunderstand me. I welcome his presence and candour. However, I rather doubt whether the Secretary of State does the same. The Secretary of State should note where this "perfectly valid" argument is taking him. It is taking him, as the hon. Member for Pembroke honestly and fairly made clear, towards charges for visits to doctors by those who can afford them.

The arguments are well understood and well known. They are well understood because we have been over this ground——

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No. If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I will continue, because many Conservative Members want to intervene in the debate and I am anxious to leave adequate time for them.

The arguments are well understood because we have been over this ground before. It is worth recording that on every occasion that we have done that, the Government have lost the argument. They lost it on Report and in another place and that is why we have returned to it today. Latterly in ministerial briefings, a new and rather unpleasant theme has surfaced. Journalists have told us that the Government are determined to get their business through. They will not back down. The Secretary of State may be wet, but he will prove that he is tough. I am referring to the same Ministers who have discovered that they are such sticklers for constitutional convention that they regard it as improper to tell us what the chief medical officer advised them.

A much greater constitutional convention is the function of Government to listen to Parliament. The will of Parliament on this matter is perfectly plain. It was shown on Report and in the vote in another place and it was shown in an early-day motion. The Secretary of State knows perfectly well that if there were a secret ballot on the proposal, he would go down. His only hope of surviving is if his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington) and his hon. Friends stand at the right doors and the wrong doors and smile menacingly at hon. Members who go through the wrong one.

The Secretary of State does not demonstrate strength by refusing to admit that he is wrong and cannot convince anyone. He shows weakness. There can be no greater display of strength than for the Secretary of State to tell us that he has gathered the views of those working in dentistry and listened to his colleagues and he has changed his mind and will not proceed. There is still time for him to show that strength of mind at the end of this debate. However, if he persists in ignoring the views expressed in the Chamber, he must be defeated in the Division.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): It is common ground between both sides of the House that the National Health Service needs the extra resources announced today, which I am sure we all welcome. It is also common ground that it is perfectly legitimate for the users of the NHS to make a contribution towards its costs. Under both Labour and Conservative Governments there have been charges for prescriptions and dental treatment.

The Conservative party has always made it clear that it is part of our philosophy to try to reduce direct taxation partly by cutting public expenditure and by increasing indirect taxes and introducing more realistic prices for parts of the public sector. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has already said, since we have been in office we have increased substantially prescription charges and charges for treatment without a lot of heart-searching and weekend activity by the Whips.

Those who subscribe to the deterrent argument against charging for dental treatment have to bear in mind the substantial increases that we have already introduced, which we have all defended, partly by saying that the money goes to improve the quality of service provided by the NHS, but also by arguing that those who benefit directly from parts of the NHS should make a modest contribution if their means permit it.

The debate this evening is about whether dental charges are simply an acceptable extension of a principle that has already been conceded or whether they raise a new issue that makes them unacceptable. Of course I am influenced by the fact that a large number of my hon. Friends with whom I usually instinctively align myself find themselves deeply unhappy about the charges.

However, anyone who visits his dentist for a check-up has already accepted that he may end up paying. There are about 37 million treatments a year and 8 million check-ups, so it follows that most people who go to the dentist know that at the end of the day they will have to pay something. Indeed, part of the point of going to the dentist for a check-up is to find out whether one needs treatment before a problem becomes painful. What the proposals are doing in practice is to substitute the inevitability of a charge with the probability of a charge. I do not find that unacceptable. I do not find any matter of high principle at stake, particularly if the charge is only £3·15.

My right hon. and learned Friend referred to the survey. I hope that he will use that survey not just to reinforce his case in the debate but to look at the three most important reasons why people do not go to the dentist and launch a campaign with the dental profession to bring down those barriers. Many of us would be reassured if, when he replies, there was some sign that that survey was being taken seriously and that there would be a campaign to promote more visits to the dentist.

However, there is another reason for querying the reservations of my hon. Friends. I do not accept the distinction between diagnosis, for which one must not charge, and treatment, for which one can charge. With the development of preventive medicine and health education, that distinction is being blurred. We should not encourage people to believe that they have been treated if they are given a prescription or have a tooth removed, but have not been treated if they are given some helpful advice or friendly warning about their lifestyle, diet or smoking. The diagnosis often embraces such health education and promotional activity which may be far more valuable and cost-effective than treatment. I do not understand the argument that it is legitimate to charge for curative medicine, but illegitimate to charge for preventive medicine.

[Sir George Young]

My hon. Friends underestimate the willingness of many people who visit the dentist, whose incomes have risen over the past nine years and whose taxes have been reduced, to make some contribution towards that service, especially if that contribution in turn goes back to funding its expansion. I do not feel in the least apologetic or defensive about this. I am happy to defend the measure in my constituency, and I shall vote against the Lords amendment tonight.

Mr. Fearn: I wish to speak against the Government's amendment and in favour of Lords amendment No. 20.

Each day that I appear in Parliament, each day that goes by, I find it more and more incredible that the Government get away with introducing legislation that flies in the face of all expert advice and public opinion. With the exception of a few members of the Government, I do not know anyone or anybody connected with the dental or medical profession who supports the introduction of charges for dental checks. Yet the Secretary of State seems hell bent on getting the clause on to the statute book, even though the measure contradicts the Government's professed objectives.

The thrust of the White Paper "Promoting Better Health", so the Government would have us believe, was, as the title suggests, the promotion of preventive medicine to improve the health of individuals. Indeed, one of the paper's stated aims was to achieve the wider availability of dental treatment. But when the Bill was presented to the House, we found that the Government had, by one fell stroke, reduced the availability of dental treatment to many of the population by introducing a charge for dental checks.

When the deterrent argument was put forward previously, the Government responded by saying that as the charge would be only £3·15 it would not act as a deterrent. My answer to such callousness is that whoever makes such statements has obviously never had to count the pennies on a Monday morning to see whether there is enough to cover the cost of sending the children to school on the bus or enough even to buy them a lunch when they get there. He has obviously never had to count his pension pittance to decide whether he should have meat for the day's meal or put an extra 50p in the meter.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): The hon. Gentleman refers to £3·15 as a deterrent. Is he aware that gross average earnings are £224 a week and £3·15 is less than 2 per cent. of that?

Mr. Fearn: I am aware of most incomes, but I do know about the incomes of the poorer people, which the hon. Gentleman may not know about.

It is no good someone saying to me that there is a safety net to cover such cases, because it is quite clear that many people do not take up state benefits. That is not surprising when one sees the length of the forms that have to be filled in and the number of questions to be answered. I think that 17 pages is the latest figure. Most important of all is the stigma attached to such benefits. Therefore, it is not surprising that people do not apply for them.

Another factor in the cost of dental charges is that if and when the measure is introduced the cost may be only small at first, but if we look at prescription charges over the past 10 years, we all know that if the Government have anything to do with it, it will not be long before the charges are increased to a rate way above inflation. Charges for dental checks, whatever they cost, are contrary to good preventive medicine.

The Government admit that there has been a great improvement in the dental health of the British people, including those in Scotland, who in the past had a poor dental health record. Much of that success is due to preventive measures. Regular check-ups play an important part in that process. Any action that reduces them can only be a step backwards.

It is well documented that dental checks play an important role in the early detection of life-threatening diseases such as oral cancer. Not so well known is the role that they play in the detection of other diseases, as the experience of one of my constituents highlights. A few years ago, after going from one specialist to another and undergoing tests for cancer, tuberculosis and many other conditions, and weighing only six stones, she visited her dentist for a check-up. He promptly sent her back to her doctor with a suggestion that she was suffering from an over-active thyroid. His diagnosis proved to be correct. We should look to the diagnoses of dentists to give patients the chance to live.

Are we really to run the risk of allowing the detection of many diseases to fall by the wayside and in doing so add to the costs of the NHS? It is clear that if the House does not support Lords amendment No. 20 today a significant number of people, not just the very poor, will be deterred from visiting their dentist until it is too late.

In the short term, it is possible that this clause will save the NHS a little money, but in the long term it will prove to be far more expensive, as dentists and doctors are required to treat conditions that, if detected earlier, would have been easier to treat and cure. The repercussions from the introduction of dental charges on the health of individuals and on the Health Service cannot and must not be underestimated.

7 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I shall be brief because I appreciate that it is in the Government's interest that this debate should go on as long as possible. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State on proposing his amendment in what I may describe as his characteristically robust style. When he hitches up his trousers, we all know that he is going to sock it to us. However, I think that he has got it wrong. I believe that right hon. and hon. Members would find great support for their Lordships outside this Chamber. There is a danger that if we were to resist the Lords amendment and returned the clause to their Lordships, they might amend it once more, and we would embark upon the kind of parliamentary ping pong that could eventually lead to a constitutional crisis.

I wholeheartedly support the Bill, which follows the White Paper on primary health care, "Promoting Better Heath". Among the White Paper's four objectives that are to be enshrined in the Bill are the promotion of health, the prevention of illness, and the importance of getting value for money. I feel sure that Members on both sides of the House wholeheartedly agree with those objectives.

Those parts of the Government's strategy have my wholehearted support. The Government have already demonstrated their commitment to primary health care by

spending £5 billion per annum for that purpose, in preventing disease. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) commented that the White Paper makes no mention of charges, but I draw the attention of the House to the Conservative manifesto for the last general election, which was not all that long ago, which also made no mention of them.

I believe that the House is puzzled by two Government inconsistencies. First, the Government are inconsistent in introducing eye and dental inspection charges when so many other examinations remain free of charge. Two of my hon. Friends mentioned breast screening and cervical smear tests, which are free. Why is that so? If one is to be consistent, charges should be imposed for all tests. Secondly, the Government are inconsistent in demonstrating their belief in preventive medicine while at the same time proposing measures that will harm prevention and increase the number of people needing to be cured.

The Government have tried this before, in 1980, when my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan) was the Minister of Health, and when the Government attempted to introduce eye inspection charges. On that occasion, my hon. Friend accepted that my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) and for Woodspring (Sir P. Dean) were strongly opposed to the Government's proposals. My hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East acknowledged that it was a very important matter. He said:

"In no way do we wish to create a deterrent for people seeking eye testing who need treatment."

He went on to say:

"It is characteristic of this Government"—

and he was speaking then of a Conservative Government also—

"and of our democratic process, that when strong representations are made to us we are only too willing to consider them carefully . . . It is not our intention to proceed with charges for sight testing."—[*Official Report*, 15 May 1980; Vol. 984, c. 1781-82.]

If that was good enough then, it is good enough now. What has changed? There have been a few changes. One of the opponents then is now a Dame, and another has become Deputy Speaker. The Minister at the time is now a so-called rebel. Another fundamental change is that today's economy is much stronger than it was in 1980. However, if one accepts my right hon. and learned Friend's proposition that the Government are trying to save money for the National Health Service, which I do not, surely the argument for maintaining free tests is far stronger today than it was in 1980. Why did the Government accept the proposition that tests should be free in 1980 but are trying to impose charges now?

In this debate on dental charges—and the same is true in respect of eye testing—both sides base their arguments on presumption. The Government presume that charges will not deter, and that, in the case of dental inspections, about £50 million a year will be saved, whereas the so-called rebels presume that charges will act as a deterrent that will in the long run cost the Health Service much more in patient treatment than will be saved in the short term.

The Government have got it wrong. There is reasonable doubt on both sides. We are not debating something inanimate but are considering our constituents' health and the prevention of what can be serious diseases. It is a matter of life and death, and we do not dice with death. My right hon. and learned Friend should not do so either. In the face of any reasonable doubt, tests must remain free of charge. That proposition is supported not only by the specialist organisations concerned with both dental and eyesight but also by the BMA and the British Dental Association.

The BDA maintains that, if there is any doubt, tests should remain free of charge. It points to two vulnerable groups—the young and the elderly. Until 1981, no charges were made for NHS dental treatment to those aged under 21, with the exception of denture charges, which were rarely relevant but were imposed from the age of 16. After April 1981, charges applied from the age of 18, except for patients in full-time education, when they began at 19 years of age. That brought about a short, sharp drop in treatment provision in the age group concerned. So paying does deter.

As to the elderly, I may point out that about half of all oral cancers are found among those aged 65 and over. Additionally, the risk of death from oral cancer is even greater than it is from cervical cancer, for which tests are still free.

I cannot be described by any of my right hon. or hon. Friends as a Tory wet, and nor can many of my hon. Friends who signed early-day motion 1405 and who I hope will be joining me in the Lobby tonight to vote against this proposition. We oppose the imposition of charges because we want to save money for the Health Service.

Once I was unwise enough to suggest in this Chamber that a politician's mind is determined by the state of his seat. I was told to withdraw such an offensive generalisation, but it seemed to make sense to me that before going into the Lobby to vote against the Government I should find out what my constituents had to say.

About 10 days ago, there was a meeting of my constituency Conservative Association executive, which had a heated debate on this matter. There were about 50 people present, and at the end two of them decided that there should be charges for everything, and that there should be means testing. Everyone else who was present supported me. That was not done out of loyalty to me but because they felt it was sensible to maintain free dental and eye tests. Last Friday, I attended a social event at one of my branches, in a place called Braishfield, when about 150 people were present. I would describe them as fairly well heeled and the kind of people who would probably anyway pay for their dental and eye tests. They too were solidly with me.

If that were not enough, on leaving Conservative Central Office the other day, I was hailed by a senior lady official who shouted "Charges!" at me. Memories of the military assault course immediately flooded back. When I turned to her, she added, "Dental and eye tests." I asked her what she meant and she replied, "The Tory women are behind you." I can think of better places to put the Tory women—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] If they believe that dental and eye tests should remain free, we should thank them for their support. I only regret that they cannot be with us in the No Lobby tonight. I call on my hon. Friends and on Opposition Members who feel that getting better value for the National Health Service is important, and who agree with the contention that prevention is better than cure, to support me in the Lobby tonight and oppose the Government.

Dr. Moonie: I listened with some puzzlement to the Secretary of State, who is after all one of the more intelligent Ministers and is renowned for his oratorical skill and his intellect. If we think about his intellect for a moment, we can admire the skill with which he left the Department of Trade and Industry ahead of the Barlow Clowes affair.

Mr. Robin Cook: And the Royal Ordnance factories.

Dr. Moonie: And the Royal Ordnance factories, as my hon. Friend reminds me. But we might find it a little puzzling that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has managed to walk into this can of worms—if the House will forgive the mixed metaphor.

I feel that we should cut through some of the more flatulent rhetoric that we have heard and try to get to the nub of the problem. There must be few hon. Members in the Chamber who seriously believe that the future of the Health Service over the next year depends on whether we introduce charges for tooth and eye examinations. That is nonsense.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): That is not the argument.

Dr. Moonie: The hon. Gentleman may say that, but it is the argument that the Secretary of State used in a direct threat to his Back Benchers.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *rose*——

Dr. Moonie: No, I shall not give way. I do not intend to waste my time or that of the House. The hon. Gentleman can make his own speech if he wants to. That ought to clear the Chamber.

We saw the same spectacle last year. The right hon. and learned Gentleman's predecessor appeared before the House in October and told us that there was nothing wrong with the NHS and that no money would be forthcoming. What happened six weeks later? Back he came, tail beween his legs, and, lo and behold, the Treasury had found the extra money needed to keep the Health Service afloat for that year. It is absolute nonsense for the right hon. and learned Gentleman to suggest that, were the £49 million that will supposedly be saved by this measure to be lost to the NHS, it would not be replaced if it was needed. Of course it would be, and the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows that fine as well.

I shall confine my remarks to the role of prevention in our society's health. It is a subject on which I have touched before and, sadly, will have to touch frequently in the coming years. Last week in the Palace of Westminster we held an inaugural meeting for the Public Health Alliance. More than 100 people from all professions turned up, as well as lay people interested in public health—people who fear that we have lost our way in preventive medicine over the past few years, and who intend to try to do something about it. It might well be appropriate to mention the Secretary of State when we talk about people who have lost their way.

Mrs. Currie: Drinking and smoking.

Dr. Moonie: I think that remarks about smoking and drinking should be aimed at the Secretary of State rather than me. No doubt they frequently are.

We were worried about the development of public health in this country. What have the Government contributed? Last week we heard of the disgraceful freezing of child benefit yet again, and now these proposals are before us. While other people are trying to reawaken our concern for public health, the Government appear to be doing their best to destroy it.

It is easy for us to forget how much we owe to public health measures, as opposed to those that members of my profession tend to claim as their own. Most are outwith our knowledge and are gradual factors that appear over the years. For example, the development of adequate sewerage and water supplies in the 19th century laid the foundation for health in our cities, and abolished cholera in this country many decades before it was abolished in other similar western countries.

In the 20th century, we have seen the advances made in the provision of school meals, school medical services, immunisation for children and many other measures that have contributed to improvements in public health over the past 100 years. Better wages and conditions over 20 or 30 years reduced deaths from tuberculosis from over 100,000 a year to almost nil.

7.15 pm

Sad to say, the Government remain to be convinced of the value of those methods. I shall not talk about cancer screening, as other hon. Members have referred to it. But if we are introducing an adequate screening service which we hope will reduce mortality from cervical cancer in particular, there is—as others have said—no logic in failing to charge for that as well, as the Government seem to think that charging has no effect.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Moonie: No, I will not. I am mindful that hon. Members have been asked to limit the length of their contributions, and I do not wish to waste the House's time. *[Interruption.]* I look forward with great interest to the deeply intellectual contribution of the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton). I cannot think of anything worthwhile that he has said in the past, but perhaps tonight he will break the trend of a lifetime. *[Interruption.]* That is something foreign to the hon. Gentleman, but the longer that Tory Members are in the House the more they live and learn.

Child benefit has been cut in real terms by the failure to uprate. As the Black report said in 1980, by increasing child benefit the Government could immediately make the most important contribution that any Government could make to improving the health of mothers and children. Unfortunately, it was ignored by the Minister of the time, and it has been ignored by Ministers today. Let us remember the effect of that failure. The child of an unskilled labourer is still more than eight times as likely to die before reaching adulthood as is the child of a professional person such as myself. That is what we mean when we talk about preventive medicine, and that is what the Government cannot escape.

No member of my profession, the dental profession or any other profession would say that the charges will not have a deterrent effect—none, at least, whose views are worth listening to. I have heard both from their associations and from them in person, and I have had scores of letters from my constituents and others. Not even the Department's chief medical officer supports the

Secretary of State's contention, and I am certain that in his heart of hearts the right hon. and learned Gentleman does not support it either.

This is not just a matter of dental hygiene or of retaining our teeth. There is no doubt that the development of serious conditions, particularly oral cancer, can be prevented through early diagnosis. Oral cancer, for those who have not seen anyone suffering from it, is one of the most hideous ways of dying imaginable. It was described to me as such by a consultant over 20 years ago when I had my first lecture in ear, nose and throat medicine. I saw the patients in his ward, and I have seen the effects of the disease, which still kills the vast majority of those who get it—largely through the lack of adequate measures to arrest it before too late. This measure will enhance the risks.

The Secretary of State says that 38 per cent. of people will be exempt from charges. Many of those are people who will not take up family credit—the 70 per cent. who are missing out on benefit and who will likewise miss out on their exemption from charges, either because they are ignorant of it or, as in the vast majority of cases, because they are too proud to pay for the health that they ought to have as of right.

I, for one, have no objection to paying more in taxes to ensure that these services remain free for everyone regardless of their means, and I trust that enough Conservative Members will support us in the Division to defeat the Government.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): The logic of the argument of the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) is that we should have no prescription charges —*[Interruption.]*—but of course a Labour Government introduced prescription charges in 1949. We all know that we need prescription charges to provide some revenue for the Health Service and to ensure that medicines are valued as medicines and not treated in a frivolous manner.

We owe thanks to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health and his team today. They have brought before the House the largest ever increase for the National Health Service. With that £2,000 million we can begin to make progress. My right hon. and learned Friend is right to ask whether an extra £49 million matters in a sum as large as £2,000 million. I suggest that it does matter. By any yardstick £49 million is a lot of money. There are about 200 district health authorities in the country, and that £49 million represents about £250,000 for my district.

If we consider dentistry in Northampton, that £250,000 which, roughly speaking, represents the revenue from the charges paid by the 50 per cent. of people who go to the dentist, would more than fund the orthodontic unit for which we have been waiting. If there were a poll in Northampton on whether people should spend £3·15 on a dental check-up and that money should be used to set up an orthodontic surgery unit in the Northampton general hospital, I am prepared to wager that the majority of people in my constituency would want the money to be invested in oral surgery.

It is helpful of the British Dental Association to arm us all with figures. Those figures clearly show that since the charges for courses of treatment have risen dramatically, there has been an increase in uptake among the elderly. In 1968, 27 per cent. of people were having courses of treatment. The latest figures from the British Dental Association show that the uptake has risen to 45 per cent. Despite increased costs, the elderly use the service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) was quite right. Those who turn up at the dentist expect to pay for a course of treatment. They know that a course of treatment will cost more than £2 or £3. It will be a significant sum. The real challenge is not the £3 charge, but how to get the other 50 per cent. of the nation to have any sort of check-up. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will pick up the point raised by my hon. Friend.

I am quite sure that my right hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right to apply the charge. I want the money to be reinvested in an orthodontic unit in Northampton general hospital.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): According to the Chancellor, the economy is thriving. Today, he has announced increased funding in a number of key areas.

The health and well-being of our citizens must be a priority for any Government. It makes sense economically, politically and morally. If the Government are committed to primary health care and preventive medicine, why are they taking the illogical and counter-productive step of introducing charges for basic examinations which have always been free in the past? The poorer members of society—those just above the level of eligibility for exemption—will not come forward and they will certainly suffer. Charges will be a disincentive and will reduce take-up.

A real commitment to preventive medicine and primary care would mean more rather than less free screening. We are eroding the principle of the National Health Service free at the point of use. We should be prepared to pay for the National Health Service, but we should pay for it through taxation. Those of us who are better off are prepared to pay more at that stage to maintain the principle of the National Health Service being free at the point of use.

Why have the Government singled out specific tests on eyes and teeth? Are opticians and dentists considered to be the fat cats of the medical profession? Is it thought that they can absorb such costs? It will not happen. The Royal National Institute for the Blind has carried out a survey which shows that it will cost £10 for eye tests and £3·15 for dental tests. Are we to assume that eyes and teeth are optional extras—a cosmetic area that does not involve life and death as much as other areas do? What about hearing tests, cervical smears, breast screening, routine tests in pregnancy, and blood tests? Will those all suffer the same fate? What is the principle that sets those two tests apart from the rest? I do not understand it.

It seems to be a miserly act. We are talking about 40 per cent. exemption, but we are contemplating a huge bureaucracy and administrative cost to ascertain who should pay charges and who should not. It seems very silly that, if the money is available to invest further in the Health Service, we should start charging for vital tests. Where will it end?

The principle of the National Health Service being free at the point of use is vital and must be defended tonight. Yes, we must pay, but we should pay through taxation and not when we need medical care.

Sir Gerard Vaughan (Reading, East): I very much regret having to disagree with my right hon. and learned Friend's

[Sir Gerard Vaughan]

arguments in this matter, especially on a day when he has raised such very large sums for the National Health Service, which we all know are much needed. We know that from our waiting lists and ward closures. I congratulate him on that. He put forward a very persuasive argument. That is not surprising when one considers that he is a distinguished barrister. His argument was entirely about money. He did not really refer to the other important issues.

If eye and dental tests were simply tests for spectacles or for holes in teeth, I would agree with him. I see no reason why people who can afford to pay should not contribute to the cost of the National Health Service through a charge. But, as we all know, there is another side to the argument which was touched on by the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes)—the case for preventive medicine.

I have to tell my right hon. and learned Friend that times have changed, and people are looking for more and more health screening and preventive care. They have got the message that the Government have been putting forward that people should have their health checked regularly. My right hon. and learned Friend is promoting that message and I wish him success. The more people go for health checks the sooner disease can be detected. So we come to the curious situation in which breast screening, cervical screening, blood pressure checks, blood cholesterol tests, diabetes tests and a whole range of other things are all free. When it comes to having one's eyes examined, which is not the same as being measured for spectacles, and having one's mouth examined, which is not necessarily the same as looking for holes in teeth, people will be charged. Such examinations are valuable for the early detection of disease. My right hon. and learned Friend never referred to that—that is why I disagree with him so strongly.

7.30 pm

If we are to maintain a National Health Service which is free at the point of need, we should include screening for health care. Others have spoken about oral cancer, but there are more than 200 illnesses or conditions which can be diagnosed by examining the mouth. Even more important conditions can be detected by examining somebody's eyes. We use our eyes to look out on the world, but they also provide a means of looking into the body. Although often referred to in another way, I am basically a neurologist and I have detected early brain tumours where there is papilloedema or pressure on the back of the eye, and early diabetes. A colleague in the House told me recently that his wife had been diagnosed as having a high cholesterol level when she went to have her spectacles checked.

We are opening up preventive medicine, so even if my right hon. and learned Friend wins the Division tonight, can he not come up to date and provide a comprehensive health screening service which can detect disease early on? It would save money in the long run, not cost extra. My right hon. and learned Friend looks as though he disagrees, but he is a barrister. I am a doctor. I resent being told that eye examinations and mouth examinations—I am not calling them dental checks—are not important in health care for our community. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will have the courage to say, "I have made a mistake and I shall let the Lords amendment stand."

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Can I ask my hon. Friend about some information that I received recently? I was told that dentists frequently discover oral cancer and are able to deal with it and that they know that it is more common than cervical cancer. If there is to be a charge for checking whether there is a cancer in the mouth, is there to be no charge for checking the presence of a cancer in another part of the body?

Sir Gerard Vaughan: My hon. Friend has drawn attention to one of the anomalies and inconsistencies in the Government's stance. It is absolutely ludicrous to charge for inspections at one end of the body but not at the other. It is ludicrous, for example, to have free urine tests for diabetes but to charge for eye examinations which may discover diabetes.

I am aware that many others wish to speak and I think that I have made my point. This is an illogical and out-of-date proposal and I hope that the Government will think again.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): I have followed the Bill throughout and served on the Standing Committee, but I am amazed that the Government have offered no defence for what they are pushing through. I am all the more amazed in view of the Chancellor's statement today, as he more or less claimed that the Exchequer has never had it so good. Nevertheless, he desperately needs what the Secretary of State called peanuts, which would be made available as a result of the proposed charges. The Prime Minister's statement today also astonished me. She said that people will be put out if they are not allowed to pay for check-ups.

The hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) said that people are upset because they cannot pay for their bypass operations, tonsilectomies, or hip replacements. I have not had sacks full of mail on that issue, but I have had a vast quantity of mail from people who deeply resent the Government's policies on this issue. The Prime Minister scraped the very bottom of her barrel when she spoke of people being offended by not being able to pay. That comment was greeted with derision, even on her own Back Benches.

I commend Conservative Members who are standing out against the Government on this issue. Their sincerity is not in doubt. It is important to highlight the fact that there is a significant difference between the stance of Tory rebels and that of the Labour Opposition. The Tory rebels see the Government's stance in terms of the damage that will be done to preventive health care just to generate relatively small revenue for the NHS. I listened in Committee to the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), who spoke fluently and sincerely. I do not doubt the correctness of the stance that he took in Committee. The Tory rebels are right—the Government have failed to provide a scrap of evidence which has medical backing in support of what they are doing.

The Opposition agree with the Tory rebels, but we also see the change as part of a wider process of moving from state provision of a National Health Service to a system based on the purchase and sale of health care. That is crucial to an understanding of why the Government are refusing to bow to the reasonable arguments being

advanced by Conservative Members. The issue must be seen in the context of much wider developments in the NHS.

The Government have encouraged the belief that we cannot afford a National Health Service. We are frequently told that there are too many old people, that people are living longer, that the NHS is a bottomless pit and that expectations are too high. Health Ministers have also tried to create an expectation of paying for health care. How else are we to explain prescription charges shooting through the roof in spite of the Government's arguments as presented in the Tory manifestos of 1979 and since? I am deeply offended when I see people in my surgeries who take it for granted that they have to bribe consultants to gain access to the basic health care to which they are entitled and for which they have paid for many years.

These proposals can be understood only in terms of the Government's ideological hatred of the central principles that underpin the NHS. They regard the NHS as the last bastion of collective provision which must be dismantled by the thrust of Thatcherism. They regard it as a barrier to total freedom from the state, and as a barrier to American-style health care as a business and an enterprise.

I believe that charges for dental and eyesight checks are a calculated step towards the establishment of a health care market. The Bill is yet another nail in the NHS's coffin. That being so, I strongly urge those who believe in the NHS to support the Lords amendment.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): There has been perhaps more emotion in the debates on this issue than on any other issue so far in this Parliament. The Government's case is more credible than has been portrayed in the media and in previous debates. It has been strongly argued that examination charges will seriously deter people from regular attendance, to the detriment of patients, and that those who are deterred will suffer adverse consequences. I am not convinced that that will happen. Such evidence as exists is inclined to support the opposite point of view.

As the House will recall from earlier debates, for more than 15 years——

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. That man is reading every word of his speech, which has obviously been written by some party or Government hack.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Canavan: Further to the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. There is a rule of the House that one is not permitted to read a speech. That man is reading a speech.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) is referring to his notes copiously.

Mr. Greenway: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Had the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) waited a moment longer, he would have heard me say that, for the past 15 or 16 years, I have run a business advising general dental practitioners on the management of their practices, so, without any question, all the words that I shall say will be words that I have written, including those in the many speeches that I have made to dental meetings throughout the country for the past 15 or 16 years.

I have observed many changes in the general dental service. There has been a dramatic improvement in dental health. Let us get one thing clear: the dedication and application of general dental practitioners have been major contributory factors in the improvement in the nation's dental health. Other factors are also evident. There has been a general increased awareness by the public of the need for self-care and oral hygiene. The use of fluoride, largely in toothpaste but also in water supplies, and more sensible diet, with a lower sugar intake, has reduced tooth decay. Despite that, 50 per cent. or more of the public do not regularly visit a dentist. In the latest issue of the *British Dental Journal*, one of the new regional advisers in general dental practice wrote:

"Let's call It 'Dental Consultation.'"

He said:

"dentists should be asking themselves why around 26 million people in the UK do not share the profession's perception of need for regular dental care."

Can it be that people do not attend a dentist more frequently because of the low priority they give dental treatment and regular dental attendance? Cost is cited by opponents of the new charge as a major deterrent. "People cannot afford it," they say. I do not accept that. We have already heard an announcement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State about exemptions, so those who are poor and at the bottom end of the income scale will get help and will not have to pay. As my right hon. and learned Friend said, that number was increased only last week.

Those who argue costs as a deterrent really mean that there are many who would rather spend their money on something else. That is true, especially of the young. My right hon. and learned Friend will recall that I wrote to him about four weeks ago and suggested that, if there is to be any change in the Government's thinking, perhaps we should reconsider the position of young adults. It is clear already from this debate that some hon. Members are persuaded by that view. Whatever we decide tonight, that is a matter to which we may have to return.

Anyone who travels regularly on trains will see 19, 20, 21 and 22-year-olds consume at least £3·15 worth of beer apiece between King's Cross and York and, I dare say, other destinations as well.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Not in second class.

Mr. Greenway: It is mostly in second class.

The opponents of these modest charges seem to have concluded that the priorities of some, if not all, patients are so irresponsible that they will present themselves for dental examination only if it is free. Are we really saying that the public's appreciation of the need and value of a regular dental consultation is so pathetically low that we must not require a modest charge from those who can afford it? What an inverted sense of proportion among people—mostly on the Opposition Benches, but also, sad to say, some Conservative Members—who say one minute that a regular dental check is a potentially life-saving necessity, yet in the next breath say that it can be done only if we provide it free of charge. Nothing is more certain to undermine the real value of a service or benefit than free universal provision.

[Mr. Greenway]

7.45 pm

It is an incontrovertible fact that, over the past 15 years, dental charges, which were started by the Labour party, have improved the efficiency and standard of the general dental service. Patients have more consumer awareness. The same is true of optical care. Extending charges to include dental examinations will present a major challenge to the profession and the Government to ensure that the public give dentistry the priority that it deserves.

Priority is what the debate should be about—increasing priority and awareness of the need for regular dental attendance, especially among the 26 million people who do not now attend. The majority would get free treatment as well as a free dental examination. It will be a shocking indictment of every one of us who is concerned with this matter—not just the patients but the profession, family practitioner committees, the Department, the Government Front Bench and us politicians—if these modest charges prove a barrier to dental attendance.

The White Paper promised that the Government would support a campaign for the promotion of general dental health. Let us get on with it soon. Although I do not accept the argument that charges should be a deterrent, that is not to say that helping patients to avoid high charges and to meet their obligations does not have merit. The first way to avoid high charges is to attend a dentist regularly. The examination charge, which we are debating, is part of an overall strategy of proportional charges under which regular attenders will pay no more than under the old system. That is a fact.

Dental insurance has a role to play. I am talking not about private dental insurance but about the member companies of the British Health Care Association, which provides schemes so that their members can insure, at a modest amount, to receive cash benefits when they have to pay a charge for dentistry or for optical work or if they are in hospital. Last year, British Health Care Association members paid about £7·5 million in cash benefits to members for dental treatment. That is only 2·5 per cent. of the amount raised from patient charges. Clearly, there is plenty of scope. Most members of these schemes are encouraged to join them by their employers. Employers can play a role in ensuring that they take a lead and that their employees have the benefit of such schemes.

The issue goes much further than the examination charge. I should like to refer to three other matters. First, there is the overwhelming need for a restructuring of the general dental service and the way in which dental practitioners are remunerated. As with so many other facets of our NHS, the present system was established 40 years ago. Then the profession had little time to do more than repair the effects of neglect. Indeed, GDPs did so well financially that fees were cut. Even 10 years ago, dentists were keen to absorb every new technique to improve output and meet demand. All that has largely changed. Now practitioners increasingly find that their regular patients require little, if any, dental treatment. One of my hon. Friends said some 8 million of the 37 million courses of treatment are examine and report only.

Since the debate about charges began a year ago, the fee paid to a dentist for an examination has increased from £3·90 to £4·20, the £3·15 that patients will be asked to pay being 75 per cent. of that. If the practitioner is required to screen for so many different illnesses, why is he so appallingly badly remunerated for doing so? It is because the present structure assumes that he will find that a great deal of treatment is required, but increasingly that is not the case. We must embark on urgent negotiations about that matter. I am disappointed that a year has passed since I made that request in the House and we seem to have got no further because we have been distracted by the argument about free examinations. We must have a continuing fair contract to reward the proper relationship between general dental practitioners and their patients and to reward good conservative treatment which lasts. Let us get on with that.

Secondly, there is the question of resources. If the charges were not accompanied by a major commitment of extra resources such as that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced today, there might be grounds for opposing the charges. Some dentists have suggested that the Government are abandoning the general dental service, but that is not true. Some hon. Members may be surprised to learn that in the past three years the net pay of general dental practitioners has been increased by almost a quarter and the fees paid on their item of service scale by one third—three times the rate of general inflation.

The Government's commitment does not end there. This year's fee scale already incorporates some of the measures outlined in the White Paper. My hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) asked about this earlier. I can tell him that there are already pilot schemes to redistribute dentists more evenly throughout the country. There is one scheme in Walsall and three in the north-east. There are also changes in the prior approval rules to give practitioners more control over their clinical judgments and the treatment that they give. That, too, is incorporated in this year's fee scale. There is also more funding for postgraduate vocational training. The findings of the Windermere relativities inquiry have been incorporated straightaway. Some Opposition Members may not know what that means. Members of the profession decided how money should be redistributed across the fee scale to reflect the type of work being done in the National Health Service today, not that of 40 years ago.

I am sure that everyone in the House and throughout the country wants the Government to put more money into the Health Service to fund nurses' pay. That has been given proper priority. We now need to consider where the extra resources are going. Some district health authorities have achieved great efficiency in their operations, but they need more money. I want more money for Scarborough and for York. If voting for examination charges will help to achieve that, so much the better.

Thirdly, we should extend consumer choice to other parts of the NHS, perhaps to other areas of general practice as well as to the hospital service. Contrasting levels of efficiency between one district and another can no longer be tolerated in a society in which, despite record funding, resources must continually struggle to keep pace with technological change. If we want more resources, we must be willing to take unpopular decisions to achieve them without damaging the economy. It is understandable that Labour Members have the audacity to bite the hand that feeds them, but I urge Conservative colleagues in this House and in the other place not to interpret an unpopular decision as a wrong decision. With demands on the Health

Service often seemingly infinite, it is essential that resources are put to the best use and reasonable opportunities for raising revenue are maximised. That is the moral case in favour of charges. It is not a popular message, but it is a right and responsible one.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The Secretary of State made the point that this was a national health debate, and I was happy that he referred to Northern Ireland as well as to England, Scotland and Wales, because this national debate affects us all.

Much has been made of today's cash injection of £1·8 billion into the Health Service. The Select Committee said that £2 billion would be needed and was accused by the Department of plucking figures out of the air, so I welcome the fact that our assessment has been accepted. That assessment, however, was made earlier in the Session and did not cover further increases in wage settlements.

Coming to the nub of the debate, it was fascinating to hear the Minister suggest today that some of his Back-Bench colleagues had changed their minds since the House first voted on this. My profession is always happy when people change their minds, when they repent, come to their senses and go along the right road. I regret, however, that it seems that the Minister has backslidden as in an earlier incarnation he supported a free Health Service at the point of delivery and made much of that principle. I hope that those who realised that they were wrong a few months back will stick to their guns today and see us through this time. The comments of the hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) in relation to the point made by the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) were not in support of charges for consultation but defended the concept that there might be a ground for paying for services. In my judgment, that would cover prescriptions rather than charges for seeing the doctor before being told what one requires. We must stick together on that and ensure that the National Health Service is maintained on that basis.

To refer specifically to Northern Ireland, it has been argued that the charges will not deter anyone from consulting a dentist, optician, optometrist or ophthalmic surgeon, but I query that. If the Government are already spending money on PR campaigns to encourage people to take up social service benefits, I suspect that it will take a great deal more PR work to encourage people to go to the dentist or the optician with the argument that the charge is only a minimum amount.

A short time ago a colleague asked me why the charge was to be £3·15. He said, "Isn't that three guineas?" The secret has slipped out. Guineas are still used regularly for legal fees. Those who suggest that three guineas is not much should bear in mind that, although it may not be much for those in the legal profession, it means a lot to the people about whom we are concerned. It may be that the Government have discovered this as a way of cutting down waiting lists. With the rationalisation of health care delivery in Northern Ireland, ophthalmic work has been centralised, particularly in the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast, with a unit at Altnagelvin to cover the north-west. That was an attempt to provide modern health care in a rational and financially disciplined way. In fact, the waiting lists are increasing because, instead of finances being directed to help that service, they are being curbed time and again.

8 pm

When considering this issue tonight we must deal with the question of the care of patients and the deliverance of that care. I share the experience of other hon. Members —and I cannot imagine that the Government have missed it—that modern care of patients can be enhanced by eye tests and dental checks. Therefore, although others may have changed their minds, my hon. Friends and I are even more confirmed in our opposition to the Government's proposals, which we shall oppose in the Lobby tonight.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): It must be especially galling for the Labour party to have this much-trailed debate on the very day on which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced additional funding for the NHS of £2 billion. At the time of the Budget, Opposition Members were saying that the 2p tax cut would have been far better spent on the Health Service. They now find that my right hon. Friend has succeeded in doing both, contrary to all their predictions. That must stick somewhat. I cannot help but think that, even if a Labour Secretary of State had had the option of another £40 million to spend, he would choose to spend it on removing the proposed charges. That £40 million, together with the £100 million for eye tests, can be used for so many other things. I cannot believe that even the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) would choose to spend that money on removing charges for tests.

The argument against charges for the tests is the argument against all charges in the NHS, which after the implementation of the new charges will raise about £800 million or £900 million a year. If the Opposition were to follow the purity of their argument, the first additional £1 billion that they chose to spend on the Health Service would not buy one additional operation. I simply cannot believe that that is what they want.

The only really important consideration is whether the charges will act as a material deterrent to people having eye or dental checks. Whenever charges are introduced or increased, the Opposition claim that people's attendance will go down. That was said when dental charges were raised and, again, very vociferously when charges were introduced for glasses. The Opposition said that people would not have glasses and would crash into each other on motorways or walk into lamp posts. That has not happened. Instead, the number of eye tests and the number of prescriptions for lenses has risen but, as the Government predicted, the charges for glasses have gone down.

Figures for dentistry have been bandied about tonight. Charges have been increased every year since 1976, yet the number of courses of dental treatment has also risen every year since 1976. It is unlikely that the charges will prove a deterrent. After all, the low income groups and all children are exempt, so we are really discussing only the 60 per cent. of the population who form the wealthier groups. For them, £3 for a dental check and £10 for an eye test once a year is not a material sum that will deter them. I cannot believe that the reason why some people will not have checks is that they will have to pay. Although the tests are currently free, they know that if anything is wrong they will have to pay for treatment. That does not put them off. People sometimes do not go to the dentist until there is obviously something wrong or they do not go to an optician until they think that they need glasses. A £3 or a £10 charge will not act as a deterrent.

[Mr. John Maples]

The weakness of the deterrent argument is given away in a lobbying circular that we have all received from the Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians. It states that

"people will find the need to pay for a sight test a psychological, even if not a serious financial deterrent."

It demonstrates the weakness of the financial argument when the federation is thrown back on arguing a psychological deterrent.

The Opposition are, in effect, saying that the 60 per cent. in the wealthier groups are not sufficiently responsible to decide whether to go to the dentist or to have an eye test because they will have to pay £3 or £10. If that is the Opposition's opinion of the level of people's responsibility for their own affairs, it is amazing that they allow them to do anything on their own.

I believe that many sight tests will, in fact, still be free. When I drive to my constituency I go along the Walworth road and past the headquarters of the Labour party. Right on the border of the constituency of the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) is a large shop, which was not there a few years ago. Perhaps when the hon. Member for Livingston is bored at an NEC meeting the hon. Lady could take him there as it is only 200 or 300 yards from the Labour party headquarters. The shop takes up two huge shop fronts and is called Betterspecs. It has a big sign in the window saying, "Free eye tests". I suspect that that will happen throughout much of the country.

If I am wrong about the deterrent argument, what will be the consequences? On the whole, they will not be that serious. If people are walking around wearing the wrong glasses, or if they do not have a tooth filled until it begins to ache, those are not really serious consequences. They are certainly not life threatening. One or two examples of possible serious consequences have been mentioned, such as glaucoma and oral cancer. We must remember that, when people have free eye or dental checks, it is not because they want to find out whether they have glaucoma or oral cancer. Those are accidental, random discoveries in the process of doing something else. A dental check is not a screening process for oral cancer; it is simply one of the by-products. I understand that the average dentist comes across only two cases of oral cancer during the whole of his career. If we want a screening process for oral cancer, that must be the most expensive and inefficient way of providing it.

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): Does not my hon. Friend think that if two people discover that they have oral cancer that can be cured and that will save them a lifetime of disfigurement that is well worth the free checks? How can my hon. Friend calculate that in money terms?

Mr. Maples: Of course I understand that that is an awful disease, as is glaucoma. However, it is about time that my hon. Friend began to cost various elements of the NHS budget, because a cost can be put on all these matters. I repeat that if the only reason for a free dental check is to detect so few cases of oral cancer, it must be the most inefficient and expensive way of doing it that we could ever devise. I do not believe that charges would be a deterrent or that there would be dire consequencies. If, in the event, I am wrong and there is a huge increase in undetected glaucoma cases, that would be an argument for heavily promoting the need for people to have their eyes tested occasionally to ensure that they are not contracting that disease.

Ever since tax-cutting Budgets were introduced, the Opposition have said that the public would prefer the money to be spent on the NHS. They say that the public are willing to spend enormous amounts on the NHS rather than have tax cuts. For a man on average earnings, the 2p tax cut in the last Budget is worth about £170 a year—£3·40 a week. Are we to believe that that same person is not prepared to spend £3 and £10 on dental and eye tests? Is a person willing to forgo all his income tax cuts so that the money can be spent on the NHS not to be trusted voluntarily, of his own free will, to spend £3 or £10 on dental and eye checks? That is an extremely patronising attitude. The inescapable conclusion that we must reach is that the Opposition think that the only good provision in society is that provided by the state and that no one can be trusted to do anything on his own.

The arguments of opponents of the proposal go to the root of the whole idea of charging in the National Health Service. If it is wrong to charge for dental checks and eye tests, it must be wrong to charge for other things. Charges, which come only from the wealthier 60 per cent. of the population, raise about £800 million a year. It cannot be sensible to spend an additional £800 million to absorb those charges back into the public purse when that money could be spent on buying so many other things for the Health Service.

When one considers that 60 per cent. of the population, it is worth remembering what has happened to their finances over the past 10 years. We know that the take-home pay of men on average earnings has risen by 29 per cent. a year over the past 10 years. The pay of those on half average earnings has risen by 22 per cent. and the pay of those on three quarters of average earnings has risen by 26 per cent. Those are substantial sums. Over the past 10 years, the take-home pay of a man on average earnings has increased by £2,400. For someone on three quarters of average earnings—about the level at which family credit runs out and at which the person becomes liable for charges—income has increased by £1,800 a year. The income of a person on half average earnings—about £120 a week—has increased by £1,100 a year.

The idea that people with those increased personal resources and increased individual wealth are not prepared to take some responsibility for paying minor charges towards health care is incredible in every sense of the word. If the increases continue, over the next 10 years, a person on average earnings will have an income of £5,000 or £6,000 more. It is surely a sensible proposition that out of that amount some marginal contribution should be made towards the cost of individual health care.

That is also the case for pensioners. Pensioners' incomes did not rise very much under the previous Labour Government. Since the Conservative Government came to power, pensions have risen quite a lot. The average pension has risen from about £100 a week in 1980 to about £135 a week in 1990—an increase of about 35 per cent. In view of that increase, it is reasonable to suggest that pensioners should make some contribution to their own health care and that they are able and willing to do so.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I wonder why the hon. Member, like many of his hon. Friends, referred to average earnings. I come from the mining industry and the phrase

"average earnings" there told a false story, which the hon. Gentleman is doing tonight—with respect. Half the men at the pit were in the top income bracket, but the other half —the lower-paid workers—received 50 per cent. less than that. What about the lower-paid workers? They are the people for whom we are fighting, and the hon. Gentleman should be fighting for them as well.

Mr. Maples: People on family credit, which is about three quarters of average earnings, will not have to pay for tests. No children will have to pay for tests. A person on three quarters of average earnings is £1,800 a year better off in terms of take-home pay than 10 years ago. People on lower incomes than that will probably be on family credit and will receive the benefit of free tests, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has proposed. It is simply not true to say that I take no account of the lower paid. I did not need to bring them into the argument because they will be exempted from paying for dental or eye tests. It is only those who earn more than three quarters of average earnings who will be affected.

Most people are far richer than they were 10 years ago and are able and willing to pay modest charges towards items of health care. Charges will not be a deterrent to people seeking services. There must be better ways of spending £140 million than this one.

8.15 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Yesterday afternoon, I led a delegation of pensioners from my constituency to meet the Prime Minister at No. 10 Downing street. We took her a giant pair of spectacles which measured 2ft 6in across, and a giant tooth. The more uncharitable among us might suggest that they were the right size for the Prime Minister in view of the size of her head and mouth. Of course, I am not that uncharitable. The reason why we took the spectacles and the tooth there was to show the Prime Minister the great concern felt by people in Leicester and, particularly, by pensioners about the proposed charges.

I was accompanied on the visit by Les George, aged 66, from Maplin road, Nethershall in Leicester. He remembers that when he was a young boy, the Labour Government introduced the National Health Service and that the National Health Service was free at the point of need. Irene Howell, aged 65, also accompanied us and, as we walked up to No. 10, she reminded us that had she not had a test, she might have lost the sight of one eye. Also with us was Mary Draycott, a young mother with two children, who has been campaigning hard for the decentralisation of health and dental services in the outer estates of Leicester. The delegation represented many pensioners in places such as Nethershall, Northfields, Evington, Thurnby Lodge and Belgrave, who are deeply concerned about the proposed charges.

Before I came into the Chamber this evening, I spoke to a constituent who came down from Leicester in a coach to present me with a letter, which I should like to read to the House. She writes:

"I urge you to oppose and do all you can to oppose the proposals for the introduction of sight and dental charges. They will not improve the nation's eyesight or hearing. You may be able to eat with false teeth, walk with false legs but you cannot see with a false eye. Mrs. Thatcher is a wolf in sheep's clothing crying crocodile tears."

That letter came from a constituent who had never written to a Member of Parliament before, but who felt so outraged that she came all the way down from Leicester.

The charges are mean and vindictive. They are imposed by those who can afford to pay them.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: That includes the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Vaz: That is quite right. I have had three pay rises in the year and a half in which I have been a Member of Parliament, for which I did not have to bargain.

Many of my constituents and the constituents of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) are unable to afford the charges. The experts in Leicester are united. The secretary of the family practitioner committee said:

"During my career, three people have been operated on the day after I examined them and detected a blood clot or tumour.

General health will deteriorate because the chance to operate early will vanish and it could be too late by the time the patient notices the signs, then the treatment could be more complicated, dangerous and expensive.

More people will go blind as a result of less early detection which will cost more in the long run to care for them."

If the Minister tells me this evening that voting for health charges will mean that money can be invested in the health service in Leicester, let him come up with a number of assurances. The first assurance I seek is that the eight hospitals in Leicestershire that are about to be closed will not close. They include Ashby and district hospital, Catmose Vale hospital, Fielding Johnson hospital, Higham Grange, Roundhill maternity home, Regent hospital, Loughborough and Blaby hospital in the constituency of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. If the Minister assures me and my hon. Friends that people in Leicestershire, like Mrs. Broughton who is 87 years old, will not have to wait two years to have hearing aids made for them, that the current hospital waiting list of 8,500 will be cleared, that 200 people who are waiting for operations on the orthopaedic waiting list will be cleared off the list and that the Towers hospital which is under threat of closure will not close, we shall be tempted to listen to his arguments. It will take 60 days of full surgery lists to clear the cases that I have mentioned.

The Government say that they want a first-class service. We want a first-class Health Service. We do not want the jumble sale Health Service that we have at the moment, which means that hon. Members are invited to hospital fêtes and charitable events to raise money for worthy causes such as the purchase of a kidney unit at Leicester general hospital.

Three weeks ago a number of my colleagues and I visited America. We visited an emergency room in a hospital. There, I witnessed a patient who had come in in great pain being asked, as the very first question, by the administrator: "Do you have insurance?" When he said that he did not, the patient, who was in great agony, was referred to the nearest public hospital, at which he no doubt had to wait because the public health service in America has been undermined to such a great extent. That is the kind of Health Service that the Government want, and the next Bill that comes before the House will provide for people to be charged when they visit their general practitioner. It already costs people in America £25 to see their GP.

[Mr. Vaz]

I commend the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham)—another Leicestershire Member, and one with whom I do not agree on any other issue—on the stand that he has taken. This morning he declared on Radio Leicester that he would be voting against the charges. I urge all other Conservative Members to join the hon. Gentleman in taking that principled stand and to vote against the charges.

Mr. Churchill: I wholeheartedly repudiate the offensive remarks made by the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Such remarks do nothing to further the cause that he claims to support.

I warmly welcome the Chancellor's announcement that the Treasury coffers are awash with money and especially the news that an extra £2,000 million is to be made available for the Health Service in the coming year and a further £2,500 million in the year 1990-91. It is excellent news, and I applaud it.

I therefore find all the more regrettable and unnecessary the Government's determination to reverse the Lords amendment and for the first time to impose charges for eye and dental checks. I speak as one who is not known as a notorious wet.

The Government proclaim that they are in favour of preventive medicine. I welcome that commitment. Preventive medicine is not only right but it is the most cost-effective form of health care. Much more expensive treatments and hospitalisation further down the line may be required if preventive medicine does not exist or is inadequate.

There can be no doubt that over the years free eye and dental checks have made a significant contribution to preventive medicine. I firmly believe that to impose charges is as retrograde as it is unnecessary.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Hear, hear.

Mr. Churchill: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State makes the perfectly fair point that I—and others as fortunate as I am—should not have free eye and dental checks. There is no earthly reason why I should. However, as I have told my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, neither I nor, I suspect, many others in my fortunate position have ever availed themselves of free eye and dental checks. It is a wholly bogus argument to say that, because the likes of Lord Hanson and Sir Ralph Halpern must be disbarred from going for free eye or dental checks, other people on earnings way below the average should be deprived of free tests.

I regret to have to say to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State—I am sorry that he cannot be in his place—that his belief that charges will not act as a deterrent is wholly unconvincing. If he is so sure that that is so, why in logic are not the Government moving to impose charges for breast cancer checks and cervical smears? There is no difference in logic between the two forms of screening.

I shall tell my right hon. and learned Friend why he is not moving in that direction. In his heart of hearts he knows that such charges would have a profoundly deterrent effect on those who need to be encouraged to go for regular checks. Regrettably, the present measure has nothing to do with encouraging preventive medicine and everything to do with pressure from the Treasury. I acknowledge that the list of exemptions is sizeable; 38 per cent.—no fewer than 20 million of our fellow citizens—will be exempted. The key argument advanced by the Secretary of State in favour of imposing charges is that everybody who does not qualify for an exemption can well afford £3·15 for a dental check or £10 for an eye test in this increasingly prosperous Britain.

Is that really so? Let me cite the case of a constituent of mine who came to my advice bureau in Manchester only last weekend. He is in his late 50s. He lives alone. He is self-employed and his business has not been prospering. Last year he earned only £2,880. That works out at £57 a week net of tax, or one quarter of average earnings. After he has paid £23 a week in rent for his council house, now that his housing benefit has been reduced to only £1·23, he has no more than £25 a week of disposable income on which to live. Because he is in full-time employment, because he works more than 20 hours a week and because he is not a single parent, he does not qualify for income support. Therefore, he would be required to pay eye and dental charges under the proposal. Is it reasonable or right to expect an individual at the bottom end of the economic scale to pay such charges? He has only £3·50 a day on which to live—less than the Secretary of State is paying for his evening meal in the House. Is it reasonable to charge such a man £10 for an eye test? Of course it is not, and my right hon. and learned Friend knows that it is not.

Let me make a proposition to my hon. and learned Friend who is to wind up the debate. If he can tell me that my constituent, with less than £25 a week on which to live, will be exempt from the charges, I shall abandon my intention to vote against the Government and I shall join my hon. and learned Friend in the Lobby in support of the measure. However, I must tell him that the advice that I have received from the Secretary of State's private office, as well as from my local DHSS office, is that my constituent would not qualify, because he does not qualify for income support. On that basis, I have no hesitation whatever in saying that I shall oppose these objectionable and damaging measures not only on behalf of my constituent, but on behalf of thousands like him in constituencies throughout the country. It is no use brandishing averages, because we know how many are so high above the average, and it behoves us to pay attention also to those who are so far below the average and who are not caught by any safety net.

It gives me no pleasure whatever to vote against the Government, but I must say to my right hon. Friends that the Government are wrong in this matter, and they have lost the argument. They deserve to be defeated.

8.30 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): After nearly three hours of debate, many arguments have been ranged for and against the amendment and many points have been made many times. Very little new can be said either for or against the amendment. However, I believe that the Lords amendment should be rejected, because the Government's proposals are constructive and will eventually filter through to an improvement in the National Health Service generally.

The crux of the issue is whether it is morally right or wrong to pay for a check-up of any kind. The distinction

between breast and cervical cancer tests and dental and optical check-ups is that the former are generally done at a hospital or by a general practitioner, but the optical and dental check-ups are done in semi-autonomous establishments on the fringe of the National Health Service. As we know, the optical testing side of the Health Service has been freed into a more competitive environment and that has filtered through to a more competitive product being provided. If the Lords amendment is rejected and the charges are allowed, we will see some competitiveness introduced into the market and eventually we will find that optical tests will cost very little and, perhaps, a good deal less than the £10 proposed.

Over the years the National Health Service has changed and people's perception of it has changed. When it was created in 1948, no one had any disposable income, and the National Health Service did not do a great deal more that repair broken bones and remove tonsils—[HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."]—in the early 1950s. Of course, it did a great deal more than that, but it was nowhere near as sophisticated as it is today, and the demands for treatment become ever higher as new expertise and techniques are developed which are ever more costly. Because of that, we must consider new ways of providing funding for the Health Service.

Our people have more disposable income and they are entitled to choose how they spend it. I do not believe that, because the majority of the population will be charged £3·15 for a dental check-up, they will not take the time or trouble to have that check-up. On the contrary, we have had well-documented evidence that as a result of some of the dental costs that have been passed on to the consumer more people are having dental treatment. Whether the connection is that, because one is paying for something, a value can be placed upon it, is open to conjecture. I believe that if a value is put on something, people are more likely to value the service that they receive.

It is encouraging that 40 per cent. of the population will not have to pay anything for their dental check-ups and 37 per cent. will not pay for optical tests. However, there are people who will be on the borderline. There will be areas that we will need to look at closely so that people are not disadvantaged in the way that my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) mentioned.

Some people feel that the NHS should be free at the point of use. Of course, NHS treatment is not free at the point of use to the extent that we might like, as some charges were introduced in 1976, and prescription charges have been with us on and off for some time. The emotive issue of treatment being free at the point of delivery is misplaced. I suppose that it could be said indirectly that if one is a BUPA subscriber, one's service is free in that one pays insurance and BUPA pays for one's treatment after it has been received. However, we do not describe BUPA as free at the point of service. The National Health Service treatment is not free, because we pay into a national insurance scheme, and we have paid heavily for it over the years.

I do not believe that it is correct for the Labour party to lecture us on treatment charges when, of course, in 1976 it was involved in implementing many charges. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) had the temerity to suggest that if we had a secret ballot everything would be greatly different. The Labour Government never had a secret ballot when they were in office in 1979 and decided to put up prescription rates. They never had a secret ballot when they decided to cut the hospital building programme. They certainly did not have a secret ballot when they decided whether to cut pensions and so forth.

Mr. Robin Cook: The reason why the 1974 to 1979 Government did not hold secret ballots was that those of us who disagreed with them did not require a secret ballot in order to express our view. We had the courage to do so and did so regularly.

Mr. King: The evidence tonight shows that neither do we. We do not need a secret ballot to express our view. To suggest that we should have a secret ballot on this one issue when the evidence is that when Labour was last in office it was making unpalatable decisions and did not have a secret ballot is unfair.

Our Health Service will obviously become more complex as years go by. I believe that it is right to establish as a principle—as we have already done—that some contribution by the user where he can afford it is the way that it should develop. Wage rates have gone up by 9 per cent. in the last 12 months. If we add to that the tax cuts that were passed on to the population, we see that real disposable income is a great deal more because of the Government's economic policies.

I believe that what we are asking for is not unreasonable or unrealistic. The financial resources that will be released because of the extra income that will come into the Service will be of benefit to the Service generally. Because of the new money that will go a long way to improving the Service, together with what was announced in the Autumn Statement, the Government's proposal has my support.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): First, we should establish that the National Health Service brought in by the first post-war Labour Government made a dramatic change in the health care of the nation. I believe that every intrusion that is made by the Government in introducing charges for this, that and the other erodes day by day the National Health Service that was created in the early post-war years. I know that there will be hot denials from those on the Government Front Bench if I suggest that behind those charges and the Government's geneal attitude towards the Health Service there is a blatant ideological attitude that intends in time to dismantle what we know as the Health Service of this country.

People outside will not allow the Government to take away the great benefits that have flowed from the National Health Service. Shortly after the war people were given the opportunity to have access to free health care for the first time. Many were elderly people without teeth and who needed spectacles which they did not have. The National Health Service changed the whole nature of health care in this country. The first generation of post-war babies proved the value of the Health Service beyond any doubt.

Many of the comments made tonight by Conservative Members make it absolutely clear that this is not simply a question of charging for dental or optical testing. It is part of the continuing attack on the Health Service by those Conservative Members who want to see the end of the Health Service and who want to see it in the hands of the market because of the profits that can be made. They want only those who can afford health care to have health care. That was exactly the position before the founding of the Health Service.

[Mr. Eddie Loyden]

Having grown up in a working-class area of Liverpool, I can tell the House of the many children who died in those cobbled streets because there was no Health Service. The child mortality rate in Liverpool was one of the highest in the country. Many of the afflictions suffered by working-class families were due to inadequate medical care, and, in some cases, to inadequate housing. Those afflictions led to the creation of the National Health Service.

It is a scandal that, having seen the benefits of the National Health Service, the Government make continuing attacks on it both in the House and outside. That is especially true of some of the Government's Back-Bench Members. Indeed, when listening to one Conservative Member, I wondered whether he was talking about Sainsburys or about the Health Service because he referred to "a better product". Where are we going when the Government's Back Benchers seek to bring the Health Service into the market? It is an absolute disgrace that hon. Members should talk about the Health Service in that way.

I happen to be one of those 250,000 people who have benefited from an eye test——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Does the hon. Gentleman see the difficulty of the Chair? The debate has tended to go wider and wider in scope until it is now in danger of becoming a general debate on the Health Service. This debate is about dental charges. A later amendment deals specifically with optical charges. I understand that the hon. Gentleman wishes to speak to that. Therefore, I hope that he will not encroach too much on the subject of that amendment.

Mr. Loyden: With all due respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all aspects of testing have been spoken about tonight, including cervical cancer and oral testing.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Loyden.

Mr. Loyden: I hope to illustrate the importance of those tests which at least some Conservative Members recognise.

8.45 pm

I happen to be one of the 250,000 people who, through an eye test, have been detected as having glaucoma. As most people know, glaucoma can——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not want to prevent the hon. Gentleman from making his speech, but I question whether this is the appropriate time.

Mr. Loyden *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will save his remarks about optical problems and optical tests until we reach that specific amendment.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Loyden.

Mr. Loyden: I remind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that every test has been mentioned tonight but no objections have been raised from either the Chair or anywhere else. It is important to illustrate the benefits of testing because that is what we are really talking about. Charges are a deterrent to testing and one of the great elements in preventive medicine is under threat. That, together with the threat to the Health Service, is the most important issue facing us tonight.

All hon. Members, whether speaking in favour of or against the Government's proposals, have pointed out that the Health Service has been moving far too slowly towards preventive medicine although it is moving in that direction. The screenings that take place are a sign of a healthier nation. Therefore, one of the greatest threats to the Health Service is the further erosion of testing that charges will cause. That applies not only to eyesight testing but to dental testing. There is an abundance of evidence to prove conclusively that oral testing can disclose illnesses that could result in either chronic illness or death that would otherwise not be detected.

It is a scandal that we should be debating such proposals in the House 40 years after the Health Service was created by a Labour Government. It is a scandal that we are debating further inroads into and erosions of a service that was once the envy of the world.

All those people who have the interests of the Health Service at heart, who want to see it move towards preventive rather than curative medicine and who want to move away from a drug-oriented Health Service that props up the companies that make billions of pounds of profits from supplying the drugs, believe that tonight's attacks on the Health Service eat into the Health Service and mean that we now have a Health Service inferior to that which we had in the past.

Mr. Key: The amendment is not just about specific health charges; it is not just about money or about the preservation of a particular legitimate vested interest; it is about something much wider and much more fundamental. It is about the best way of improving and maintaining the dental health of the nation.

Economists would tell us that we are into the hoary old chestnut of externalities—in other words, if I as an individual start using lead-free petrol, it does not make much difference to the state of the environment, but if everyone could be persuaded to use it, it would make a great deal of difference. That sort of argument can be applied to the problem facing us tonight.

The argument is about how we can persuade people to react to certain circumstances. Whichever way each of us votes tonight on this issue, I believe that we all want improved dental care for the whole nation. The question is, how do we achieve that? Do we best achieve it by mass state provision which is free at the point of consumption or by unbridled market forces? I shall seek to demonstrate that neither is the complete answer.

The little evidence that there is, as opposed to opinion or judgment—it is striking that, however strongly one feels on either side of the argument, there are only opinions and judgments and one cannot say that the argument is either black or white—shows clearly that the present system of free check-ups has been a failure. About 50 per cent. of people fail to take up the current free service. We are told that there are a number of reasons for that: for example, people may think that they do not need to go to a dentist until they are in trouble; some people have a blind fear of the dentist and some people have difficulty in finding a dentist who is conveniently close to their work. However, the cost of the treatment was ranked bottom among people's reasons for not going to the dentist.

The answer to all those failures must be better education. What have the Government done about that? Well, in 1981 the Government introduced a policy document entitled "Care in Action" in which they recognised the role of education and stated:

"Too many endanger their health through ignorance or social pressures. Public action can give people the information they need to make sensible decisions about personal health, and encourage in the community a reasonable attitude towards the main area for prevention".

When the Health Education Authority was set up, the then Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr. Fowler), stated:

"As a special health authority, the new authority will be an integral part of the National Health Service in England. As a result, it should be more responsive than an outside body can be to the needs of the Service, and in turn will have more influence in setting priorities for the Service and ensuring that the needs of health education and promotion are properly recognised."

That was a most important statement of intent. It is evident that, whatever the deterrent effects of charges, there is only unexpected evidence, as opposed to opinion. In 1976, the Labour Government raised dental charges by 36 per cent. and the number of procedures carried out by dentists rose. Even the evidence presented to hon. Members by the British Dental Association appeared to contradict that case.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) had some fun at my expense about this, but it is important to consider the document that we have all been sent by the BDA. I have read it carefully and looked at the tables of statistics. It is a profoundly unconvincing case. If ever there were a case of lies, damn lies and statistics, it must be in this document. It is the most selective use of statistics that I can imagine. That is fair enough because the BDA is a legitimate vested interest. I do not therefore decry the case that it seeks to make, but nothing in life is free and the goods and service which are free at the point of consumption are, in general, valued least in society, whether junk mail or tap water. If dental care is free at the point of consumption, people seem prepared to put up with broken appointments, long waits in dingy waiting rooms, out-of-date magazines and rude receptionists. In short, we are very British and do not complain about the poor service.

On the other hand, if we are allocating our own cash, we expect service and standards. That is also in the national interest. We all benefit from the better use of resources. The evidence that we want better standards is there and we are already paying for better standards. Let us consider first the increase in the number of dental hygienists in most of our dental practices. Of course, there are the usual exemptions, but we pay for the benefit of those paradentists, who are a very good thing.

Secondly, may I draw the attention of the House to the problem of AIDS and dentists. That problem will grow significantly. My dental practice—I checked up this morning—is spending well over £1,000 on disposable gloves as a direct result of the AIDS problem, £500 a year on disposable bibs instead of the usual rubber bibs and £500 a year extra on surface anaesthetics instead of needles. At present, dentists have to wait over a year for reimbursement from the state because the state is bad at allocating resources. Standards in practices would rise if dentists had an acceptable cash flow. That would be one of the effects of introducing those charges. I would happily pay up if I could see the standard of service go up. Both professional services and the quality of environment of dental surgeries would improve.

For five years, as a Member of this House, and for many years before that, I argued to the electorate that the purpose of cutting taxes and reducing Government involvement is not to give us an easy life, but to encourage us to take a more responsible attitude. That is a high moral argument and the care of ourselves, our families and our children should be a first charge on our income. If I can allocate those resources, rather than the inefficient state, it is not only in my interests, but in everyone else's interests too.

I cannot support the Lords amendment. I shall vote against it tonight. I have no intention of ratting on my Conservative principles which I have put to the electorate in election after election. I do not have a monopoly of virtue, nor do I believe that anybody else has in this important debate. However, we are harangued and preached at because of the success of the economy. We are told about record levels of personal debt, conspicuous consumption, imported electronic goods and about calls for deregulation of Sunday trading, the £8 a week per household spent on alchohol, the £4 per week per household spent on tobacco, booming sales of sweets and confectionery for children, but what price optical and dental health?

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I did not intend to speak in this debate and I do not intend to detain the House long because other hon. Members wish to speak. However, I want to illustrate the difference in the speeches of the hon. Members for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples), for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). The hon. Member for Davyhulme put the case against the Government, but his two hon. Friends spoke in favour of the Government. They and other hon. Members who support the Government are duty bound to put the case for supporting the Government on dental tests and eye tests, and for charging for other tests. They cannot simply say, "We think this is a good idea. People ought to pay for these tests. They should not be free" and then remain silent about all the other tests, for example, cervical smear tests and breast cancer screening. They cannot remain silent about those matters and put the case for the Government.

It is all very well for the hon. Member for Northfield to say, "We freed up the market with regard to dental and eye tests, but we haven't freed up other tests yet." The implication is that, when they have freed up the means of checking for breast and cervical cancer, they will charge for those tests, although the hon. Gentleman could not quite bring himself to say that.

Every Conservative Member of Parliament who is prepared to support charging for preventive tests, leaving aside the charges for treatment and all the other red herrings that have been mentioned tonight, must follow the logic of their argument. We know what is happening. The House and the country are being softened up. When those charges have been introduced, it will be that much easier for other Ministers to say, "It's unfair for all those other tests to be taking place. Now people have to pay for dental tests and eye tests."

Mr. Key: The hon. Gentleman is a fair-minded debater. I could argue the case that we would not have been allowed

[Mr. Key]

by the Chair to digress into the matters that he is raising. However, we should all be prepared to argue about the future funding of the National Health Service. One of the failures of the House and of this nation is that we have not been prepared to debate such difficult issues as the crisis facing the Health Service has become steadily worse.

Mr. Rooker: I am prepared to say, without stepping out of order, that I am not in favour of charging for preventive medicine. It does not matter whether it is eye tests, dental check-ups or any of the other tests associated with preventive medicine. If we go back a few years, I do not think that any hon. Member would have contemplated charging when the mass radiography units were going round the country. That is not so frequent today because there are other safer ways of checking on the problems of lung cancer.

Many millions of people are receiving preventive medicine free at the point of use, but against their will. That is because their water has fluoride in it. I have always supported fluoridation. I am prepared to accept that form of mass preventive medicine on its merits but not in principle. There are many, however, who do not want that mass medication, preventive though it might be.

The free marketeers on the Government Benches would argue that the public should pay for that treatment because it will prevent problems from occurring later. That is the logic of certain Conservative Members. I accept the honesty of the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), because it is clear that he would support charges for cervical smears and other tests.

These issues must be faced fair and square. Most of the major diseases that caused generations to suffer were almost eliminated before the medical profession discovered what they were and what the treatment should be. I remember attending a lecture at the community medicine department of Guy's hospital many years ago. Slides were projected that showed graphs illustrating the numbers of people who were not dying as a result of contracting various diseases. We were then told when a cure had been found. It was clear that the fall in the line on the graphs did not depend on treatment. Instead, there was a direct relationship to public health policy that embraced community medicine and good hygiene. That is a factor that must be taken on board.

9 pm

With advances in science it may be that other tests will be invented for some of the diseases that are prevalent now and for others that we may not even know about. A test for AIDS is an example that I use in passing, for five years ago we might not have known anything about the disease. There will be tests invented to prevent people of whatever age falling foul of certain illnesses or diseases, and we know that those tests will save money.

There are those who contract certain illnesses or diseases because we have not developed tests that will tell us when they are in the early stages of contracting them. If the relevant tests were invented, they would definitely save money. They would be cost effective. Is it being argued that although new tests will save money we should introduce charges for them? Surely that would be contrary to public health policy and our attitude to it for the past 100 years or more.

The Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), is right to think that people are still ignorant about their own bodies. From time to time the hon. Lady tells the country the truth. Whenever she does so there is a reaction, but that is because of the way in which she puts her message across. The hon. Lady, in her own way, is attempting to educate. She is intent on educating the people en masse so that they can take better care of their bodies. She knows that most people are ignorant about their bodies in detail, especially when it comes to what they do to their bodies and the illness that will ensue 10 or 20 years later. The hon. Lady is engaging in a process of education.

An element of preventive medicine is to enable the public, without any barriers of mystique, to subject themselves to checks. If only small barriers are erected that does not matter. In effect, the money does not matter. Conservative Members talk about 60 per cent. exemptions, but if there were no problem about money we would not have arguments about two out of every three who are eligible for family credit not receiving it. There is ignorance of the system and ignorance of what is available. The same applies to charges for checks and to those who would be frightened of taking advantage of them. Unless Ministers are prepared to argue that they will consider later the cost effectiveness of other checks, their words are not worth the candle. I do not care what the costs are, because costs do not really matter. If the proposed costs are halved, some people will still be prevented from taking advantage of them.

We know that some people, either through illogicality or ignorance, will be prevented from going for checks. That is not good enough. That is contrary to everything that has happened in the development of public health policy over the past century. It would be a bad day for the Government and the House if we were to let that happen.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard (Norfolk, South-West): I shall be very brief because most of the arguments that it is possible to deploy on this subject have been thoroughly rehearsed tonight, if not in earlier debates. However, I want to make two points, the first of which relates to the principle of charging for dental check-ups. No one can dispute the fact that the power to make appropriate charges for health services was built into the National Health Service Act 1946 from the very beginning. No one has tried to dispute the fact that Governments of all political persuasions have taken the chance to make charges when they wished during the 40-year history of the NHS.

My experience may be unique, but I have rarely had a free dental check-up. My dental check-ups always seem to be accompanied by an X-ray, cleaning or scaling for which I have to pay. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) who said that the boundaries between treatment and examination in that area of the Health Service are very blurred. Most people who attend a dental surgery expect to be charged either for something following from the check-up such as an X-ray or cleaning or for a course of prescribed treatment. I have no difficulty with the principle of charging for dental check-ups.

Not much has been made of my second point. Check-up charges are part of a total package for primary health care contained in the Bill. The package is designed to produce improvements worth £600 millon over the next three years for the primary health care network. As I

represent a rural constituency in which primary health care is of the utmost importance, I welcome the improvements and I shall have no difficulty in supporting the Government in support of the charges as part of that package of overall improvements.

Mr. Carttiss: As has already been said, all the arguments have been advanced. When my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House was asked whether the Government would change their mind after the amendments were passed by the Lords, he said in April or June that he had heard no new arguments that would change the Government's view.

I have heard no new arguments to cause me to change my view that the Government have made a mistake. I recognise that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench and my colleagues on the Back Benches have put forward some very persuasive arguments, and I understand what they have said. That is a matter of judgment. I would be very surprised if someone was deterred from having a dental check-up if the charge was £3. We are not talking about eye tests or a higher charge of £10 which would be a different deterrent.

Conservative Members have concentrated their attention on wealthy people whom it is alleged do not need free check-ups. No matter how wide ranging are the Government's exemptions, there will still be people, as we all know, who are just above that level and for whom a charge will make a difference. Of that there can be no doubt. If it does not make any difference, why do the Government continue to subsidise the wealthy middle class who want to attend opera and the Royal Shakespeare Company performances? My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) is always on about that. Let us get the facts right.

Why is it such a dreadful thing to say to people who can afford to go somewhere else that they cannot have that one test free in the interests of preserving the principle of having an initial free check?

We have heard a lot about prescription charges. Every time anyone mentions the charges for the two tests we are told that we do not oppose charges for prescriptions. If I had been a Member when the Labour Government introduced prescription charges, I might have done so. What I do know is that once the principle—it may well have been right—was conceded, they were appropriate, indeed unavoidable, given the vast range of services that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) identified as showing that we have a much more comprehensive Health Service now than when it was formed. The arguments for that might be clear, but the fact remains that prescription charges keep going up and there is no doubt that these charges will go up. There is no way that in three years' time we will be talking about £10 for eye tests or £3 for dental check-ups.

I oppose the principle of charging for doctors' visits and all the rest, which has been debated thoroughly. Hon. Members have been nodding their heads. My hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) went like this when the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) asked whether he would approve of charging for cervical smears. Many Conservative Members will put their hands up if they are told to do so by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Whip, who has just walked in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that hon. Members will remember that *Hansard* cannot interpret hand signs.

Mr. Carttiss: The case is being advanced that there is no deterrent in these charges. Indeed, we have heard some interesting and persuasive points of view. It has been said that if we charge for something everybody will want to have it. That may well be true; I do not know. But this is a fundamental principle.

I am not sure whether the Government know the costs involved in introducing these charges. They say little. For example, we are told that charges are no deterrent. We are told that after a time patients will come back.

In Great Yarmouth dentists who are capable of operating on impacted wisdom teeth are referring their patients to the local hospital to have the operation there, not on medical or clinical grounds, but on social grounds because their patients are just above the exemption limit; they would have to pay the dentist but can be treated free in hospital.

There are many more such cases. If one talks to people who visit hospitals regularly, as I do, they tell of people being redirected. That is what will happen. People will go to their general practitioner complaining of a headache. Once he would have sent them to the optician, but now he will send them to the eye clinic in the local hospital. Make no mistake about it. Of course, that will not apply to everybody.

I seriously question how much of the £50 million that it is alleged will be redirected will be saved when the time comes. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and his colleagues in the Department of Health, and, indeed, my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, on having agreed the significant increase of £1·25 billion for the Health Service. I was asked to listen to the Autumn Statement. Having done so, I am reinforced in my view that we should not be introducing these charges.

When my right hon. and learned Friend opened the debate he observed that the Autumn Statement had certain elements in it and he asked whether we all understood it. I have examined it, and I find that when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer stands at the Dispatch Box next March to present his Budget he will have a surplus of about £10 billion to £15 billion that he can use in various directions, including reduced taxation. He could also use it to continue providing what I happen to believe—although I recognise the alternative arguments—is a fundamental principle, a free service of dental and eye inspection.

9.15 pm

Opposition Members made the point that one can go to a GP and say, "I have something wrong with my foot, doctor," and that he will examine it without charging £3. One might say to him, "I have something wrong with my arm—have a look at it." He might reply, "There is nothing wrong with it. It is all in your head." Why should those services be free while others are subject to a charge? Right hon. and hon. Members have asked that question several times today. It was asked in the debate on Report, but still no answer has been given. We shall not be given an answer because many of my right hon. and hon. Friends consider, for sound reasons, that there ought to be more Health

[Mr. Carttiss]

Service charges. I respect their view, but I still oppose it, and tell them that I hope very much that this is the last we shall hear of their proposal.

Conscious as I am of the passage of time, I shall conclude by quoting Bruce Anderson writing in *The Sunday Telegraph*:

> "There is no justification for Tory Members whining and griping every time they have to explain an unpopular decision in their constituencies."

That is not what it is all about. I had to explain to my constituents why it was that on Monday, and again on Thursday, I voted to pour more money down the EC drain on their behalf—much more money than is in question here. I also had to explain with enthusiasm to my constituents why the British Government allowed the American Air Force to use air bases in East Anglia from which to launch their bombing attack on Libya. I had to explain that to 70 constituents who were in Libya, working for the oil industry there. Worse still, I had to explain it to their wives, who were worried about them—but I had no difficulty doing so.

Great Yarmouth is not just my constituency. It is my home. It is my parents' home and the home of my grandparents and of their parents. I have to face my constituents not to explain unpopular decisions but to explain in terms that I can support and believe why I vote in the way that I do in Divisions. I can explain to my constituents why the Government are introducing this measure. I can understand the argument that has been advanced that the £50 million involved can be more effectively directed elsewhere.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State commented on radio last night on whether those of his colleagues who oppose the Government wish to have on their consciences the loss of £50 million that could be spent in other areas. I do not want to have on my conscience the two people of whom my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) does not think too much because their dentist had discovered only two oral cancers. It is a case not of whingeing and whining but of being extremely proud of a Government who have done more for the Health Service than any other.

I strongly object to having to march into the Lobby with Opposition Members because on this occasion they happen to be right and the Government wrong. I trust that even at this late stage the Government will join me. I am not against the Government; I am voting for the Lords amendment and for the people who sent me here, and I hope that the Government will do so as well.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: The response by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to my modest intervention during his opening speech was profoundly disappointing and disturbing. It was disappointing because it compounded what I thought at first was a modest error: when he listed the possible uses for the sum that could be saved by charging for dental checks, he did not mention any that had any relation to dentistry, and I now ask him to remedy that.

I found my right hon. and learned Friend's response offhand in the extreme. It was clearly intended to suggest that he agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), who said earlier this evening that the optical and dental services were on the fringe of the NHS. That is certainly not true of dental charges. For many people the regular visit to the dentist is their most common meeting with the NHS. I visit my dentist every six months; I do not visit my doctor that often. Throughout human history until the last century, inadequate dental health was one of the greatest causes of physical misery, and I consider the dental service one of the most important parts of the Health Service. My right hon. and learned Friend missed a great opportunity in brushing aside the suggestion that funds raised by imposing charges on dental inspections should be used at least in part to improve dental services.

I am particularly concerned about this because it contradicts comments made during the Bill's Committee stage by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he was Minister for Health. He said then that more than £50 million would be spent on improved primary health care, and that, while not all of it would be spent on dental services, they would be a priority. The impression given today was that they would not.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) said that he could accept the imposition of charges for dental inspections if he then saw a new orthodontic hospital in Northampton. If we could see real developments in certain areas of dental provision, we might be able to argue that that was an improvement. Surely few people would argue that, if we were starting from scratch and had £50 million to spend on the dental part of the NHS, we should use it to provide free dental inspections for those who can afford to pay. But what worries me is that we have no indication that the Government intend to use the funds that they are raising —or at least a major part of them—to improve dental care.

My right hon. and learned Friend said that he felt that during the past few weeks the number of people expressing opposition to the measure had increased. I well understand why people may have begun to wonder when they find that the Government have apparently shifted their ground since the Committee stage. I am seeking a direct and specific assurance from the Minister that primary dental care will benefit from the change in the direction of funds brought about by the introduction of charges. I consider that that is the crux of the matter. That is what I wish to hear.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Hon. Members have spoken about the many well-worn arguments that we have had tonight. Those arguments did not start tonight; they go back to last December when the Standing Committee of which I was a member first started discussing these clauses. Since last December, the Government have made available £3 billion of extra public money to the National Health Service. Therefore, I find it just a little extraordinary that Opposition Members should be so concerned about these matters, yet fail abysmally to applaud the huge extra sums of money that have been made available during the past year.

I find it extremely difficult to understand how they can suggest that many problems will arise from the charges. I do not consider that there is any fundamental difference between charging for treatment and charging for the tests that we are discussing tonight. In that respect I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young).

Opposition Members have produced statistics that suggest that a £3·15 charge for a check up will deter people

from going to the dentist. I do not believe that will be the case. It is not proven, and, judging from the arguments used tonight, it is most unlikely to occur.

It is much more likely that as a result of our debate tonight we shall well end up with a better dental service. It will not be the case that, simply because people have to pay £3·15 for a dental check-up, if they can afford it, that will affect whether they go to the dentist. However, the charge may affect the dental service that is provided. I am absolutely convinced that, although quite clearly not all the extra money will be spent on dental check-ups, some of it at least will help that cause. I strongly believe that we need to monitor exactly what occurs if the charges are introduced. We need to find out whether there is a decrease in the take-up rate of dental check-ups. I believe that the charges will make very little difference.

There is a more fundamental reason for rejecting the amendment. Ever since the foundation of the NHS, it has been short of funds for one reason or another—latterly much less so. The expanding need for health care in this country means that we have to make an increasing individual contribution to the Health Service. One of the main purposes of the charges is that they will allow people who can afford it to contribute to their own health. That must be a step in the right direction and must result in more resources being released for more important and more fundamental health care. Therefore, I shall support the Government tonight and I ask my hon. Friends to reject the amendment.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I hesitate to take part in the debate because the only time that one of my speeches in the House was reported around the world was when, in mid-flow, the crown expertly fitted to my front tooth by the National Health Service fell on to the Bench beside me. I hope that I shall be more successful this evening. [HON. MEMBERS: "Keep your mouth shut then."] I owe it to my constituents to say a few words. I do not doubt the Opposition's sincerity, but they have not examined needs and priorities accurately—the same needs and priorities that every Government have had to tackle. Perhaps I may quote the Chancellor of the Exchequer who said:

> "It is clear that it is not possible in existing circumstances to permit any overall increase in the expenditure on the Health Services. Any expansion in one part of the service must in future be met by economies or, if necessary, by contraction in others. In exercising this essential control over total expenditure, regard will of course be had to priorities."—[*Official Report*, 18 April 1950; Vol. 474, c. 59.]

That was what a Labour Chancellor, Sir Stafford Cripps, said. He was trying to grapple with the difficult problem of balancing needs and resources. A Minister of Health said:

> "I am afraid it is necessary this afternoon—we need more money than my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer could see his way to provide. The measure we have taken to get that money has been described in some quarters as an attack on the Health Service or as the first step in dismantling the Service. I am tempted to voice the indignation I felt when I read those words, but I will refrain. Instead, I hope that my hon. Friends will reflect on what I have said this afternoon about the intentions and plans of myself and of my right hon. Friend to expand and develop the hospital and general practitioner service".—[*Official Report*, 24 April 1951; Vol. 486, c. 235.]

That was said by Mr. Marquand, a Labour Minister of Health, when imposing charges on 24 April 1951. Already in the history of the National Health Service, Governments have had to make choices. We recognise that if we are to protect people who can least afford to pay, we must ask those who can afford to pay a modest amount to make some contribution.

9.30 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Leigh: No. I am trying to draw to a close.

The only alternative to asking people who can afford to pay to make a modest contribution is the philosophy of the queue. We all remember the words of the grandfather of my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), who reminded us that the Socialist way is the way of the queue. Ours is the way of the ladder. When people fall out of the queue, Socialists will employ officials to put them back in the queue. We give people a ladder, and if people fall off the ladder we provide the best ambulance service in the world.

Even Socialist Governments have recognised that the queue eventually becomes intolerable. I have another interesting quotation which runs:

> "the ideal of a free service lasted in fact barely three years from its inception—charges of some kind have been in operation ever since 1951 . . . I have made my view known widely, over a long period, that ideally the National Health Service should be free to everyone at the time of need, and it is not at all difficult to find telling quotations from past speeches of mine over the years."—[*Official Report*, 30 May 1968; Vol. 765, c. 2255.]

That was said by Mr. Kenneth Robinson when imposing prescription charges on behalf of the Labour Government in 1968.

Even Labour Governments have had to impose charges to avoid the philosophy of the queue. I do not doubt the sincerity of Opposition Members but, like most sincere people, their sincerity is small part self-deception and large part humbug and hypocrisy. One has only to examine the record of Labour Governments to realise that.

The argument that charges should not be imposed is false. Successive Governments have realised that they must be imposed. We must therefore ask whether it is necessary to impose these charges.

We know that some 20 million people—those who are least able to pay—will be exempted from the charges. We have dealt with the deterrent argument and heard that between 1976 and 1986 the number of people who received dental treatment increased by 7 million. We have heard also that people on the borderline of income support might be deterred from taking dental treatment. If that argument is true, is it not an argument against more charges? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] There is the voice of the part of the Labour party which opposes all charges. If those hon. Members are honest, and lay aside self-deception, hypocrisy and humbug, they will realise that a Labour Government would have to impose such charges. I shall vote against Lords amendment No. 20.

My final point might give some comfort to Opposition Members. The points made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) were worth while. The time may come when the Government have to grasp the nettle of charges on other services. I do not say that such charges are desirable or necessary. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State gave the sincere and honest answer that in his view they were not yet necessary. The time may come when, if the NHS is not to absorb an increasing proportion of GNP and we are to continue to

[Mr. Leigh]

provide services to those in need, we have to consider charges on other services. I do not for a moment think that that necessarily proves that these charges are wrong. They are a necessary fact of life which we must accept. I am sure that, for that reason, Ministers will get a majority for their motion.

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): The House will welcome the extra £1·6 billion which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has announced today for the National Health Service in England and Wales. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health on his considerable personal achievement in this respect, but we cannot continue indefinitely to find these extra massive resources for the NHS without a clear policy and direction for the future of health services. I hope that that will be the outcome of the review which my right hon. and learned Friend has inherited. It is therefore all the more regrettable that, on the same day that the Government have demonstrated, once again, that they are generating new resources for the NHS and much else, they find that they must also proceed to reinstate charges for dental treatments. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has reminded us, the Health and Medicines Bill is based on the 1986 Green Paper, "Primary Health Care", which contained a range of measures to promote good health and preventive care. Those measures will cost money to implement in the short term in order to save money in the long term through better health.

Two years ago, I consulted widely in my constituency with all the doctors, dentists and chemists about those proposals. The general reaction was positive—they welcomed them. Before us today is a new charge for dental examinations which was not proposed in the Green Paper, and therefore was not the subject of that consultation. It is obvious that, if it had been, the message would be what we are receiving now from the professions, that such a charge will serve to negate some aims that the Bill is designed to achieve and will be self-defeating, both financially and for the health of the patient.

I oppose the introduction of a dental examination charge for three reasons. First, it abandons the principle that the National Health Service should not charge patients for advice. Although I believe that we should be doing much more to encourage people to cover privately for their health needs, out of choice, the fundamental principle of a state-run service must be to enable people to seek medical advice regardless of means and without charge.

Secondly, once that principle has been broken, it becomes easier to introduce the charge elsewhere—for advice from the doctor, for screening and for smears. We have heard of a number of services where such a charge could be introduced. Once the principle has been broken, it also becomes easier to increase the charge. If the Bill is passed, this year we shall introduce a charge of £3·50 for a dental check. Next year, it will undoubtedly be at least £5, and it could escalate a the same rate as charges for dental treatment in recent years. That is not the right way to reform the financing of the NHS.

Thirdly, and contrary to what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said earlier today, I accept that there is much in what the dental profession is telling us, and has told my right hon. and learned Friend—that a dental examination charge, modest though that proposed is, will prove to be a disincentive to young adults, especially the 18 to 20-year-olds who will have to pay it. I accept that they are not as responsible as they should be and they will avoid going for a regular inspection. In the long run, that will prove more costly both to the National Health Service and to the patient. Treatment almost always follows the free examinations—treatment for which the patient pays. Examination charges for 18 to 20-year-olds will raise just £10 million and I do not believe that it is worth the candle.

I had expected my right hon. and learned Friend, by way of a concession, at least to exempt the elderly from the charges, but apart from those already specifically exempt he has not done so. In view of the early detection of oral cancers through routine dental examination, I believe that that is particularly harsh.

Had my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister said that the charges were a temporary measure to finance the preventive health care programme that he is about to launch—with, I hope, the wholesale introduction of fluoride in the drinking water—and that the charge would be lifted as soon as evidence showed that the programme was working and demand for treatment falling, I would have reconsidered my position. But my right hon. and learned Friend has not suggested that. The charge will be a permanent addition to the financing of the National Health Service and in my view will sabotage what this otherwise admirable Bill is designed to achieve. The abandonment of the principle of free examination under the National Health Service is not something that I can support today.

Mr. Meller: The essential background to this wide-ranging and well-informed debate is that in the past 10 years provision for our dental services has been greatly increased, leading to better dental health among the population as a whole. There has been a marked increase in take-up of dental treatment throughout the country against a background of markedly increased charges for the treatment provided. That is the essential factual background against which all who are still considering how to cast their vote should begin their consideration.

Provision has been dramatically increased in the past 10 years. In 1978-79 the cost of dental services was £279 million. In 1987-88 it was £820 million—an increase of 43 per cent. in real terms. Even allowing for the impact of the contribution paid by the public in charges, that still represents an increase direct from the Government of 26 per cent. in real terms. That has led to better dental health. In 1973, 29 per cent. of five-year-olds in England and Wales were free of dental decay. By 1983 the figure had risen by more than half to 52 per cent. In 1968, the percentage of adults with no natural teeth was 37 per cent. In 1985 it was 22 per cent.

The percentage of adults attending the dentist regularly has risen from 40 per cent. in 1968 to 50 per cent. in 1985. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) reminded us, however, even though 50 per cent. attendance is better than the 40 per cent. of 20 years ago, it still means that 50 per cent. do not go to the dentist regularly. That is an issue to which we should be devoting a great deal of attention.

There has also been increased take-up of the services that dentists have to offer. In 1979, the number of courses

of treatment in the United Kingdom was around 31 million. By 1986-87, only seven years later, there were 37 million courses of treatment. My right hon. and learned Friend has already reminded the House that especially noteworthy among that increase in treatment was the number of pensioners having their teeth checked—in most cases in the clear knowledge that it would lead to a course of treatment for which 80 per cent. of them would have to pay. Indeed, the increase in the number of pensioners having dental treatment during that period was 92 per cent.

9.45 pm

Mr. Hayes: I am not in any way challenging my hon. and learned Friend, but something that he said a moment ago might have inadvertently misled one or two of my hon. Friends. Is it true that pensioners will not receive any exemption unless they are on income support?

Mr. Mellor: Yes, that is right. We estimate that of the 6·9 million people who will be exempted by virtue of receipt of income support, 2·5 million will be pensioners.

It is interesting that the take-up of treatment has risen sharply, notwithstanding the background of increased charges for treatment that have been significant during the past 10 years. It is also interesting to hear the Opposition's ritual denunciation of charges. However, we know that back in 1976 they put up charges for dental treatment by 35 per cent. and again in 1977 by 27 per cent.

In case the House is troubled by the Opposition's attitude, I must point out that they did not fuss about the odd three quid back in 1977 when they put up charges for plastic dentures from £12 to £20 and for metal dentures from £12 to £30. The minimum charge for treatment rose from £12 to £30 at a stroke, an increase of 150 per cent. We do not really need too many denunciations from the Opposition.

It is fair to say that in the increasingly prosperous society that has been created in Britain during the 1980s, the Government have also put up dental charges so that from a total of 20 per cent. of the cost of the dental service coming from patient contributions in 1980 the figure has risen steadily over the years to a current total of 32 per cent. That increase in patient contributions from 20 per cent. to 32 per cent. of the cost of an expanding service has happened while that service continued to expand and to treat increasing numbers of people—including an increasing number in the most vulnerable group, according to the definition applied by some of my hon. Friends. That is something that should be taken into account.

It is true that certain types of treatment have reduced in number, such as extractions and fillings, because they are not so necessary today. It is not because people are not taking up treatment, but because the general dental health of the population is improving. It is interesting to note that increased take-up has been more marked in some of the more expensive procedures—for example, crowns increased by 83 per cent. and bridges by 535 per cent. during the lifetime of the Government, yet those are among the most expensive treatments available up to the £150 maximum that we have already specified.

The provision that we are debating is a charge of £3·15 for a dental examination—75 per cent. of the actual payment made to the dentist. It fits in with the procedures introduced in April under which, instead of there being up to 100 per cent. charges—a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale—we fixed on 75 per cent. for all procedures up to a maximum of £150. That is not without significance because it means that even with these additional charges—if the House is minded to permit us to render them—more than 6 million of those who received 32 million courses of treatments last year would pay less than they did in April because of the adjustments. That is further evidence to convince anyone who needs persuading of the limited cost of the exercise to the patient.

Mr. Churchill: Can my hon. and learned Friend say whether the constituent whom I mentioned, who is single, self-employed and in his late 50s, without dependent children and in full-time employment, but earning only one quarter of average earnings, would qualify for free tests despite the fact that he is not on income support?

Mr. Mellor: If my hon. Friend's constituent is not on income support, I am afraid that he will not qualify unless he falls within the category of the nearly poor set out by my predecessor in the debate in April. With the greatest respect, hon. Members cannot expect Ministers to be able categorically to answer such questions at the Dispatch Box, although it is something that would be well worth checking.

One of the key questions that has arisen in the debate concerns what we are really trying to achieve in the dental service. It is quite clear what we are trying to achieve. We are trying to build on our unparalleled success—certainly since the 1970s—to ensure that when people visit dentists, they visit well-trained dentists capable of dealing with all their problems. Above all, we want more people to visit the dentist. We know that 50 per cent. do not. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) drew entirely the wrong conclusions from the figures that he gave for teenagers who were not turning up for dental checks. It is interesting to note that people do not turn up for dental checks even though they are free. It shows that the problem is altogether more difficult than the question whether people will be deterred by the £3 charge. People put plenty of other reasons for not going to the dentist before cost. There are all the old fears about pain, and doubts about whether the dentist will be any good. One crunches one's way through all the unsuitable foods denounced so regularly by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and one thinks that one's teeth are standing up to the strain all right and says to oneself, "Why bother to go to the dentist?"

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West) *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: Not for the moment.

That is why the focus of our attention is increasingly on prevention—on reaching out to people to find ways of persuading them to take better care of their teeth. That is why in this year alone we are spending £250,000 on an advertising campaign especially targeted on teenagers to try to persuade them to go for treatment.

Let me take up the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) about prevention campaigns. I wish I could have the attention of my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North, although I realise that it is difficult to hear against the background of the Opposition—[HON. MEMBERS: "Get on with it".] All the money—the £50 million that will no

[Mr. Mellor]

longer need to be paid out on dental examinations—will go back into the Health Service. I am not saying that every penny will go back into the dental service but there will be significantly expanded provision in dental services. My hon. Friend knows, from the figures that I have cited—an increase from under £300 million to over £800 million in eight years—I say that against the background of real achievement in the past—*[Interruption.]* One wonders where the Opposition get their facts when they ask about the expanded commitment. There are 22 per cent. more dentists in England and Wales than when the Labour Government left office 10 years ago. That is what we mean by expanded provision and a few jeers and caterwauls will not change that.

What do we seek to do to vindicate the commitment? We are looking to expand health education initiatives, to investigate means of improving the marketing of dental care and to increase the number of people who seek regular dental care. We shall be giving increased financial assistance towards the cost of establishing and equipping dental practices in those areas short of dentists. That should be of interest to Opposition Members who represent inner-city constituencies and who regularly say that they do not enjoy the level of provision available elsewhere in the country.

Mr. Battle *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: I shall just finish a point, and then I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman. We shall give more money to expand the number of places in the vocational training schemes designed to improve the skills of family dentists, and more money for postgraduate training courses and for a training allowance for attendance at approved courses, because these days not every dentist has to come from Australia.

Mr. Battle: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman explain to the House why not one of the professional bodies that deal with this matter agrees with the Government on this issue?

Mr. Mellor: It is called vested interest, and I thought that Opposition Members—*[Interruption.]*

Another point was very properly raised during the debate, which was the question of additional charges. I know that a number of hon. Members are concerned about this matter, and I say categorically that the Government have no plans to introduce further charges —*[Laughter.]* I should like to reiterate and quote from the words of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, when she was interviewed on the BBC nine o'clock news on 21 December 1987. She said:

> "We have in fact introduced one or two extra charges which we think people can well afford, but at the moment we are not talking about extra charges beyond those which we have introduced, and the Government have no plans to introduce further charges."

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and one or two other hon. Members asked what the difference was between charging for dental inspections and charging for people to have their breasts checked for cancer or to have a cervical check. Of course, I have said that there are no plans—nor would there be—to charge for such examinations. There is a difference in kind between those checks, which are a systematic search for disease, and dental checks, which are basically a check to see whether dental treatment is required. [Hon. Members: "Rubbish."] Oh yes, it has the fortuitous additional benefit that if a case of wider mouth disorder becomes apparent, a dentist can spot it. However, I say to hon. Members, who base their case on the detection of oral cancer, that it is idle to pretend that dental checks were ever intended or devised as a means of screening for oral cancer. They were not. That is categorically so.

I shall turn to the question of oral cancer which appears to me to be a significant point. Oral cancers are tragic and serious, and everybody wants to see them detected and, where possible, cured. Happily, it is a relatively rare condition in the United Kingdom, where there are some 1,500 cases of cancer of the mouth each year.

Mr. Hayes: It is 2,609 per year.

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend gives a false figure and I shall correct him later. There are 1,500 cases of cancer of the mouth each year. That means, spread as an average across all the dentists in the United Kingdom, that the average dentist would see two or three cases of oral cancer in his entire working life. The off-chance of picking out an oral cancer cannot be the basis for 100 per cent. free dental examinations.—[Hon. Members: "Withdraw."]

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Mr. Mellor *rose*——

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Mellor: In a recent survey the figures show that 40 per cent. of oral cancers are detected by dentists. That means that one dentist will see only one case of oral cancer every 20 years. I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes).

10 pm

Mr. Hayes: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for giving way. According to all the professional bodies, which until this moment have been accepted by the Department of Health, last year alone, 2,604 oral cancers were discovered, approximately 41 per cent. of which were presented to dentists. I am sure that my hon. and learned Friend will accept that one difficulty is that doctors are not properly trained to diagnose diseases of the oral cavity, whereas dentists are.

Mr. Mellor: If I may say so, that is a tendentious assertion.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Lords Amendments to the Health and Medicines Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Lords amendments again considered.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Mellor: When the bell intervened, Mr. Speaker, I was saying that my hon. Friend had quoted his article in the *Evening Standard* which, no doubt, has remunerated him well enough to enable him to pay for his next check-up —[Hon. Members: "Disgraceful."]

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hayes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman may make his point if the Minister gives way.

Mr. Mellor: I am teasing my hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Mellor: I purchased a copy of the *Evening Standard* to read my hon. Friend's article. The figure that my hon. Friend gives of 2,600 oral cancer cases includes cancer of the throat which is not detected by dentists. It is cancer of the mouth cavity that accounts for 1,500 cases—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I sense that we are coming to the end of this important debate.

Mr. Mellor: Later in his article, my hon. Friend states that "a mere £140 million" is what is at stake tonight. That does not——

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North) *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: No, I cannot give way now.

That does not seem a fair basis on which to decide how to cast one's vote in this debate because £140 million is a large amount of money in Health Service terms——

Mr. Hayes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend——

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is it a point of order?

Mr. Hayes: With respect to my hon. and learned Friend, he suggested that I profited from the article—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for me.

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Mellor: Of course, if it will make my hon. Friend feel any better about it, I will withdraw any such suggestion. I should like to deal with what he actually said——

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Why do you not make the Minister withdraw that comment?

Mr. Speaker: Because I am not responsible for what is said, provided that it is in order. It may have been in bad taste, but it was in order.

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend wrote:

"The cost of retaining the free dental and sight check is a mere £140 million".

No hon. Member should vote tonight under any illusion, because £140 million is a great deal of money in NHS terms. I advise my hon. Friend that the total cost of all the medical services offered by the district health authority which contains his constituency amounted last year to £41·7 million. That buys an awful lot of treatment.

We shall be concerned later tonight with the treatment of eye disease. I attended the opening, by Her Majesty the Queen, of the brand new, rebuilt Moorfields eye hospital last week. That cost £15 million, only one tenth of the mere £140 million of which my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow spoke. We want to reduce the number of patients on the waiting lists. For £25 million last year, we did over 100,000 more in-patient operations—*[Interruption.]*—and we shall do more than that next time. I wish that Opposition Members would be quiet for just a few minutes—*[Interruption.]*—and I shall finish a great deal sooner. It comes down to a judgment whether, in this day and age, when the man on average wages is 30 per cent. better off than he was 10 years ago, we think that £3·15 once or twice a year will be a major disincentive to people to go to the dentist when over 20 million people will be exempted from these charges.

When my right hon. and learned Friend took over the Department, it was open to him to say that he thought that these charges were misconceived. He and I looked at the matter and concluded that what we want to do for the Health Service lies in far more vital areas than preserving an increasingly archaic rule in a world where 60 per cent. of the population is well able to make that payment.

I urge my hon. Friends to bear in mind when they go into the Lobby tonight that the only consequence of the Government failing to carry this measure would be our having to come back with proposals that they would find more unpalatable. It is hardly possible to think of any less damaging way of raising money to make our Health Service even better than to introduce these charges.

This is a great day for the National Health Service, when over £2 billion of extra resources have been won for the service. It will be an even better day for the service if the decision made in the House of Lords is reversed tonight and I therefore urge the House to reverse that decision.

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 300, Noes 284.

Division No. 462] **[10.07 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James

Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, David
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Colvin, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.

Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fry, Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
McCusker, Harold
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudd, David
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neillst, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Sir Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Adam Ingram.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 12

THE DENTAL ESTIMATES BOARD AND THE SCOTTISH DENTAL ESTIMATES BOARD—CHANGE OF NAME AND EXTENSION OF FUNCTIONS

Lords amendment: No. 21, in page 13, line 3, leave out from first "to" to end of line 6 and insert

"carry on any such additional activity relating to the provision of general dental services as may be prescribed and, without prejudice to the generality of this subsection, to conduct or commission surveys or other research relating to the provision of such services."

Mrs. Currie: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This technical amendment was accepted in Committee in another place. It ensures that the wording of subsection (3)(b)(1C) is sufficiently wide to allow sensible research activity on the general dental services to be undertaken by dental estimates boards. The amendment clarifies the position and removes any unintended inflexibility.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 13

GENERAL OPHTHALMIC SERVICES AND OPTICAL APPLIANCES

Lords amendment: No. 22, in page 13, line 18, leave out subsection (1).

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following:

Amendments (a) to (f) to Lords amendment No. 22.

Lords amendment No. 23.

Amendments (a) and (b) to Lords amendment No. 22.

Lords amendment No. 26.

Amendments (a) to (f) to Lords amendment No. 26.

I remind the House that privilege is involved in these amendments.

Mr. Clarke: Lords amendment No. 22 deals with the question of whether we should introduce charges for eye tests as a contribution towards the Health Service's rising expenditure.

We have just had a rather closer vote than those to which we are accustomed—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Right hon. and hon. Members who remain beyond the Bar must be quiet or should enter the Chamber.

Mr. Clarke: There is a certain degree of excitement in the House, and we have just had a very rousing winding-up speech from my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Department of Health. We have had some exchanges with our own right hon. and hon. Friends as well as with Opposition Members on exactly what the divisions are about this evening.

We are engaged in a very serious matter that has considerable consequences for the Health Service. I listened to a good part of the last debate. I heard, for example, my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan), a distinguished former Minister of Health and a personal friend of mine, speak extremely eloquently about the problems of oral cancer. He touched on the subject of eyesight and spoke also about glaucoma. I accept entirely the sincerity with which he spoke. I also know that he realises that both my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State and myself are equally concerned about the problems of oral cancer and glaucoma.—*[Interruption.]* Of course we are. The suggestion that we are oblivious to those matters has arisen. In the previous debate, there was a difference between us as to whether a £3·15 charge every six months will deter anybody from examinations that might in a few cases give rise to the discovery of oral cancer.

What also runs behind this debate are the finances of the National Health Service for next year. What happens as one progresses in a debate of this kind is that everyone rather warms to his theme. Certainly I find myself warming to my theme and becoming ever more convinced of my case. I suspect that some of my right hon. and hon. Friends and Opposition Members are growing ever more convinced of theirs.

The House has just given us a rather close run thing that might have cost the Health Service £50 million in the coming year. I find it ironic and perverse that on a day when we have provided over £2 billion more for the Health Service over and above last year's spending, and over and above last year's settlement, the Labour party is voting to take funds out of the Health Service and to try to knibble away at that increased expenditure. My hon. and learned Friend was quite correct in saying in the previous debate that hon. Members on both sides of the House spoke of £50 million as though it were a small sum, although at least one of my hon. Friends was talking about more than the complete budget of his district health authority. Both my hon. and learned Friend the Minister and I gave examples of the kind of treatment that can be provided out of such sums.

10.30 pm

I respect the sincerity of hon. Members of both sides, but they are not addressing themselves to the fact that by voting as they do they are denying patients throughout the country the prospect of treatment. In this debate, no doubt I shall be told that we are—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members not to address remarks to me, or to anyone else, from a sedentary position.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Get to the business.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member says, "Get to the business." I am getting to the business of the £70 million against which he is about to vote and which will deprive people in Workington and elsewhere of an expansion in services that might otherwise take place. That is highly relevant to the next debate, and he and others should bear it in mind.

I make no apologies for reminding the House of that background. It is against that background that I shall listen again to the arguments that will be adduced about the possibility of undetected glaucoma if we do not vote against the prospect of the most prosperous 60 per cent. of the population—those who do not fall into the exempt categories—facing a horrendous bill of up to £10 every two or three years. *[Interruption.]* Yes, I am angry, because we are facing—*[Interruption.]* The Labour party is again

being irresponsible about health charges. If the House becomes irresponsible, we shall be £70 million light for the Health Service and treatment expansion next year.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State is not giving way.

Mr. Clarke: I may give way in a bit, but I will not be interrupted from a sitting position by the hon. Member for Workington and then give way to him two minutes later.

The issue in this debate will turn on whether people will be deterred from going to the optician and cases of glaucoma will not be detected if we introduce the charges that we are suggesting for the sight test. That is the nub of the debate. Before we launch into long descriptions of the consequence for eye disease, we must first ask how many people, if any, will be deterred from going to the optician by the prospect—and it is no more than a prospect—that many opticians will charge £10 or thereabouts.

I said when I spoke about dental charges that we had heard the argument about deterrence year in and year out for more than 10 years, every time we raised the charges. We have had exactly the same experience with the optical services. But, as many hon. Members will remember, we had a more serious debate about optical services about four years ago when we took the dispensing service out of the NHS and introduced the voucher scheme. We made significant changes in the way in which the NHS was financed.

At that time exactly the same arguments were adduced. We were told that there would be undetected disease and sight problems. I recall those debates quite well. I have seen briefing quoting some of the comments that I made in that debate. I have re-read the debate. The then spokesman for the Labour party, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), said on 20 December 1983:

"The result for the public will be eye strain and headaches at best. At worst it will be the inability to see clearly so that they are at risk in their work, a hazard in the road or otherwise may injure themselves".—[*Official Report*, 20 December 1983; Vol. 51, c. 306.]

We heard all the stories of glaucoma, we heard about bus drivers driving into lamp posts and how the price of spectacles would soar as we privatised the service.

The evidence supports the arguments which I used before and which go to the root of the debate. We have heard this cry of wolf before. It did not happen. The changes that we made did not result in fewer visits to the optician. In fact, competition made spectacle prices more reasonable and the choice to the consumer was extended. According to the most recent survey that I have, the United Kingdom's retail sale of spectacles increased by about 10 per cent. in the first two years alone—from 1984 to 1986.

Therefore, all those arguments proved to be false. Greater use is being made of the optical services than was made before we made the changes which were opposed on precisely the same grounds as our proposals are being opposed today at a threatened cost to the National Health Service of £70 million.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend realise that this House did away with free eye tests before? Before we had the National Health Service, opticians gave free eye tests. At the moment the taxpayer pays for eye tests. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that we are likely to get free eye tests again because of economic and commercial pressures?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. I shall turn to his point in a moment.

The people who campaign against us now campaigned against us four years ago. They are better off than they were then, although at the time they feared that they would be made poorer. The public are making more use of the optical services than they did then.

We are now discussing the idea that the six out of 10 of the population who are not exempt will be deterred by having to pay £10, typically about every two or three years. I shall not rehearse all the arguments I used about dental examinations as to why I think that that is contrary to common sense as well as the evidence.

I keep being challenged, "Who in the profession agrees with you?". I have never found that large numbers of turkeys rush forward before Christmas, but I have found some support from sensible journals. I propose to assist the House by reading from the column known as Nemo which, as hon. Members who follow optical matters will know, appears in *Optician* of 1 January 1988. It deals directly with the core of the debate—whether people will go to the optician with less frequency because of the charges. I shall read from Nemo because I have been challenged to produce support from people within optics —having found one, I shall read it—*[Interruption.]* As my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) said, if the House agrees with their Lordships, opticians expect to continue to be paid by the taxpayer for a service which otherwise they would provide free. There is no doubt as to who the beneficiaries will be if we agree with their Lordships in the amendment.

Optician said:

"if it is to have any effect in the place where it matters, the case against the Government's proposals needs to be presented in well reasoned and dispassionate terms, avoiding as far as possible dire predictions and the sort of sweeping and unsubstantiated allegations normally resorted to on such occasions. What reason is there for supposing that to ask people to pay for something previously provided free will cause them to lose interest in the particular goods or services, particularly where their health is concerned? To incline to this view is surely to underestimate the intelligence and sense of responsibility of the man in the street."

The audience of this journalist are opticians.

"Is it really asking too much to require persons in work or who are otherwise able to pay, to fork out, say, £10 for a sight test every two years? Let us retain a sense of proportion; this represents no more than the cost of a couple of modest rounds of drinks, or a single restaurant meal.

Contrary to what the pundits would have us believe, one tends to learn more from the experience of history. Those who are old enough, for example, will recall how the imposition of the first NHS charges in the early 1950s was interpreted by the Cassandras as the death knell for opticians. The reality, of course, was that people still had need of spectacles—and have demonstrated their willingness to pay for them to an ever-increasing extent over the years.

The end of NHS dispensing in 1985"——

Mr. Canavan: Reading.

Mr. Clarke: Of course I am reading—I am quoting. The hon. Member last emerged in the Chamber to chant in a similar way at one of my hon. Friends. I trust that he will not continue to do that throughout the debate. I have already told one of his hon. Friends that a lot of money for the Health Service is at stake.

"The end of NHS dispensing in 1985"——

Mr. Canavan: Reading.

Mr. Clarke: I am quoting.
"The end of NHS dispensing in 1985"——

Mr. Canavan: Reading.

Mr. Clarke: —
"proved a further testing time"——

Mr. Canavan: Reading.

Mr. Clarke: —
"for the prophets of doom,"——

Mr. Canavan: Reading.

Mr. Clarke: —
"when, contrary to all predictions, little or no falling off in public demand"——

Mr. Canavan: Reading.

Mr. Clarke: —
"for opticians' services occurred following"——

Mr. Canavan: Reading.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Clarke:—
"the ending of their sales monopoly. On this evidence there seems little to fear regarding the public's longterm willingness"——

Mr. Canavan: Reading.

Mr. Clarke:—
"to pay reasonable sums also for sight tests."

Mr. Churchill *rose*——

Dame Jill Knight *rose*——

Mr. Clarke:—
"The real problem for the ophthalmic optician will be to try to ensure"——

Mr. Canavan: Reading.

Mr. Clarke:—
"that his is the chosen establishment for this purpose, and not that of a competitor."

Mr. Churchill *rose*——

Dame Jill Knight *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us have all the points of order together then.

Dame Jill Knight: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is my right hon. and learned Friend not perfectly entitled to read a quotation if that is what he wants to do? I for one am anxious to hear what he says.

Mr. Speaker: The whole House is anxious to get on with this debate.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. She and I address ourselves seriously to this issue. I do not think that people outside will be very pleased to hear that we are talking about this sum of money for health care against a background of din from the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan), who has just joined us.

I have quoted *Optician*, setting out in reasonable terms, which I shall not attempt to repeat or embellish, the underlying case of people who follow the affairs of the optical world much more than most hon. Members and their fears on costs. We must ask whether opticians will impose a charge which will deter the six out of 10 of the population who are not exempt from charges.

How much will opticians charge? One proposition is that they will continue to charge what they at present charge the NHS, which is about £10. The Bill would end the provision of an NHS test for non-exempt people. Opticians will charge what they decide to charge. If the Government are successful in this Division, it will be for opticians to determine what, if anything, is charged to their customers or patients.

Much of the debate, in this and the other place, has been founded on the proposition that all opticians will continue to charge the equivalent of the NHS fee that they now get for the free sight test which they offer to everyone. Some of my hon. Friends who know just as much about the optical profession as I do disagree with me. This is a matter of opinion and judgment. I do not believe that all opticians will maintain a charge for a sight test which is equivalent to the present NHS fee that they receive, for the same reason that the cost of spectacles did not soar when we withdrew NHS glasses four years ago. Competition —a legitimate activity for professional people, as for others—will oblige opticians to offer a charge for optical tests—if they charge at all.

10.45 pm

I ask the House to consider the other argument against me. I know that I shall hear this point: "No, we have asked all the opticians and they all say that they will carry on charging what they get at the moment from the NHS. That will deter the clientele. We shall sit around and watch the eye disease develop which would otherwise have been detected." Does that mean that these commercial men—all professional men are business men as well as qualified people—will solemnly all set the same fee, at a level which deters customers from coming over the threshold of their shops? They will all sit around watching their incomes drop as fewer patients come in—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: Before my hon. Friend again starts telling me that this is peanuts—about four and a half times the budget of his health authority—let me say that I have history on my side. I told the House four years ago that I did not believe those people then, and I was right. Frankly, I do not believe them now.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): My right hon. and learned Friend is spending a good deal of time in likening the proposed charges to past examples. Does he agree that there is a fundamental difference in one area to which he has not so far directed his attention? Those of us who are concerned about the Government's proposal are not just concentrating on the poor, as perhaps we did in the past. We are looking at people who, for no other reason than that they are over a certain age, begin to develop sight defects. If there is a deterrent to those people—a large number of whom will not fall within the category of poor—and they do not seek an eye test, the savings on which my right hon. and learned Friend concentrates will be swamped by the additional resources that will have to be devoted to diseases if and when they arise.

Mr. Clarke: I respect my hon. Friend's views. He is returning to the key of the argument. He asserts, contrary

to what I have just said, that these charges will continue to be levied, despite the competitive pressures on opticians —

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): Of course they will.

Mr. Clarke: I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman spoke when we last talked about opticians, four years ago.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) is entitled to disagree with me. He disagrees with my instinct, my opinion, that opticians will not maintain eye test charges for very long. If they do not maintain eye test charges, my hon. Friend's fears will be ill-founded, as he will concede. He says that, if opticians maintain some eye test charges, that will deter the elderly in particular. I am sure that he agrees that not all pensioners fall into the poor category, but I agree that the older one becomes, the more one is prone to glaucoma.

I concede that I may be wrong in my opinion that the charge for the eye test will steadily disappear, but that is my strong personal opinion. Let us imagine that some charges are maintained at anything up to about £10, which is what opticians get for the NHS test now. We can then examine what I first anticipated would happen. Every couple of years or so, people might face the prospect of having to go to the opticians. At the moment, people who go to opticians usually expect to pay for their spectacles, if they are not exempt. They are right to do so. The reason why people usually go to the opticians is that they are not seeing as well as they used to, or need to have their prescriptions updated. Three out of four people who go for a sight test wind up acquiring spectacles. And they pay for them. The charges they pay for the glasses are considerably higher than any possible deterrent arising from these charges.

We have found since privatisation that people are not deterred, as I have already said, by the prospect of going through the voucher scheme or paying for themselves. NHS voucher customers who qualify for help have in practice been willing to pay more than their vouchers for the spectacles of their preference. Even though such people are, by definition, of modest means, it is not surprising that they are willing to top up their NHS vouchers to pay for what is not a huge or recurrent item of expenditure. Most pay now; most will in future.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the competitive pressure on opticians will depend entirely on where they are—that is, on whether they are in major town centres or small towns?

Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that this is not a matter of creating a further disincentive to those who already use eye tests? Every Government Minister accepts and preaches that there is not enough take-up of screening of all kinds, and that we should encourage more take-up.

In the context of the remarks made earlier this evening by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, what is the real difference between screening for cancer and screening for eye ailments and other diseases?

Mr. Clarke: I shall deal first with the argument that competition may not occur everywhere. My hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) pointed out in conversation with me that competitive pressures may not exist in rural areas. But, even in rural areas, I cannot believe that opticians will be too far away from other opticians for such pressures not to exist. Although they may have a slightly protected market, they will not sustain their position if it is clear to their rural customers that in nearby towns such as Leeds or Hull there are no charges for a test. *[Interruption.]* Already one can see those little signs in the windows of opticians' premises saying, "Free NHS tests here". I do not criticise opticians for that: it is a way of getting customers across the threshold to sell them spectacles, if it turns out on examination that they need a prescription.

Secondly, my hon. Friend mentioned screening tests. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State was right to challenge the direct comparison with full-blooded screening. We are not talking about cervical cancer or breast cancer screening. Both those tests are expressly designed to show whether the first signs of a particular condition are present. We are discussing average patients going for eye tests to see whether they need spectacles, or going to the dentist to see whether they need treatment —*[Interruption.]* What I have said is correct. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members will have an opportunity to participate later in the debate, but not by intervening in this way.

Mr. Clarke: What happens—and neither I nor my hon. and learned Friend denies this—is that it gives an opportunity to someone who is examining for a particular purpose to detect the first signs of other diseases. However, it is not a specific screening test. The idea that eye tests were invented for the purpose of detecting glaucoma is nonsense. This Government introduced and financed breast cancer screening to detect avoidable disease and breast cancer in women. The eye tests merely offer an opportunity for people to detect glaucoma.

Of course, we must not take risks. Most of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members have listened patiently while I have explained why I do not agree that patients will be deterred, nor even convinced, that the charges will be maintained. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) and others ask, "Why take the risk?" My hon. Friend is obviously worried about the risk of glaucoma going undetected if my judgment, based on experience of optical charges, turns out to be wrong. This measure has been through this House several times and I and my hon. Friends have gone to great lengths to cover that risk. I have already said that it is my opinion that no great risk exists and that people will not be deterred from having eye tests.

I began my speech by saying that I am no more anxious to have avoidable disease in this country than is my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East or any other hon. Member. At earlier stages we have made concessions that provide a free NHS eye test for those groups most at risk. Glaucoma is estimated to affect about 1 to 2 per cent. of those over the age of 40, a proportion of whom do not wear glasses. There is a much higher risk among particular people as there is a hereditary element in the condition of glaucoma. People of 40 or over who are the siblings and children of the glaucoma patient are at 10 times greater risk of developing the condition than those who are not so related. That is why my right hon. Friend the Chancellor

[Mr. Clarke]

of the Duchy of Lancaster, then the Minister for Health, proposed to retain the free NHS eye test for that group, which is most at risk.

We have already proposed to retain the free test for those suffering from diabetes. Contrary to what I believe to be necessary, there have been concessions, in case we are proved to be wrong, to cover that section of the population most at risk. Yet, having gone to such lengths, hon. Members now say, "No, there must be a free eye test for everyone in this Chamber and everyone in the high income groups, including those in the higher tax bands, in case the opticians continue to charge."

I believe that the practical effect of these proposals is that the opticians will continue to have an income from the NHS that they would not otherwise get. Most important, the NHS—on the night of the day when my right hon. Friend has given a great deal more money to it—will have to take £70 million out of its planned expenditure if this amendment is not carried.

Mr. Hayes: I am sort of grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend. He said that he was taking a risk—it is more like backing a whippet with a wooden leg. Some 70 per cent. of optometrists' income comes from the sight test. What will happen to the other 30 per cent.? It will be loaded on to the price of spectacles and contact lenses.

Mr. Clarke: I invite my hon. Friend to raise the subject of optometrists' incomes in his speech, and I shall deal with it when I reply to the debate. That is what I think to be at risk if their Lordships' decision is overturned by this House. I think that the most competitive optometrists, the best opticians, those who continue to build on the success of the past four years when there has been a growth in spectacle sales, will do very well.

Mr. Hayes: No.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend obviously knows some less competitive optometrists who rather like the idea that the NHS should continue to pay them £10 a time for everybody who comes through the door to whom they give a sight test. If he wishes to pursue that argument further —which he did not set out in his *Evening Standard* argument—my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State will be only too anxious to give him as good as he gets in the course of the exchange.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey) *rose*——

11 pm

Mr. Clarke: This must be the last intervention because I wish to conclude my remarks.

Sir Giles Shaw: Will my right hon. and learned Friend clarify the position of a glaucoma test in the NHS testing procedure? Is there no requirement for such a test to be conducted when a person goes for a normal NHS sight test? Is there any way in which it can be enforced so that when we have—if my right hon. Friend's argument is persuasive—a £10 charge for it, at least the public will know that the test for that disease will be a part of the NHS eye test?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend raises a serious point. I believe that the bulk of responsible optometrists and opticians give a full sight test—*[Interruption.]*—and we have the powers to specify the extent to which the patients and customers are tested. We shall look at the necessity to use them if we find that people are giving quick sight tests and not screening for glaucoma. *[Interruption.]* Labour Members are disappointed by that, it seems. They have come to life again, their Scottish hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) having gone back to where he came from prior to joining us for our discussion. What I said is important and is relevant to the detection and treatment of glaucoma.

Most of the arguments that we are about to hear in this debate, I anticipate—though I shall listen, as ever, with an open mind—will not touch on the detection and treatment of glaucoma. If some passion is to enter the debate, let us ensure that in making a judgment in the next hour or two we do not put at risk £70 million which I and my hon. Friends want to put to use in the NHS, including in the optical services.

Rebellion requires more courage and conviction than routine opposition. Tonight Labour Members are indulging in routine opposition. When my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State teased them about whether they would like to see the end of all health charges, a big cheer came from them. Apparently they are saying that they would abolish all health charges. That would mean huge expenditure for no benefit to the patients. It also means that they are committing themselves to a policy which, as we know perfectly well, they would never implement if they ever got to power.

If we succeed in overturning this Lords amendment, I do not believe that any future Labour Government will ever withdraw this charge for the optical examination or will bring it back—because I do not think there will be a charge —for the sake of paying the opticians a fee, which by then will have disappeared or be very cheap indeed by the forces of competition.

Labour Members are being opportunistic. They are taking advantage of an occasion when my hon. Friends are concerned about eye disease. There are serious issues at stake, such as the future of the Health Service, its expanded services next year and keeping the full benefit of the £2·2 billion that we have put in. I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote to ensure that we keep the full benefit of all that extra money.

Mr. Robin Cook: It would be churlish of me to begin without congratulating the Secretary of State on having found one medical view in support of his proposal, albeit one who felt compelled to write anonymously.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that he believed that he was absolutely right—those were his words—in the views he expressed in the House on 20 December 1983, when we last debated this matter. Let me remind the Secretary of State of what he said in the speech in which his remarks were "absolutely right". He said:

"We are keeping in the NHS what should be kept there—free sight tests for everyone, regardless of need."—*[Official Report,* 20 December 1983; Vol. 51, c. 362.]

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has got round to the House of Commons brief; I trust that he has also looked at the copy of *Hansard* from which that quotation is taken. Before he comes to the quotations from my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Social Services, I would point out that when the quotations are taken in context it is clear that we were describing the then

measure and the then measure kept the eye test in the National Health Service. The charge for it was not at issue in the explanation of the deregulation. [*Interruption.*] The hon. Gentleman has not read *Hansard*. [*Interruption.*] I am merely asking hon. Members to stop quoting selectively. If the hon. Gentleman reads the debates in March 1983 he will find that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) helpfully intervened to underline the point that I made in Committee. I described the arrangements as being in place for the time being, and my remarks are on record. There is no inconsistency in what we are saying today.

Mr. Cook: It was as well that we let the Secretary of State intervene, and continue for as long as he did. I listened with great care to his concluding remarks. He said that he had made it clear—of course, he is quite right—that his commitment to free sight tests was "for the time being". Those are precisely the words that he used earlier when he said that this Government had no plans to introduce charges for cervical cancer smears, breast cancer examinations or visits to the doctor. That, too, was "for the time being." We now have a clear definition of what "for the time being" means: it is a period of four to five years at the outside.

The Secretary of State is perfectly entitled to change his mind. It is open to any hon. Member to do so. However, I put it to him that some people who heard what he said in the debate in 1983 have not changed their minds and believe that free sight testing ought to remain in the NHS. If I may say so—as one colleague to another—the Secretary of State is not entitled to get angry with those who have not changed their mind with the same facility as he has. There are serious and deeply held views on sight tests on both sides of the House and those views will not be changed by a display of ill temper.

All the arguments of principle in the previous debate can be carried forward into this second debate. The House will be relieved to hear that I do not propose to repeat those arguments. However, I firmly believe that the case against charges applies with even greater force to the eye test.

There are two reasons for that. The first is the nature of the examination. In preparation for the debate, I went for an eye examination. Some hon. Members may know that, having observed photographs which perhaps do not show me at my best. Any hon. Member who has been through the test must know that it is misleading to describe it as a sight test. It is a full examination of the eye. The eye is the one part of the body behind which one can look without cutting it open. It is a window through which one can see not just the ocular system but the circulatory system and the immediately adjacent part of the brain. That has been admitted by the Secretary of State and the Government, who have tabled an amendment seeking to exempt those suspected of suffering from glaucoma and diabetes. That is a very clear indication of the fact that the eye examination is an effective way of screening for those very serious diseases.

Other diseases may also be detected. Twice as many cases of hypertension as cases of diabetes are detected through the eye examination. Since the debate began a year ago, when the Government first floated their proposals, my hon. Friends the Members for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran), for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) and for Wigan (Mr. Stott) have all been visited by constituents who have made it plain that their lives had been saved by a routine eye examination in which a serious tumour requiring urgent operation had been detected. It is not an isolated and rare occurrence; one in 12 eye examinations results in a medical referral. That is 1 million cases a year. To put it another way, three out of four cases of glaucoma are first detected during eye examinations. Those matters are not in dispute. The Green Paper said that sight tests can identify health problems as well as a need for spectacles. Therefore, it is important that skilled sight testing should remain readily available. That is important.

As I understand the Government's case, they do not deny the importance and the significance of the eye examination. What the Secretary of State has argued is that, yes, eye examinations are important, but nobody will be deterred if we take away the fee that we pay to optometrists and they in turn introduce a charge. I find it curious that a Government as committed as this Government are to market forces—in all other areas holding that the price signal is effective—should in the solitary case of health charges suspend the law of market economics and say that the price signal does not deter. It is nonsense on stilts for them to sustain that no one would be deterred by "a tenner a test".

I listened with interest to the Secretary of State when he talked about how much the test would cost. I believe that he would agree that one could fairly sum up his comments by saying that, after this measure has been passed, we shall have no control over what the charge might be. We are abandoning the charge to the optometrists. In a sense, this debate is even worse than the previous one, because at least then we knew how much the charge would be. On this occasion, the Secretary of State maintains that the charge could be less than £10. Equally, it could be more than £10. I am bound to say that every optometrist I have met during the past year has made the obvious and simple observation that he is likely to have fewer people coming forward and, if he is to sustain the same amount of income, he will have to charge more than £10 a test.

We now have evidence—which was not available on Report—of what happens when the fee is withdrawn and it is left to the market to decide. It is sufficiently dramatic to justify a retrial. That evidence comes from the state of Alberta. In August 1987 the state eliminated free eye tests by withdrawing them from state insurance. The result was so disastrous that it brought back free eye tests within 11 months. Lord Skelmersdale was unfortunately caught adrift when the other place debated this measure, and he was unwise enough to say that the report of things going wrong in Alberta was merely anecdotal. He was unaware that in the same month in which he referred to those difficulties as being anecdotal the government of Alberta had been so convinced by the reality of its experience that it was bringing back free sight tests. The abolition of free sight tests in Alberta did not reduce examination charges, but resulted in charging by optometrists. It is claimed that abolition produced a drop of 30 per cent. in the number of people presenting themselves for eye examination. Another consequence was that there was a sharp increase in the number of people being referred to eye hospitals for a more expensive eye examination.

That brings me to the second reason why on this issue the case against charges is stronger. The Secretary of State repeatedly told us that he was doing this for the money and, to be fair to him, he made no bones about that. In that spirit of candour, I will respond by saying that he will

[Mr. Cook]

get more money by charging for dental examination, but, in so doing, he will cause great damage to the teeth of the people of this nation—damage which is not worth £49 million. I accept that he will get the money from dental examination fees. I do not believe for one moment that he will find himself in pocket as a result of abolishing free eye tests. He will not get any money from this perverse measure and I will give two reasons why that is so.

11.15 pm

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): The House is listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman's arguments. I am certainly trying to do so. Is it not wrong to talk about "free" eye tests? Surely what we are arguing about—this is a perfectly reasonable argument—are eye tests that are provided by the generality of taxpayers—they are certainly not free—and eye tests provided by a free and competitive market. Is it not our experience in most aspects of life that the operation of a free market where there has never been one before, which is what there will be if this measure is agreed, will serve the public better?

Mr. Cook: I have some sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's point. Ultimately the eye test is not free. Ultimately it has to be paid for by somebody. At present, it is paid for by the taxpayer. What I find curious about the Secretary of State's argument is that he seemed to have invented the free sight test for which the taxpayer would not pay and nor would anybody else. Plainly, that does not stand to reason. The Secretary of State cannot save £90 million unless somebody else pays for it.

I predict, with confidence, that the Secretary of State will not save that sum, for two reasons. The first is a short-term reason. Our eye hospitals will be swamped by references from general practitioners who will no longer be able to refer their patients to optometrists for free examinations. They will be able to secure free tests for their patients only by referring them to an eye hospital. That is what many general practitioners will do. The Secretary of State has come up with a proposal which gives everybody an incentive to go for their eye examination to the one place where it costs the right hon. and learned Gentleman the most to pay for it and to avoid the optometrist round the corner, where it would cost him least to pay for it.

The long-term reason why I do not believe that there will be any savings from this proposal is even more disturbing. As a result of the removal of the free sight test there will be a growing burden on the Health Service from people with serious medical conditions which will not now be detected until they are at an advanced stage.

It is possible to extrapolate from the experience of Alberta what that could mean for primary care in Britain. There are 12 million eye examinations in Britain every year; 70 per cent. will now be liable for a charge—that is 8·5 million. If 30 per cent. of those cases in Britain are deterred by a charge—as happened in Alberta—2·5 million people will not go for an eye examination. If the instances of glaucoma among that 2·5 million is the same as that for the population as a whole, we will miss 10,000 cases of glaucoma annually. We may miss another 10,000 cases of diabetic retinopathy. Glaucoma cannot be reversed. It can be arrested, but when it has proceeded to too advanced a stage, it cannot be reversed. When it is found too late, the sufferers are going blind.

That is not just a personal tragedy for the people concerned. If I may put it in terms to which the Treasury can relate, it will also be expensive for the NHS. Every blind person costs the state £3,500 per year in added services. The annual cost for 10,000 cases of glaucoma which are not detected in time would wipe out half the savings that the Secretary of State hopes to achieve by abolishing the free sight test. He is not making a saving. He is taking on an expensive commitment to future care. The truth is that the free eye test is not a burden; it is a bargain. Only those who can see only the bottom line on costs or those who overlook the importance of the sound principle that preventive screening should be free can overlook the excellent cost benefit that the free eye test represents.

I come now to the heart of the matter. In the past few days, we have seen high drama on whether the Secretary of State will succeed in facing down his hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) and for Harlow (Mr. Hayes). Twice in one night the Secretary of State has taken on not only the Opposition but a large wing of his Back Benches. It is inconceivable that any man so urbane and well-rounded as the Secretary of State would go to all this trouble for the modest sum that he hopes to save. It is impossible that a man of his intelligence even believes that he will save any money from this proposal.

No Minister goes to all that trouble over such a doubtful prospect, but he may go to it for the sake of principle. I fear that the reason why the Secretary of State is taking on all-comers over this issue is the principle that, if the House swallows this proposal, it will swallow the principle of charges for any form of primary care treatment. All that is left is to decide what comes next—charges for a visit to the doctor, for cervical smears and for breast screening.

I end by coming to the point where Opposition Members differ from the dissenters on the Conservative Back Benches. We agree with them in opposing the proposal because it will be deeply damaging to the nation's health, but we also oppose it on grounds of principle, because we are committed to a Health Service open to all and free at the time people need it. It is in defence of that principle that we shall vote against the Government.

Mr. John Marshall: Much of what we have heard today has been predictable. Whenever the Labour party is in opposition and Health Service charges are mentioned, Labour Members have a knee-jerk reaction. In 1964, the Labour party promised to abolish prescription charges. By 1970, prescription charges had not been abolished, but were higher than they were in 1964. In 1974, the Labour party campaigned on a promise of abolishing prescription charges. By 1979, they still existed. I am willing to wager that, whatever they have said tonight, Labour Members will campaign in election after election promising to abolish these charges and then doing nothing about it, if they ever, by some mischance, find themselves in government. They have led the country down that path before, making promises and then not keeping them, and that is what they would do about these charges.

Much of the discussion about these charges is pure synthetic indignation. A charge of £10 to be met every second year is equivalent to giving up two cigarettes a week; how much better it would be for people's health if they gave up the whole lot rather than just two a week. Can people really say that no one can afford a charge of £10

every second year when the average industrial wage is £224? When I asked the Liberal party spokesman, the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn), about this, he said that there were people below the average industrial wage. Of course there are, but those who are poor and those with low incomes will not be paying prescription charges.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Marshall: No, I shall not give way. I promised to be brief and I shall be.

We are discussing a charge that will raise £70 million at a time when this country spends £2,458 million a year on betting and gaming. Are we saying that a society that can afford to spend that amount of money on betting and gaming cannot afford to spend £70 million on eye tests?

We are told that the charge will definitely be £10. We even had the absurd suggestion from the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) that, because some people might not have a test, the opticians' reaction would be to put up the price, but he confessed to some doubts about market economics. I can assure him that there is no market place in the world where the supplier of a service reacts to a reduced demand by putting up the price. If he were to take a first-year course in elementary economics, he would be told that a reduction in demand leads to a reduction in price. Wherever one goes in our towns and cities, one sees competition among opticians in the main high streets. I am willing to wager that, when these charges are introduced, we shall find an optician in every town offering a free National Health eye test. As soon as one optician takes that step, the optician down the road will take it. Competition will ensure that the £10 charge will not increase, as Labour Members suggest, but decrease.

We must consider the proposed charges as part of a package that will lead to better primary health care and a better Health Service. We must ask ourselves whether it is right that those who can afford to pay a modest charge should receive a free service.

Mr. Fry: My hon. Friend is saying that those who can afford to pay should pay. I have much sympathy for that view, but has he considered the position of pensioners who do not pay income tax and receive no benefit from the state apart from their basic state pension? They will not be able to afford a charge of £10. What will be their position?

Mr. Marshall: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made it clear this afternoon that someone who is in receipt of the basic pension will be in a better position than my hon. Friend imagines. Those who take a Rip Van Winkle view of life, suggesting that every pensioner has merely a basic pension and that there should be free eye tests for all those of pensionable age, are suggesting that Sir Robin Day, for example, should be given the right to enjoy a free eye test. What would people do to try to get on "Any Questions" on a Thursday night? It is surely not a correct sense of social priority to seek to provide free eye tests for Sir Robin Day at the expense of the general body of taxpayers, many of whom earn much less than he does. It is much better to target those who can afford to pay so that the Health Service can be improved. Do we want a better Health Service? Of course we do. That is why I shall support the Government and vote for the charges.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): For the past three hours I have been worried by the patronising, almost self-congratulatory and arrogant way in which the Secretary of State, the Minister of State and their supporters have dealt with the key principle of preventive medicine. The argument on principle is not confined to the proposed charges, and I welcome the fact that there is common agreement on both sides of the House that these charges foreshadow what the Government have set out in a secret manifesto that they will seek to implement during their present term of office or during the next one if, God help us, they win the next general election.

I shall deal with the issue in a way that is different from the one that has been followed by those who have preceded me. We have heard politicians arguing eloquently along the lines that are set out in prepared briefs. I shall advance an argument from the other side of the wall. I have had personal experience of the results that stem from the inability to receive preventive medicine in time to prevent blindness.

During the 1970s, when I visited the House to see my father, who was then the hon. Member for Dumbarton, Central, I took ill. I was sent to Moorfields eye hospital, where it was found that I was suffering from Eels disease. For the following two years I was entirely blind in my left eye. I could see nothing apart from the light and colour that was visible through my right eye. Eels disease is especially nasty when it is contracted by men and women in middle age and pensionable age.

I was struck down with Eels disease in my mid-20s. Over two years I underwent 19 operations at Moorfields, some of which were of an extensive and complicated nature, using the latest laser techniques and other surgical procedures. I owe my sight to the "qualities" of the professors at that hospital and to the dedicated skill of those engaged in the prevention of eye disease and the restoration of the ability to see for those in my position —the magic of seeing again.

I received my sight back at some personal cost as a result of the social effects of my illness. There were also costs to the state and to my family. I had 19 complicated operations, the last three of which were of a type that Professor Hill had not tried before. Yet he carried them out in an attempt to restore my sight. Thousands of pounds were invested in that programme of operations by Professor Hill and the Moorfields eye hospital. I was not unique at the hospital. It was full of people suffering from permanent blindness, going blind or seeking treatment to restore sight as a result of the lack of preventive medicine in the community.

11.30 pm

I suffered social effects as a result of my illness. For two years I was unemployable. For six months I was unable to hold my three-year-old son because even the smallest shake could cause a haemorrhage in the eye. Such haemorrhages are part and parcel of Eels disease. Eels disease and invitreous haemorrhages are caused by infestation of the eye which causes substantial and serious blood clots, many of which are inoperable. For the middle aged and pensioners who are afflicted that usually means the end of sight and the removal of the eye or, in some cases where both eyes are affected, it could mean total blindness.

The effects of such illnesses are not restricted to loss of employment and the cost to the state and the family that

[Mr. Ian McCartney]

that involves. Those illnesses also cause social problems in the family. They bring pressure on a family as it must come to terms with the fact that one central, important member of the family must accept the possibility of total blindness. The family must accept that the person concerned may be unable to work and have a career. The family might suffer a loss of income. Those factors have social consequences for the family. My family was no different from many families which suffer from blindness. I live with those consequences today in terms of my former marriage as the family could not stick together because of the nature of the illness and the pressures that it brought on the family.

When the Minister talks about vested interests, it is important to know what we are talking about. My vested interest and that of hon. Members on both sides of the House lies in the belief in the prevention of disease and illness because of their social and financial costs to the state. The doctors and professors whom the Minister attacked so glibly a moment ago left at their own expense within hours of the Bhopal disaster to go to India to try to prevent mass blindness among the people of that stricken town. The professionals have a vested interest in their own position and in the well-being of their patients and the community in which the patients reside.

One of the major arguments in the debate is about communities and preventive medicine. I am a child of the National Health Service. I was born in a steel and coal community in 1951. I have early recollections of the workings of the service. I was among the first generation to be born under the NHS. I saw the effects of inoculation, eye tests and screening as part of eye tests. I remember as a child that 50, 60 or 70 of us at a time lined up to take the tests in a working-class community. Preventive medicine is important to the community as an attempt to prevent disease and to ensure that the community is properly served in terms of facilities for all people.

The Government talk about cost-effectiveness and in my short contribution so far I have talked about how my illness affected me and my family. The Government argue that cost-effectiveness is irrelevant. My illness has resulted in a net loss to the community, both in terms of the cost to Health Service in trying to put right the damage to my eyes and the cost to the Exchequer of social security and sickness payments. It makes no sense to impose such a small charge and put at risk so many individuals in the community.

If the Government are really looking for a trade-off for this small amount of money, why not trade off some of the tax cuts that so many hon. Members voted for only a few short months ago? What about a trade-off with the assisted places scheme for educational attainment, the money that has been pumped into city technology colleges at the expense of the rest of the education service, or even half the money from the wholesale sale of the royal ordnance factories at a third of their market value? If the Minister is really interested in a trade-off, trade off those items, not the health and sight of many thousands of potential victims in Britain.

I know that many hon. Members wish to speak and, like me, have waited a number of hours to participate. I hope that when the Minister replies in his histrionic way he will not return to the blackmail of today's Autumn Statement. The House should be supreme in the decision-making of this country and it should not be subservient to anybody, whether it be the Chancellor of the Exchequer or the Prime Minister. If the House decides not to impose these charges, the Government have a duty to come back here and put into the nation's budget the resources to provide that service.

Unless that is the case we are well on the way to having an elective dictatorship. That is another fundamental argument. Tonight the Government have been arrogant enough to name hospitals in the constituencies of those hon. Members who have argued persuasively against the Government. No stone has been left unturned by the Secretary of State in trying to denigrate the profession, or individual hon. Members who have argued against the Government's principles.

That leads me to suggest that it is not simply one or two additional charges that are at stake but the concept of who pays for preventive medicine in Britain. Therefore, in voting against this we are voting not just against the charge but against the whole concept of the market philosophy of this stinking Secretary of State—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."]—who is prepared to put at risk the sight of so many people for a few pounds. Hon. Members might shout. They have never understood the blackness of blindness and what it does to the individual or his family. I would never wish it on anyone. I can only say that I can stand here because I have been lucky. The opportunities given me by Moorfields eye hospital and the skill of its professors, nurses and doctors have enabled me to have my sight back. The tragedy is that for thousands that will not be the case. The Government's proposals mean that for many more blindness will be a reality.

Dame Jill Knight: I can assure the House and my right hon. and hon. Friends that there are infinitely better and calmer arguments in favour of retaining the Lords amendment than we have heard in the last few moments. I had thought that the financial advantages to the Government and the NHS of regular health checks were obvious. One reason why some of us are so concerned is that we do not believe that the Government have their sums right on this matter. The earlier that disease can be diagnosed, the cheaper and easier it is to treat and the greater the likelihood that the treatment will cure.

Preventive medicine means having a health check which discovers a disease at an early stage and then having something done about it. Some of us find it strange that the Government say that they will not do this, but will instead spend the money on preventive medicine. We truly believe that eye tests come under the heading of preventive medicine. This is the fence at the top of the cliff rather than the ambulance at the bottom of it. Everyone knows that that is more sensible and infinitely cheaper.

Since the Health Service began there have been many necessary changes, and I am not bothered which party introduced them. The fact remains that charges have been imposed for prescriptions and for various appliances as time has gone by. I entirely agree with that. It seems right and sensible that an individual, having been given a free test and discovering that a requirement exists—whether it be for spectacles, bridge work or whatever—should pay something towards the cost if he can afford to do so.

This debate is a fight to keep tests free and thus encourage people to take them regularly. That principle has never wavered in 40 years of the National Health Service. Other aspects have changed but never that. Tests

have always been free, and as a result of that rule thousands of people have had their sight and even their lives saved.

The early signs of many serious diseases reveal themselves in eye tests. I shall not rehearse them all because right hon. and hon. Members are well aware of what those diseases are. Almost 1 million people per year are referred for hospital treatment by optometrists who have discovered something wrong during testing. I understand that that number was the subject of some ridicule by one of my right hon. Friends, who said that not all of the 1 million people referred annually by optometrists ultimately needed treatment. Nevertheless, every single one of them was referred because it was thought that they should have a blood test or be checked for heart disease. The accuracy of an optician's referral is substantially higher than that of the general practitioner.

Earlier today, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State commented on radio or television—and as I did not hear the broadcast myself, I ask him to correct me if I am wrong—that opticians do not test for glaucoma, or that the eye test does not include a test for that condition. I do not know whether that is correct, but I assure my right hon. and learned Friend and all other right hon. and hon. Members that any person seen by a trained optometrist who is judged to be in an at-risk category will be checked. A child being given an eye test will not be checked, but that is no reason to say that the contribution made by opticians is not important.

I turn to one of the Department's own publications, "Health Trends", which points out that 72·5 per cent. of all glaucoma referrals to hospitals are made by opticians, while 23·7 per cent. are by general practitioners. That surely illustrates the value of the opticians' contribution, and the fact that they have saved the sight of many of their patients.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I refer my hon. Friend to a letter that appeared in *The Times* yesterday from two consultant surgeons at Moorfields Eye hospital, who in referring to glaucoma commented:

"There is no evidence that early diagnosis necessarily halts the progress of the disease, which in any case only leads to visual disability in a small minority of cases."

Dame Jill Knight: My hon. Friend would have been wiser to read *The Times* today as well, because his point was answered in a letter to it. The two gentlemen who wrote the letter are, I understand, retired and no longer work in that hospital. It is possible to produce this quote and that quote; all that I can say is that the quote that I gave is from the DHSS itself. The figure is accurate and, I should have thought, one that the whole House could accept.

11.45 pm

I hope that the House agrees that regular health checks are a good thing and should be encouraged. The Government's case is that charges will not discourage. We heard earlier this evening that checks by dentists showed a drop when extra charges were brought in. Charges have never been made for eye tests, so how can we judge at this stage whether demand will go up or down? What is interesting, however, is that some ophthalmic opticians in the United Kingdom still have figures showing a dramatic increase in eye examinations when they became free in 1947. I know that that is not a complete answer, but if many more people took advantage of the free eye test when it came in, surely it is reasonable to suppose that the reverse may well happen.

Charges for eye tests in Alberta, Canada—as the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) mentioned—were brought in very recently. Incidentally, they were levelled only at those between the ages of 19 and 63: people of pensionable age were not charged. But the drop in demand of 30 or 40 per cent. was so worrying for the Government that they took only 11 months to reverse their decision. My hon. Friends and I ask the Government to listen to what we are saying, because they too may have to reverse their decision if the vote goes the wrong way this evening.

There is no doubt in my mind that there will be a drop in demand, and my view is shared by all the professional organisations—including the British Medical Association, which cannot be said to have a financial or fiscal interest. My right hon. and learned Friend says that most people can afford to pay something for a test, and that those who cannot afford it will not have to pay. It is true that under my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, Britain is more prosperous than ever before, and many more people have money in their pockets. But the House must not fall into the trap of imagining that everyone outside this building finds it as easy as we inside it do to put his hands on £12 or £15—for I warn hon. Members that the price of an eye test will be somewhere between those sums.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dame Jill Knight: This is the last time.

Mr. Bennett: Surely if people are deterred by the £10 or £12 that my hon. Friend says will be charged they will be equally deterred from buying spectacles if they need them; but she is not advocating free spectacles.

Dame Jill Knight: I do not think that point worth answering. I am saying that the cost of a test for people outside the House will be difficult to meet. Besides, no one has yet pointed out tonight that spectacles will be much more expensive because the Government have been forced to put VAT on them for the first time. Not only will people have to pay for their eye tests, but they will have to pay much more for their glasses.

I am extremely concerned at everything that I have heard this evening about pensioners. It is simply not good enough to say that as a country we spend so much on beer, so much on tobacco and so much on gambling. Not everybody spends money on beer, gambling or tobacco. Many people write to me and come to see me in my surgery about some of the more recent changes, such as those to housing benefit, saying, "I do not gamble, I do not smoke and I do not drink, yet I am finding it a hard job to manage."

I am very troubled about pensioners. Of course my right hon. and learned Friend is quite right to say that not all pensioners are poor. But we should not disregard those who are poor because they are more at risk than anyone else. After pensionable age, eyes are more likely to become diseased, so pensioners are in real need of regular care. Undoubtedly some early diagnoses will be missed, and it will be more expensive. Furthermore, members of the public are well aware that they are entitled to free eye tests in hospitals and many will go there. Like the dentist mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss), many doctors know when their

[Dame Jill Knight]

patients are hard up and some will refer them to hospitals. The silly thing is that it costs the Government nearly three times as much to have an eye test done in the ophthalmic department of an eye hospital than they currently pay to an optometrist in the high street. It costs about £28 outside London and £30 in London, whereas they are paying the opticians £10. Where is the economic sense in that?

My right hon. and learned Friend and some other hon. Members think that optometrists will provide tests free. That is absolutely ludicrous. Why should they do that? Those men and women are professionals who have studied and trained for four or five years. It is like telling a doctor, "You can give your professional services free. Nobody will pay you for your professional services and you can make your money from bandages." That is ridiculous. Why should professional men and women who have studied and worked in their profession be expected to provide their services free?

Furthermore, the Government have already taken steps to ensure that when a patient has had the refraction, he must be given a prescription so that he or she can buy glasses elsewhere. The patient is free to go to the boutique down the road. An optometrist will not be able to say to a patient, "I have tested your eyes. You will buy your glasses here, won't you?" I have a letter from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State saying:

> "Opticians will be prohibited from offering sight tests on condition that any spectacles required are purchased from their business."

The Minister has already knocked one leg off the optician by saying that he can do a refraction and the patient can walk out, so he has done the test free. How can the optician keep his doors open? Furthermore, 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. of people who have an eye test are found not to need glasses. So there are two groups of people who walk out of the opticians, and the optician is paid not a penny. How will he pay his rent, his rates and his receptionist? It is an extraordinary argument.

Finally, is it fair that people who need glasses should subsidise those who do not need glasses? That is what will happen. If the optician is expected to provide free eye tests, he will have to put more money on the glasses that he is able to supply. That does not seem to be fair.

I know that the Government did not wish to put VAT on spectacles but it will greatly increase the cost. Why cannot the money brought in from VAT be used to keep the test free? Tonight we are talking about the breach of a principle that we have held to since the very beginning of the National Health Service. For the first time we are breaching a rule that was introduced for a very good reason.

It appears that the Government have already agreed that ready made spectacles should be available without a prescription. If ever I heard of a way in which to ensure that people do not get their eyes tested, that is it. People will have to pay quite a lot for the eyesight test and more for their glasses, so they may decide to get a ready made pair from Woolworth's.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Lady is coming to a conclusion, but it is extremely rude of hon. Members to have loud conversations during her speech.

Dame Jill Knight: I am indeed finishing. I am worried by that final deterrent to getting a test. The free test is important to the Health Service, important to the economy and important to health. I shall go into the Lobby in support of that principle.

Mr. Loyden: The House may have had some sympathy for the Secretary of State at the beginning of the debate as he had to argue an indefensible case, but he did not tell us what merit the Government's proposals have. He has dealt with the issue in a cavalier fashion. When hon. Members have illustrated the dangers of doing away with an important facet of preventive medicine, he has used an argument based on the financing of the NHS.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), I have an interest in glaucoma although, unlike him, I did not know that I had an eye disease. I went for an eye test and was referred by the optometrist to the local eye hospital where glaucoma was diagnosed. I did not know what it was. The same probably goes for about 80 per cent. of the population. I had to go home and read the dictionary. It was rather old and said that glaucoma is a disease of the eye which can result in bursting and total blindness.

Thanks to advances in that segment of the Health Service, that is no longer the case, but early detection is essential if the disease is to be arrested. I sometimes think that the Secretary of State does not understand what it all means. If he does, he is acting in the worst tradition of a Secretary of State responsible for the Health Service. Having listened to the debate, any Secretary of State could not but be persuaded to change his mind.

The argument in favour of the free test has been won tonight. Conservative Members who have listened cannot fail to oppose the Government's proposal. The Secretary of State ought also to bear in mind the fact that people who cannot find the £10 or so that is to be charged are likely to go to eye hospitals such as the one I attend fairly regularly. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman goes to those hospitals, he will realise that cuts in the NHS have meant that people in St. Paul's eye hospital in Liverpool spend between three and five hours in waiting rooms waiting for attention, diagnosis and treatment. If people are deprived of eye tests by opticians, those waiting times will increase as general practitioners refer their patients to hospitals if disease is suspected. This will add to, rather than reduce, the costs of the NHS.

12 midnight

The Secretary of State presented a facile argument to the House. He is doing a disservice to the Health Service by denying people the right to access to a part of preventive medicine. I said earlier that I was dissatisfied with the rate at which the Health Service was moving towards prevention. The Under-Secretary, who allegedly supports preventive medicine, should vote against these measures.

All the aspects which are considered to be an advantage of the Health Service and a part of preventive medicine contribute greatly to people's well-being and health. No Secretary of State has the right to increase the risk of undetected glaucoma and other diseases as this Secretary of State is doing. He is increasing the possibility that a person will end up in hospital for a major operation when

his condition could have been detected early and that he will be required to attend the hospital once every six or nine months for treatment.

This is damning evidence of the way in which the Government have treated the National Health Service and further evidence of their aim to change or dismantle it. Every charge that is made is a further erosion of the NHS. Every charge for screening, which is part of preventive medicine, erodes the nature and value of the Health Service and the benefits that have accrued from it. The whole House should reject the flimsy arguments put for the proposals. The Secretary of State has not made out a case on medical grounds. He has referred constantly to market forces. He talks about people going for eye tests merely because they require spectacles. Surely that is the whole point. Of course, they go for spectacles, and then they find out that something is wrong. They are referred to a hospital and treatment takes place. By his decision, the Secretary of State will deprive people of access to a part of preventive medicine. We should condemn him outright for that.

A further chance is being given to Conservative Members. The Opposition cannot defeat the Government and carry the amendments, but Conservative Members should go into the Division Lobby and do exactly that.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I support the Government on the issue of introducing charges for those who can afford to pay. My reasoning is similar to that which led the Conservative Opposition to support the Labour Government in 1951, when Labour first imposed charges on spectacles and dentures. Labour's Health Minister gave four criteria for introducing charges. The first criterion was that more money should be made available to the NHS. That is exactly the argument which we put forward —there should be more money for use within the Health Service. In 1951, the Labour Government were worried about whether the elderly were getting proper treatment under the Health Service. The Labour Government were concerned about hospital services and waiting lists and whether the hospitals were getting enough money. That is precisely what this proposal is about. It was as true then as it is now.

The Labour Minister went on to say that the charges were useful because they could be imposed in such a way that they would have virtually no effect on seriously ill people. That is also true today. The charges were not costly to collect—then or now. The Labour Minister also said that the charges were useful for deterring abuse, not that there was much abuse of the tests. The same applies today.

I have one reason for saying that the charges are sensible that did not occur to the Minister in 1951: fairness. About 21 million people will be exempt from these charges, which could not be said of the Labour proposals in 1951, or of any subsequent Labour proposals.

The proposals are reasonable because only those who can afford to pay will have to. It is interesting to read in *Hansard* what Labour Members said in 1951. Nye Bevan described the charges as a mutilation of the NHS. Many other Labour Members suggested that the charges were the end of the Health Service. The Labour Health Minister suggested that the debate was getting out of proportion. It has not changed much since then. Meanwhile, the NHS has gone from strength to strength, the forebodings of Nye Bevan and the warnings of many other Labour Members notwithstanding. It has done so especially under Conservative Governments such as this one.

It is worth noting that almost all the Labour Members who spoke against the charges in the House in 1951 voted for them in the Lobby afterwards.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): They are all dead now.

Mr. Shaw: I see the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) behind the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton). He is not dead, and I trust that he will vote with the Government tonight, as he did in 1951 when they imposed charges.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): What charges for testing for the identification of the early stages of diseases have any Labour Government brought in?

Mr. Shaw: The principle of charging is exactly the same now as in 1951, when the Labour Government introduced charges. Hugh Gaitskell introduced them on the four criteria I outlined earlier, and on the basis that they represented better use of NHS money. That is the key. The eyesight test does not, in itself, improve people's sight. Taking action, having treatment and wearing glasses do that. Government action to increase the use of spectacles has done far more for improving people's eyesight than anything else.

In 1984 the Labour party fought like mad against the introduction of privatisation and competition in providing spectacles and eyesight testing. Now, more spectacles are sold than before, more people go for tests, and the public are more aware of the efficiency of the private sector. That is why I believe, with my right hon. and learned Friend, that the private sector would absorb the charges over time. It will want to expand to its business. It is in its interests to attract more people for testing.

This measure, given the concessions made by the Government for glaucoma and diabetes sufferers, is fair and correct. The Labour party is dishonest about imposing charges. Many of the founder supporters of the NHS supported the Government who brought in charges in 1951. We now have a better service, whose costs people appreciate better. Many of the fears expressed in 1951 and 1984 have proved unfounded. I have no hesitation in supporting the Government; the Lords amendment should be rejected.

Mr. Fearn: Much of what I said in the earlier debate applies to the introduction of charges for eye tests. I repeat what I said last December: the proposed charges for eye tests make a mockery of the Government's announced intention to improve preventive health care.

The original 1986 Green Paper, page 32 item 4, states:

> "Free NHS sight tests and prescriptions are maintained for everyone who needs them. The sight-test can identify health problems as well as a need for spectacles, so it is important that skilled sight-testing should remain readily available."

I want to know what the Government consider to be "readily available". A charge of £10 will make it virtually impossible for many parents, young people in their first jobs and those in part-time or low-paid employment, many of them elderly, to avail themselves of any sight test. Once again, the Government appear to be acting against the recommendations of all the professional groups and voluntary organisations with experience in this area, all of which claim that the introduction of a charge for the eye

[Mr. Fearn]

test would negate the aim of the promotion of better health. Patients will be deterred, and eye diseases and other conditions will go undetected.

The financial savings that the Government expect to make have also been challenged. It is expected that more patients will visit their general practitioners who, in turn, will have to refer them to eye hospitals. There is the added cost of the treatment of disease and conditions which, if detected, could be remedied at less expense.

We are not simply discussing finance. It is a question of people's lives and the quality of those lives. Are hon. Members willing to introduce proposals that may lead to unnecessary discomfort, poor vision and, in some cases, loss of sight? Are we content that people who may already be hampered by the disabilities that come with age—and that will eventually affect us all—will be put under further stress because they cannot afford £10 or more for a sight test? Are we willing to introduce a measure that may prevent people with diabetes, blood pressure and other conditions from obtaining an early diagnosis and treatment? If this House is interested in prevention as part of the health care of the nation, it will support the Lords amendment and encourage opticians to give more extensive eye examinations and the population to have more regular checks. That could be as effective as other screening programmes.

There have been suggestions that competition in the sight test market will reduce the cost or even eliminate it. I very much doubt that, as most consumers know that nothing comes free these days. Any freebies such as free estimates are always absorbed into the cost of the product, making it more expensive.

On 20 October the Prime Minister, as reported in the "Parliamentary Health Monitor" of 31 October, said that she thought it reasonable for people to pay a modest charge for something fundamental to their health. I am pleased that she recognises that such tests are important to an individual's health, but I question her assessment of a modest charge. It may be modest to someone like the right hon. Lady who enjoys certain comforts, but £10 is not a modest amount to the many people who have far lower incomes.

I remind the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State that the British people already pay charges for their health care through the system of general taxation—not just income tax, but VAT and other taxes. That means that virtually everybody contributes to his or her health care and, as opinion polls show, would be willing to contribute more through that method.

I hope that many Conservative Members will recognise that the introduction of charges will be harmful to prevention and promotion in health care and to the long-term effectiveness of the system. I hope that they will vote with Opposition Members in support of the Lords amendment. In doing so, they will also be sending a message to thousands of their supporters saying that they really care. That, I doubt.

12.15 am

Mr. Hayes: I wish at the outset to deal with the rather unpleasant rumour that an altercation occurred earlier between my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State and myself. What my hon. and learned Friend said was said in the heat of debate and, I understand—because I have known him as a friend for the last five years—was said in fun. I did not take it personally, nor did he, and I hope the matter can rest there. I sincerely hope that there is no wicked press circulation of any rumour about bad blood between us because I assure the House that there is none.

I shall be brief because many of my hon. Friends wish to speak. A peculiarity of tonight's discussion is that we have been dealing with the subject of preventive medicine. While the Bill may be concerned with preventive medicine, the provisions that we have been debating tonight have nothing to do with that. They have everything to do with money.

A year or so ago my right hon. and learned Friend's predecessor was rolled over by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury who, as we know, is an able and talented Minister with a wonderful way of dealing with ferocious Cabinet Ministers. He invites them into his office and for some reason they roll on the floor and let him tickle their tummies while he takes their wallets. The trouble is that those Cabinet Ministers then expect us to bail them out, and we cannot do that.

The Secretary of State has not been a soft touch. He came to the House today with a very good health package indeed, and all credit to him. But to talk of £140 million as a major sum is utterly ridiculous. It is probably equal to the Foreign Office lunch bill. And as for the £27 million which would exempt the 6·5 million pensioners in question, that is probably equal to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's lunch bill.

I remind hon. Members that it is easy to score party political points. While we have been talking about those who can afford to pay, according to the Royal National Institute for the Blind, 78 per cent. of the population between 78 and 85 years of age have major eye disease, yet 50 per cent. of pensioners still live on or just above the poverty level. The top 20 per cent. of retired households with more than twice as much income as the 80 per cent. below them pull up the national average, and for far too many pensioners who do not qualify for a sight test any charge will act as a significant deterrent.

My right hon. and learned Friend is saying, in effect, "I will take a risk. I do not know how much it will cost ordinary people and pensioners. It could be £10, £15 or absolutely nothing. We will leave it to market forces." But 70 per cent. of optometrists' incomes come from sight tests. From where will the other 30 per cent. come? Clearly, it will be loaded on to the price of spectacles and contact lenses.

About 6·5 million pensioners are particularly at risk. It is absolute nonsense to pooh-pooh the idea that going to the optician is not total screening, and that has disturbed me in relation to some ministerial statements made this evening. Optometrists can diagnose diabetes, glaucoma and cataracts—diseases that are particularly prevalent among those over the age of 60. People over the age of 60 need to have their eyesight tested regularly. In future the poor devils will not know that they have diabetes or glaucoma or cataracts until it is too late.

We should be trying to encourage people to visit their optometrist, optician and dentist. If a charge of £10 or £15 is slapped on to the sight test, as I believe will happen, those pensioners just above income support—whom Ministers tell us will not get any support from the state—will have to make a choice between paying their gas or

electricity bills—[HON. MEMBERS: "Don't be silly."] Sadly, some of my hon. Friends are telling me not to be silly. It will be interesting to see how many letters they get from their constituents when it gets colder—perhaps from the same constituents who have been clobbered by the housing benefit changes over the past few months. Some pensioners will have to choose between paying their fuel bills and going to the optometrist to have diagnosed any diseases from which they may be suffering.

This evening we could prevent much pain and suffering, and a great deal of money could be saved for the National Health Service in the long term.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I have listened carefully to the debate since 5.30 this afternoon. It has become clear that this is a debate about priorities and about deterrence. My hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) is wrong to describe the sum of £140 million as trivial. It would pay the total costs of my local health authority six times over, and it would buy two completely new district general hospitals. We must ask ourselves whether we are right to regard expenditure on eye tests for those who can afford them as a priority or whether it would be better to divert that money to other aspects of the Health Service.

The problem goes right back to the beginning of the Health Service in 1948. The other day, I was looking at the minutes of the Labour Cabinet of 13 December 1948. Aneurin Bevan, after only five months—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may not be interested in priorities, but Aneurin Bevan said that Socialism was about the language of priorities. The Labour Cabinet found that in only five months of running the NHS the total cost had risen 30 per cent. above the estimates of July of that year. We have to make difficult decisions about where money should be spent in the Health Service, and I do not believe that it is unreasonable to ask those who can afford it to make a modest contribution towards the cost of their health.

If there is no competition between opticians and if the cost is not subsumed in other charges and through opticians maximising their custom, the charge will still be no more than the equivalent of the cost of five or six pints of beer in the more expensive public houses. It will be equivalent to twice the average weekly spending on tobacco in this country, half the price of a tank of petrol and about three Chinese take-away meals. That is to put the charge in the context of those who can afford it.

We are told that 62 per cent. of people are to pay the charge and 38 per cent. are to be exempt. Sixty-two per cent. is exactly the percentage of the population who own their own homes and it is smaller than the percentage of people who own telephones or cars. Are we really saying that people can afford to own their own homes, cars and telephones, yet that they cannot afford to pay a £10 charge for an eye test? I do not believe that that is a reasonable view to take of how people spend their money.

The argument about deterrence is an arrogant one because it says that working people are so stupid that they are not prepared to spend a small amount of money on looking after their health. I do not believe that that is true. There is no evidence that the increase in prescription charges during the past 10 years has deterred people from taking care of their health. It is a small and useful measure to send money to where it is needed and to ensure that people have a right to make a small contribution towards their health. I support the Government.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I did not intend to address the House on this issue until the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) had the audacity to talk about three Chinese take-away meals in the same breath as talking about preventing people losing their sight by having an adequate eye test. I believe that that is deplorable. There are many arguments about whether people would pay to have a test to ensure that they were certain that they would receive adequate medical attention for a problem that they had experienced. We shall not further debate in the House by lowering it to the question whether people will buy consumer goods as opposed to having their eyes tested.

Many people who are worried about a problem—whether it is something that has occurred in old age or something that has come over them while they are young—face the trauma of deciding whether to consult their GP or to have their eyes tested because they are uncertain whether it is a serious matter or a passing phase. As many people have said over the past few weeks, if money can be saved by ensuring that a problem is picked up during its early stages by giving people the opportunity of having their eyes tested easily and cheaply and either being reassured or having action taken at a stage when long term problems can be prevented, no one in the House or in this country should deny that person the right to a free eye test. It does matter what happens to other people around us. We have obligations and responsibilities to help each other—not just those who are deserving and responsible because they do not spend their money on three Chinese meals. What happens to the person living next door and to the person sitting next to us tonight is the responsibility of all of us. If by spending a small amount of money we can prevent the deterioration of a person's sight and money being spent on putting right long-term problems, every hon. Member, whatever his politics or ideology, has an obligation to vote to defeat these charges.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: We can sum up the debate by asking two questions. Do we wish to encourage people to have their eyes tested or to discourage them? I think that the question answers itself: we want to encourage them. The evidence for that has not been challenged. Secondly, do we want to lengthen the waiting list for out-patient clinics at ophthalmic hospitals or at the ophthalmic departments of general hospitals, or do we not? The answer to that is clearly and obviously no. On both those bases, therefore, we should vote to sustain their Lordships' amendment.

12.30 am

Mr. Thurnham: I speak in support of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State because we know for a fact that this measure will raise £80 million for the National Health Service and we have to weigh that in the balance with the theory that the charge will be a deterrent. I do not believe that it will be a deterrent, but there is no way that we can prove that. I do not believe that there is such a thing as a "free" test because the tests have to be paid for and the cost recovered in one way or another.

Those who argue that charges are a deterrent in one sense must also accept that they are deterrents in another sense because if the money is not raised from the people who benefit from the test, it will have to be raised from the taxpayer. There is then a deterrent for those who have to

[Mr. Thurnham]

earn the income with which to pay the taxes. We know what happens when the Labour party is in power—we have taxes——

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): If my hon. Friend really believes his argument, should we not charge people to go to a general practitioner, or charge for cervical smear tests and for breast screening on the ground that that would raise money for the Health Service?

Mr. Thurnham: My point is that if we have taxes at the level that the Labour party had when it was in power, we know exactly what happens to the economy. The Labour party was the party that had to cut hospital building. The Conservative party is the party that raises the funds to build the hospitals. In 1977 the International Monetary Fund had to bail the country out. That was when hospitals faced cuts.

It is for those reasons that I support this measure, which will raise more money to enable the hospitals that we need to be built. I have weighed that in the balance with the theory that charges might be a deterrent. I believe that those people who feel that they want a test will go to have that test and they will pay for it because they are benefiting from it. They will pay for it either directly or through charges for their spectacles, if they need them. If anybody is deterred from seeking a test, I imagine that it will be the 25 per cent. who currently go only to find that they do not need spectacles. It is for that reason that I support my right hon. and learned Friend in raising funds by this measure which can do nothing but improve the National Health Service for the public.

Mr. John Hunt (Ravensbourne): I have found tonight's debate a profoundly depressing parliamentary occasion. I am bound to say that I regard the proposal to charge for sight testing, at whatever level that charge is eventually set, as mean and misguided. In spite of the confidence and conviction of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State that charges will not be a deterrent, I believe that they will serve as a deterrent to those most at risk.

I am sure that it will not have escaped the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend that the opposition to these proposals from this side of the House spans the spectrum of our party. Wets and drys are for once united in a common cause and are speaking with one voice in defence of preventive medicine. That is a point of considerable significance. I am surprised and sorry that, faced with this expression of deep and genuine concern among a wide range of the members of our party, Ministers have shown such a reluctance to respond to those genuine concerns.

I advise my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench that charging for eye tests is destined to do maximum political and social damage with minimum benefit, either to the coffers of the Treasury or to the reputation of our Ministers and our Government.

I know that some of my hon. Friends are especially concerned with the impact of the charges on the lower paid. I would certainly not dismiss that concern, but my special and specific concern tonight is with pensioners and with the impact of the charges upon them. We know—we have been told—that to exempt that category will cost £27 million per year. However, I have already told my right hon. and learned Friend that in terms of the Treasury's book-keeping, that is petty cash.

Of course, we all welcome the additional funds for the National Health Service announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor this afternoon, but surely that begs the question. If we can find an extra £2 billion for the National Health Service and if we can make massive debt repayments, surely we can find the £27 million that is necessary to exempt the pensioners from this charge? That is the answer to the argument by my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) about priorities.

However, it appears that, for the sake of a minimal saving in public expenditure, we are prepared to put at risk the sight of the elderly. This is not crying wolf. Let us make no mistake about it. The elderly are particularly vulnerable and are likely to suffer from the diseases about which we have heard—glaucoma, cataracts and hypertension, all of which can be detected at an early stage by regular sight tests. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) has reminded us that almost one million people a year are referred for further medical investigation following an eye test. I understand that more than half of those are over 60. That shows the potential danger of introducing this charge.

We are told that a charge of £10 or £15 will not deter and that the Government object in principle to across-the-board benefits. I can say in answer only that, from my experience, the more wealthy pensioners seek private treatment anyway, but anyone who has regular contact with the elderly knows that, even if they are well off, they fear for the future. They watch every penny and avoid spending money whenever they can. My worry is that, faced with a charge of £10 or more for an eye test, they will keep putting it off. They will make do with their glasses and, in the process, often serious and irreparable damage will be done to their sight.

That is why, even at this late stage, I beg Ministers to think again about this policy. Unless they do, there is no way that I can go into the Lobby with them tonight.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Earlier this evening, the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) told us of his experience when, in his twenties, he lost his sight. Like every other hon. Member, I listened carefully to what he said, but if I believed that, because of these proposals, the care that he received at Moorfields eye hospital would be withdrawn and the condition that he brought to our attention would not have been brought to anyone's notice, I would not vote for the proposal. However, I do not believe that that is the case. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that, although what he said to the House was harrowing, personal and important, it is not relevant to tonight's debate.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman, with the best of motives, has completely misjudged the issue. My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) was talking about a different matter. We are discussing those people who go to an optician, perhaps for spectacles, and discover that they have glaucoma. My hon. Friend was talking about something peculiar to himself and he obtained the necessary treatment.

Mr. Hughes: I shall make clear later my views about that matter. The hon. Gentleman makes an important point and I shall not duck the issue. If he is not satisfied, he can deal with the matter in his speech.

I want to refer to the Health and Social Security Act 1984. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has quoted what Opposition spokesmen said at that time. There can be no doubt that the arguments advanced by the Labour party were fundamentally flawed. Opposition Members said that, as a result of the measure, people would go blind and the price of glasses would increase. *[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members do not believe me, they should read the relevant debates. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said that, as a result of the measure, many people's eyesight would suffer and that the Government's proposals would reduce choice, abandon consumer protection and put up the price of glasses. Nothing could be further from the truth. We know that prices have been reduced in the high streets while consumer choice has increased.

The Labour party was not alone in getting it wrong in 1984. The arguments that were advanced by opticians and the ophthalmic trade at that time and those that they are advancing now are almost identical. They were wrong in 1984, and in my judgment they are wrong now. In 1983, Mr. John Thorpe, on behalf of the Society of Opticians, said:

> "Spectacles may be cheaper, except for those who cannot see."

That argument was wrong then and I submit that it is wrong now.

Only two years after the 1984 legislation was enacted, glasses sales increased by 10 per cent. During the same period the number of eye tests increased by over 1 million. The nub of the argument—I take up the point which the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) made in his intervention—is whether people will be able to pay the proposed charge, but it is my judgment that the charge will not be levied. The 1984 Act, which revolutionised the industry, has done much to bring greater consumer choice and reduced prices. It has led to many major companies slogging it out in the market place to make sure that they get their share of the market. Those who benefit from their struggle are those who need spectacles. Companies will not want to relinquish their market share and I believe that they will offer free eye tests.

We are talking of a profession that guards its standards carefully, which means that it will offer proper eyesight tests. Anyone who suggests otherwise is insulting the opticians' profession. I believe that the Lords amendment will be rejected and that the proposals of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will lead to wider availability of eyesight tests. The Bill will act as an incentive for the public to get their eyes tested, not as a disincentive. *[Laughter.]* The predictable laughter of Opposition Members is the same ill-informed laughter, with the same ill-informed comments, that we heard from them during our consideration of the 1984 measure. They did not understand the market then. They did not understand what consumers wanted or what was happening. It is clear that they still do not understand the market. If Labour Members want to speak, let them make their own contributions to the debate.

I support my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. When we reflect on this measure, we shall understand that he was right. His judgment is good and it will lead to opticians providing a better service.

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), as he sometimes does, let his guard drop for a moment when he dismissively referred to the £70 million that the proposed charges will save as a "modest sum". That is the kind of cavalier attitude to public expenditure savings which in the long term does real damage to the National Health Service.

Over the years the NHS has suffered considerable capital investment damage through financial indiscipline and a cavalier attitude to public expenditure savings. The fact that the charges will save £70 million is not to be scoffed at. That money will be ploughed back into primary health care and will provide £70 million of extra resources for the NHS.

The hon. Member for Livingston should be aware that the merit of the charges does not stop there. If we provide services for free, be they medical or optical, there will be waste of public resources which could be better used elsewhere.

12.45 am

At that point the debate links up to the very serious matter of whether people who need eye tests will be deterred from taking them because of lack of means. The 36 per cent. who will be exempted are all right, but it is wrong to look at the remaining 64 per cent. simply as a group of affluent people. That is not the case. Certainly many of them are affluent and can well afford to meet the fees. They should certainly meet the fees. However, I acknowledge that there is a not insignificant number of people who are just above the exemption limit for whom there is a risk that the charges will prove a deterrent.

The competitive effect of the charges will come into force here. They will have such an effect because they will introduce market forces into an area where those forces are needed. To date the optical profession has had things too easy. It has had a captive amount of money from the Government for some time. It will now have to compete in the market place. As sure as night follows day it will drop its prices. Some within the profession will offer free optical tests. I confidently forecast that the Government will save £70 million and there will also be the widespread availability of free optical tests. Market forces will come to bear and the charges will have a beneficial effect.

I ask my hon. Friends who are teetering on the brink of rebellion and are not quite sure whether to go over the edge to consider those factors carefully. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), who is in that position, wants to make things clearer.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my hon. Friend think that some of the opticians will give free washing machines—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Irvine: I would not extrapolate the argument quite that far, but my hon. Friend has got the general thrust. On that happy note, I conclude my remarks.

Mr. Mellor: I trust that the mood of euphoria that my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) has so successfully created may be continued for the remaining minutes of the debate.

[Mr. Mellor]

I begin by thanking my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) for the friendly comments that he incorporated in his speech. I entirely reciprocate them and for my part I am sorry if the badinage between us appeared a little more serious than it habitually is in the conversations that we have had together over the years.

The House should focus on a further example of increased provision within the Health Service when considering the background to the issue; one in which a considerable amount of progress has been made in treating fundamental and difficult eye disorders that arise within our society. Take, for instance, the distressing problem of cataracts. In 1976 there were 40,000 cataract operations. I am not making a party point. I am talking about the development of the service. By 1985 there were 59,000 cataract operations. Our target is to take that up to 70,000 by 1990 and I am confident that that will be achieved.

It is not just a question of ensuring that the treatment is available to deal with these difficult conditions. It is also important that we increase people's awareness of the significance of their eyes and the importance of not taking their eyes for granted, even when it appears that there is no reason to consider that they are in difficulties.

That is why, once again, the resources that the Government are making available, above and beyond what was made available by any of their predecessors, are aimed at trying to encourage eye awareness by proper promotional campaigns and to ensure that there is a proper supply of professional people at all levels of the service able and willing to deal with the rectification of these problems.

That is the way forward, the way in which we can ensure that the maximum number of avoidable eye conditions are detected early. That is the way we shall ensure that the community genuinely sees the necessity of having regular checks. Once again we are in exactly the same situation that we were in with dental charges. While a lot of people do go, even more do not, and it is overall eye awareness that needs to be raised.

Essentially, the argument comes down to this. The Government believe that against a background of over 20 million exemptions and the fact that most people will require an eye test only every two years—the recommended period—while many people leave it perfectly safely for three years, a £10 charge is not a burden in an increasingly prosperous society.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): My hon. and learned Friend referred to deterrence and the debate hangs to a considerable extent on whether people will be deterred from having eyesight tests. Will his Department have access to information about the number of eye tests being carried out, and, if it is discovered after a reasonable period that people are being deterred by any action taken by the House tonight, will the matter be looked at again?

Mr. Mellor: I appreciate that a number of people, like my hon. Friend, are worried about the matter. Yes, statistics will continue to be kept of NHS eye tests—those that continue for the exempt 20 million. We shall, by samples and other scientific ways, find out whether the number of eye tests in the rest of the community is growing on the same basis that it has been growing in recent years.

Of course, all this turns on the assessment that sensible people make of the evidence. Plainly, in such issues it is perfectly reasonable for one group of people to arrive at one conclusion and for others to arrive at another. I shall later say why I believe that what we have decided is based on a proper inference drawn from previous occasions when, for instance, we deregulated the optical industry.

Clearly, we shall want to monitor the consequences of the change. Of course we recognise the need to reconsider any aspects of these arrangements should the evidence require it. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) and other right hon. and hon. Members who are concerned about this aspect will accept that that is said in good faith and that it will be carried through by the Government.

The opportunities offered to the profession will give opticians the prospect of building on the skill and experience of optometrists in offering the kind of service that the community needs, so encouraging people to make more use of their services. I quote from an article by Marvyn Slater, a Fellow of the British College of Optometrists, published in *The Daily Telegraph* on 18 October:

> "With the prospect of a revitalised private service on the horizon optometrists can stop relying upon spectacle sales and offer their unique skills—the management of healthy eye disorders, visual ergonomics, visual and neurologically related educational disorders, industrial consultancy, low vision aids and assessment—to the 50 per cent. of the population who will be ineligible for NHS sight tests."

I feel sure that he is pointing the way to an altogether more satisfactory future for optometrists than having them remain imprisoned within the framework that the present NHS imposes upon them. It will give them a chance to break out and to make their presence felt.

Why are the Government so confident that this measure can proceed, liberate resources to go elsewhere in the Health Service, and not cause difficulties in a prosperous society? It is because we have been here before. We have been through the battle in respect of the deregulation of opticians and the various dire predictions that were made then. I shall not quote them now, but suffice it to say that concern was expressed not only from the Opposition Benches but by my right hon. and hon. Friends as well.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston will recall the speeches that she made on the subject, when she expressed great fear about the consequences of that development. I say to my hon. Friend that I hope that she and others will take comfort from what has happened. It has shown that the predictions were not accurate and that the Government have been able to create an altogether better market and an altogether more satisfactory service than before. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I detect a degree of scepticism among one or two of my hon. Friends and so I shall give them the facts upon which I rely for that observation.

First, although three quarters of the people who go for tests already wear spectacles and so know that they will have to pay, the number of tests is up by 1 million over that period. Secondly, sales of spectacles have increased by 10 per cent. which is a sign of the market's increased buoyancy. Thirdly, there have been considerable benefits from price reductions of a most marked kind, which have been in the consumer's interest, and wider choice.

The figures are very striking. The average cost of private spectacles in 1981 was £59·26. In 1986, five years on, it was £57·88. In other words, there was a reduction in

the average price of spectacles over those five years. Put another way, the average cost for NHS and private spectacles taken together fell from £44 in 1981 to £31 in 1985; a 28 per cent. drop in real terms. It is on that basis that we make the predictions we do about the consequences of this latest change.

Testing for glaucoma clearly concerns many people. My hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston said that, whenever a person of the appropriate age was eye tested, a glaucoma test is also made. I do not want to take issue with that. I believe that there is concern about whether a test under the new system—a "deregulated" or "privatised" test—will include the test for glaucoma. We have powers under the Bill to make requirements about what the tests should comprise. I take very seriously the points made about glaucoma, and we shall want to discuss them with the professions and other interested parties to ensure the right result.

I am

The debate is about how far in a mature and prosperous society people are prepared to pay modest charges for a service that most recognise will involve extra costs as soon as they embark on it. The difficulty in which my right hon. and learned Friend and his Ministers find themselves is that, even against a background of the most generous settlements that there have been for increased funding of the NHS, a range of competing priorities and demands must still be met: expensive high-technology medicine, the increasing requirements of an aging population and the need for enhanced psychogeriatric care.

I assure the House that, although my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has generously made the money available, it took a great deal of persuasion, as my right hon. and learned Friend said earlier. The case had to be made that the money would be properly targeted on improved patient services and not swallowed up in inefficiency and bureaucracy, or used for purposes that no longer required a heavy public subsidy. If we are unable to make these savings, surely some other choice will have to be made, and it is difficult to know how easy the decision will be. I ask my colleagues who oppose us at present to think very carefully about that aspect.

I also appreciate how difficult the issue is seen to be by many of my hon. Friends on the Back Benches. The appointment of my right hon. and learned Friend to the Department of Health was greeted very warmly by my colleagues. With his Ministers he has had the opportunity to look carefully at policy proposals for the future, and to consider what we shall have to pay to make the NHS work efficiently and to try to clear up the many problems such as excessively long waiting lists and inconsistencies in key performances between one district and another.

I hope very much that before casting their vote against my right hon. and learned Friend my hon. Friends will give thought to his categorical judgment that we can safely make the decision we are making, and that any alternative will cause grave difficulties to the NHS. As the second successive Secretary of State who has made this proposal, my right hon. and learned Friend should perhaps be entitled to the benefit of the doubt from the sceptics. I hope that in a spirit of common decency towards those who have been entrusted with such a difficult job they will think long and hard before making his job more difficult, and will allow his judgment to win the day.

On that basis, and in confidence that the evidence points in this direction, I ask the House to join us in rejecting the Lords decision and restoring the position that existed when the Bill left the Commons six months ago.

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 296, Noes 288.

Division No. 463] **[1.03 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael

Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Mariand, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'caster)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, David
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Cleiland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Colvin, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fry, Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*

Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Latham, Michael
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Hon
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Robert
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neillist, Dave
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Allen Adams.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendments (b) to (d) to the words so restored to the Bill agreed to.

Consequential amendments (e) and (f) agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 23 disagreed to.

Amendment (b) to the words so restored to the Bill agreed to.

Lords amendment Nos. 24 and 25 agreed to. [Special Entry].

Lords amendment No. 26 disagreed to.

Amendments (b) to (d) to the words so restored to the Bill agreed to.

Consequential amendments (e) and (f) agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 27 and 28 agreed to. [Special Entry].

Clause 13

General ophthalmic services and optical appliances

Lords amendment: No. 29, in page 17, line 45, at end insert—

(3) The following subsections shall be inserted after subsection (1) of section 21 of the Opticians Act 1958 (restriction on sale and supply of optical appliances)—

"(1A) Subsection (1) above does not apply to an excluded sale.

(1B) In subsection (1A) above "excluded sale" means a sale for a person not under the age of 16 of spectacles which have two single vision lenses of the same positive spherical power not exceeding 4 dioptnes, where the sale is wholly for the purpose of correcting, remedying or relieving the condition known as presbyopia; and for the purposes of this subsection lenses are to be taen to have the same positive spherical power if the difference between them is within the tolerances relating to the power of such lenses specified from time to time in the British Standard Specification."

(4) In subsection (2) of that section for the words "the foregoing subsection" there shall be substituted the words "Subsection (1) of this section."

Mrs. Currie: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 41.

Mrs. Currie: Amendment No. 29, and Nos. 41 and 43 which apply to Northern Ireland, will allow the sale of reading glasses to adults without a prescription. In the other place that principle was agreed in Committee following a free vote on the Government side. However, as the amendment tabled by the noble Lord Winstanley had certain defects and did not provide a safeguard for children under 16, the Government brought forward a tidying-up amendment to give effect to the wishes of another place.

The arguments about the sale of reading glasses without a prescription have raged for many years, with each side putting its case forcefully. It is generally accepted, however, that wearing self-selected glasses will not harm adults' eyes, even if they are the wrong strength. I remind the House that the original motion was tabled in another place by Lord Winstanley, who is a qualified doctor, and that he has been supported publicly by such people as Professor Barrie Jay of the Moorfields eye hospital, who says that there is no evidence from other countries such as the United States, where off-the-shelf spectacles have long been available, that people are harmed if they choose glasses that do not give them perfect sight correction.

Indeed, many other countries including New Zealand, Holland, Italy, Sweden, Canada and almost all states of the USA allow the sale of reading glasses, seemingly without adverse consequences for the populations' eyes. If

[Mrs. Currie]

there were any evidence of significant problems in, for example, the United States, where there is derestriction, I would have thought that the movement would have been very much in the other direction.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Minister accept that if the amendment stands, people can go into a shop, buy spectacles without a prescription and so bypass what many believe to be an essential eye check during which major medical problems may be diagnosed?

Mrs. Currie: Yes, that is exactly what is being suggested. The concern underlying the hon. Gentleman's quesion is probably taken care of by some of the research in the United States. For example, in a study of 15,000 eye-glass wearers in states where reading glasses are now sold over the counter, 79 per cent. of those questioned said that they still had professional eye examinations. We believe that more competition, lower prices and more convenience will far outweigh some of the difficulties that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. That is also why the Government brought forward an amendment to ensure that there is particular protection for, for example, children under 16.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: How will the 16-year-old cut-off point be policed? We must bear in mind the absurd difficulty of preventing people under 18 buying alcohol from off-licences, which is the best example of lack of policing.

Mrs. Currie: It would be illegal to sell such spectacles to children under 16, in the same way as it is illegal to sell them a number of other things. I have not the least doubt that opticians, especially as led by the General Optical Council, will keep an eye on these matters.

I repeat that we have no evidence that purchasing the wrong spectacles can cause harm to the eyes. The people whom we hope to help by accepting the amendment are those in my age group, the 40s, when eyesight begins to deteriorate very slightly but where evidence of eye disease is extremely rare.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Does the hon. Lady accept that people drive wearing glasses? Does she further accept that there can be a difference between one eye and the other and that that cannot be catered for when buying glasses over the counter?

Mrs. Currie: I am not sure of the relevance of the hon. Gentleman's first point. I certainly hope that anyone with defective eyesight drives wearing glasses. The hon. Gentleman is right about eyes being different. I understand that the proposal would allow only spectacles with both lenses of the same strength. That is a safeguard as anyone who found such an eye difference when they tried to purchase the spectacles would be well advised to have an eye test.

As I have said, in the United States where people have to pay for their eye tests, the overwhelming majority of those who purchase spectacles go to their advisers and have the appropriate tests. There is no reason why that should not be the case in this country. I merely offer the House a comment made in the leader in the *New York Times* on 16 May.

"Q: What's the difference between $60 reading glasses prescribed by an optometrist in New York and a $12 pair from Woolworth's in New Jersey?

A: $48."

In our view, the Lords have been wise in their approach to this subject, and we commend their amendment to the House.

1.30 am

Mr. Galbraith: The Minister is being somewhat disingenuous in trying to pretend that the argument against the amendment is based on whether the spectacles one gets may or may not affect one's sight simply because those spectacles may or may not make the right correction. The true argument against it is based in part on our earlier discussion about whether people will obtain glasses without prescription and therefore without having had their eyes tested.

We have already rehearsed the arguments about the value of eye tests and I will not repeat them. Without wishing to quote any scare stories over this issue, I must emphasise that it is essential that people having trouble with their eyesight should have their eyes examined by a properly qualified person before obtaining spectacles.

The amendment will undoubtedly result in many people not having their eyes properly tested, so leading to a deterioration in sight, due not to the refractive index within the spectacles but because some people will have ocular disease which will not be diagnosed.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): Because of the courteous and helpful replies that I have received from Ministers, I no longer speak with the acute anxiety that I felt when I first became aware of the amendment. But I still retain more than lingering traces of deep unease, and they require further assurances if they are to be eradicated completely.

I remain wholly in favour of the charges which we have voted to introduce and I still do not believe that they will act as a serious deterrent. But in this case the Government appear to be saying that people should have a prescription and a proper eye test because that is good preventive medicine, while at the same time saying that it is not necessary to have an eye test.

The Government's endorsement of the lack of necessity for an eye test will be a greater deterrent to people to have eye tests than any charge, however high. I say that because if people need new spectacles, or need glasses for the first time and they have no choice but to get a prescription, they will have their eyes tested whatever the charge.

An exaggerated picture may have been painted of the incidence of eye disease as opposed to eye defects which can be discovered during an optician's test, but it is common ground that a significant percentage of eye disease is diagnosed in such tests.

Under the amendment, a person aged 40 to 50 who has had consistently good sight but finds difficulty with reading, or some other minor difficulty, will probably say, "I do not need a prescription. I will simply buy a pair of glasses that will magnify." Even if the difficulty that that person has been experiencing is indicative of something more serious, he or she will not find out.

It has been pointed out that no person's two eyes are alike. Buying ready-made spectacles across the counter will mean that people will buy glasses with two lenses exactly alike.

It would be foolish to disregard the medical opinion which suddenly says that it is not so important to have a prescription, and that the wrong spectacles will not do much damage. Nevertheless, I am uneasy. If it is true that no damage is done to adult sight by wearing the wrong type of spectacles—given that they are simple magnifying spectacles—why were we so insistent when the sale of frames was deregulated that the lenses for them had to continue to be prescribed? Has medical opinion changed so radically that the argument has suddenly been stood on its head? If we are so convinced that there is no problem with adult sight, why did not the Government propose the amendment, rather than leaving it to the other place to do so? I issue a simple challenge to the practitioners who say that adult sight will not be damaged. Would they be prepared to put the wrong spectacles on their nose and wear them consistently for any length of time, and if they did, would they be confident that they would do themselves no long-term damage?

I fear the danger that if we get into the habit of thinking that we can buy spectacles without prescription and that it will do no harm, a market for second-hand glasses will develop. At that point we shall lose control. It will no longer be a case of telling people that they can buy only magnifying glasses. We shall lose control over the type of glasses sold. Many people will be deceived into thinking that they need simple magnification—nothing more than could be achieved with an ordinary hand-held magnifying glass—when in fact they need something more sophisticated. They will go without the spectacles that they need and when they find after two years that their sight has deteriorated they may think that all that they need is a stronger pair of magnifying spectacles. Once again they will buy them without prescription.

I do not wholly disregard the medical opinion that the problem may not be as serious as all that, but I seek some assurances. First, will the money which is rightly being rechannelled into preventive medicine include money for an immense education campaign about the value of the eye test? Will people be told that prescribed glasses are preferable to those that one can buy over the counter? Secondly, can we have a guarantee that the arrangements will be properly policed to ensure that only simple magnifying glasses and nothing more sophisticated are sold over the counter? Will any provision be made to discourage those who are returning for their second pair of non-prescribed spectacles—perhaps a statutory Government health warning that non-prescribed spectacles may, in the end, damage their sight? Will something be done to encourage people to choose properly prescribed lenses as a first step?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I propose to intervene briefly. I had intended to speak at length but I do not think that that would be helpful given that it is 1.40 am. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

In our earlier debate, the Secretary of State said that on the previous occasion on which these matters had come before the House he had been right. He maintained that when deregulation was being discussed by the House in 1983 he countered a number of predictions made from the Labour Front Bench and that he was right. Perhaps he was right, but there is a distinction between that debate and this. On that occasion, all the right hon. and learned Gentleman's hon. Friends supported him. He may be surprised to learn that a number of Opposition Members —including me—also supported his position on deregulation in 1983. We argued the matter on the Labour Benches, but our view did not prevail. On this occasion, however, Conservative Members are divided and the Opposition are united. I do not think that the Secretary of State has understood the importance of that difference.

The Minister referred to the market in non-prescribed spectacles in the United States of America. I was in America a couple of months ago and I bought two pairs of spectacles in a Washington store. I paid $7 for one pair and $15 for another—the equivalent of about £5 and £9. It struck me when I bought those glasses how cheap they were, so when I returned to the United Kingdom I invited a gentleman from, I think, the College of Ophthalmists to the Commons to tell me how one could justify spectacles being so much cheaper in the United States of America. He said that his organisation was not, in principle, opposed to the sale of cheap spectacles.

Although I shall be voting in the same way as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), I am not here to argue against the supply of free spectacles. If people want cheap spectacles, let them have them. The question is whether they should be allowed to have cheap spectacles without being given a prescription or some form of sight test. Should we allow a select group of people through this important net during which a medical condition might be diagnosed with not only long term implications for them, but for the Exchequer, in that the National Health Service may have to treat them. We are not arguing against the need for an over-the-counter market to develop in cheap spectacles. I accept that and if opticians believe in real competition, they, too, would support that principle. What they are saying is that people should have a prescription to buy them.

Perhaps a prescription can be modified so that it refers to magnification in terms of two, two and a half, three or whatever. It might be simplified to the extent that the person for whom spectacles are being prescribed can go to the opticians or to Underwoods, Boots or Woolworth's and buy a pair of spectacles over the counter. The point is that we must retain the net through which people must go before they are allowed to buy spectacles freely in the market, because the net is so precious in identifying disease.

I am sorry that so many hon. Members have left the House, and we will have difficulty, clearly, commanding a majority in the Lobby. Even at this late stage, I believe that the Minister should be aware of the concerns that have been expressed. When she replies to the debate, will she comment on the statistics that she gave us earlier? She said that an opinion poll had been carried out in the United States which showed that 79 per cent. of those who were buying spectacles on the over-the-counter market and in stores had had sight tests. That begs two questions. What about the 21 per cent. who had not? That means that millions of people have by-passed sight tests in America. Does the Minister accept that there may be millions of people who have slipped through the net?

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I wish to disclose an interest, because I was recently consulted by the Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians on this matter. I want to probe the reason given by the Minister for supporting the Lords amendment. It seems to me that she rested her case for this substantial change in the Government's policy on the research carried out in the

[Mr. Michael Shersby]

United States. Can she tell the House when that research was carried out, what the research showed and why it was sufficiently powerful to change long-established Government procedure on this matter? As the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) said, as long ago as 1983 the then Secretary of State for Social Services, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr. Fowler), made it clear that the determination of the Government was not to bow to pressure from those who advocated the lifting of all restrictions on the dispensing of spectacles to adults.

The Office of Fair Trading also considered the matter and reported that if Ministers felt that the potential health risks outweighed competition benefits, it would consider the alternative of derestricting dispensing provided that spectacles could only be sold against a prescription issued in, say, the previous two or three years. That view was expressed in 1983.

Earlier this year, in fact in Committee, my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton) stated:

"we are clear that the law does not, nor is it our intention that it should, allow people to walk off the street into any shop that cares to display spectacles and to buy spectacles that have no relation to some measurement of what their eyes need."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 11 February 1988; c. 660.]

1.45 am

Those are two clear statements of Government policy, by the former Secretary of State and by the former Minister for Health, made only a few months ago.

I should like to make it clear to the House that, as I understand it, the Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians does not claim that ready-made spectacles are harmful to the eyes. It is concerned about missed eye examinations. Its serious objection to ready-made spectacles for adults over 40 is that almost inevitably such a person would be likely to miss an opportunity for a proper eye examination, yet the very people likely to buy ready-made spectacles are presbyopes over the age of 40 for whom a health screening check is most important.

Even at such a late hour, these are important points and I shall be extremely grateful if my hon. Friend will explain to the House a little more clearly why there has been such a substantial reversal of long-standing Government policy and why, on the basis of unspecified American research, it is proposed to agree with the Lords amendment.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): It is significant that all the Back-Bench speeches in the debate have been hostile to the Government's view. It is interesting that the two speeches from the Conservative Back Benches have been from hitherto noted Government loyalists. That tells me, the House and the country that there is considerable all-party disquiet about the Government's refusal to accept the amendment. That disquiet arises from the fact that an amendment previously supported by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) might well have enabled us to avoid this debate as it would have accepted that free eye tests mean that people are not reluctant to go to their optician to get a professional view and a professional prescription, which they can then take to a supermarket-type facility.

I am particularly critical of the price of spectacles in this country. It is interesting that all the Government's moves to reduce the price of spectacles have in my view and in that of my constituents had little impact on high street shops.

The experience of America appears to be unreliable. I believe that the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), gave the game away when she talked about the quality of the people passing judgment in the United States. She did not talk about optometrists or about qualified opticians. Her words were "eye advisers". What qualifications do those "eye advisers" have to dispense spectacles? I suggest that such people do not have any qualifications——

Mrs. Currie: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman heard me. I called in evidence Professor Jay, ex-president of the Faculty of Ophthalmologists and a consultant at Moorfields eye hospital, who has said that there is no evidence that choosing such spectacles causes any medical problems.

Mr. Griffiths: The Minister's comments are irrelevant. She has not sought to refute the fact that, as the record will show, she referred to eye advisers, not qualified opticians or optometrists. That betokens a phrase to denote people who are not qualified and are selling cameras or films over the counter one day and are calling themselves eye advisers and selling glasses the next, as if they were operating a fast food franchise. We might have some faith in eye advisers if they were qualified and could ensure that prescriptions were made up to suit people's eyes, but the Government deliberately voted tonight to ensure that that does not happen free of charge. That explains the opposition to the measure and why no Conservative Back Benchers have spoken in favour of it.

The Minister has not taken into account the difference in traditions between this country and the United States. In the United States, people are accustomed to paying for glasses and eye tests. The United States has never boasted a free health service when people need it, paid for by taxes. People in the United States must look out for themselves and look to their own resources. That tradition may serve people in the immediate future, but the incidence of glaucoma and other eye diseases may be higher in the United States than it is here because people are not screened so early. I choose my words advisedly and say "may". If the Minister is prepared to present evidence to the House—I give her the opportunity to do so—I will withdraw the word "may". However, as she is not rising to intervene, I am minded to change the word "may" and say, "The likely fact is that the incidence is greater."

Since the war, we have had a tradition of free eye tests which has been supported by all political parties, until now, the profession and the country. The Government will save peanuts as a result of the measure that they forced through earlier by so narrow a majority. People in this country are accustomed to free eye tests. Conservative Members are right to say that nothing is free because those tests are paid for through taxes.

People are entitled to one professional consultation a year to have their eyes tested. Without that, the sales of glasses over the counter will not be a boon to the country, but will deceive many people into thinking that they are receiving medical treatment when they are being conned by unqualified over-the-counter salesmen. That will result

in increased eye disease and increased cost to the National Health Service, as diseases will be detected much later than at present, and the people who will have to pick up the bills will be the taxpayers.

Dame Jill Knight: My name appears against amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 29, and I have waited patiently to speak to it. I do not want to detain the House for long, but I wish to make one or two points that have not yet been drawn to the attention of the House. I remember vividly—this happened when I first became a Member of this place—a Bill that was moved and piloted through the House by the late Sir Ronald Russell, who represented Wembley. The arguments advanced against the then common practice of having ready-made spectacles available in Woolworth stores, for example, were extremely powerful. Sir Ronald had no difficulty in securing a place for his Bill on the statute book.

It is extremely unfortunate that we are going back on Sir Ronald's arguments and his Bill. In those days we thought that it was wrong for ready-made spectacles to be available for purchase in ordinary retail outlets, and it is sad that that principle is now being overthrown. Ministers made firm promises during the early stages of the Bill's passage through Parliament that this very thing would not happen. Clause 14(1) has been amended by the Government to require the Secretary of State to regulate all the duties that are to be performed in a sight test. What is the point of that if there is not to be a sight test in many instances?

Practically everyone on earth has two eyes that are different. Another fact, and a continuing one, is that every two lenses in every pair of ready-made glasses are the same. It is not possible for someone to pick up a pair of ready-made glasses that meet his or her needs exactly. I have far too much respect for my eyes to risk damaging them by wearing ready-made glasses. Is it certain that the provision of ready mades will deter the public from bothering to arrange eye tests and obtaining proper glasses.

When the Bill is enacted and implemented, the cost of an eye test will increase, and the public will be able to pick up a pair of glasses in a Woolworth store, for example, or from a barrow in the local market. What sort of arrangement is that?

Clause 13, as amended, excludes the sale of ready-made glasses to under 16-year-olds. That is ridiculous. How will that provision be policed? Will inspectors wander around ready to pounce on 15-year-olds who are seen hovering near the ready-made glasses counter in a Woolworth store? The licensees of pubs cannot identify young people who are under 16, and perhaps the difficulties of licensees are not so great as those that will be faced by inspectors. After all, some young people sit in pubs for comparatively long periods with drinks in their hands, and for much longer than it would take a 15-year-old to buy a pair of ready-mades. It is lunacy to pretend——

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Dame Jill Knight: No, I shall not give way. I am trying to be brief.

If it is lunacy to pretend that there can be effective policing, why are 16-year-olds excluded from the sale of ready-made glasses?

I apologise to the House for introducing two highly technical issues. Theoretically, it is impossible for there to be presbyopia of more than three dioptrics, but ready-mades are said to be for persons suffering from presbyopia. The provision permits reading glasses to be sold up to plus four dioptres in power, but they could not possibly be sold wholly for the purpose that the Bill stipulates. That is ridiculous nonsense.

I concede that ready-made glasses may not harm people's eyes, but it can be said with certainty that those who wear such glasses will not be able to see properly. The glasses will not be optically correct. Double vision could easily be caused if the optical centres of the lenses did not coincide with the exact distance between the person's eyes. If someone had double vision, he will be extremely dangerous when behind the wheel of a car. Unfortunately, drivers will buy ready-made glasses, put them on their noses, drive their cars and hit something. They will not be able to see properly. There is no doubt about that. There are many examples of that happening in America. If drivers have a tendency to experience double vision because they wear optically incorrect glasses, they will be especially dangerous when driving at night. Alternatively, someone wearing optically incorrect glasses could enter a factory and operate a lathe without being able to see properly.

We have already taken one step towards eliminating eye tests, and this is a second and extremely serious step. If my hon. Friend the Minister and her ministerial colleagues are sincere in wanting the public to have eye tests, this is the wrong way to proceed. I ask them to accept the amendment.

2 am

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I support the Government. Every hon. Member who has spoken so far has treated the general public like imbeciles. If a member of the public selects a pair of ready-made glasses, he wants them for reading. If the glasses are comfortable for both eyes and he can read well, those glasses will do very nicely thank you and will do no harm to the eyes.

If a member of the general public needs distance glasses with different lenses, he will have to get a prescription. If he is not well or has eye trouble, he will go to his general practitioner. One of the first things that the general practitioner will do is get a torch and look into his eyes. That is a diagnostic approach used by doctors.

I believe that members of the public are very sensible. If they are not well and have eye trouble, they will go to a doctor or a proper optician. Most people believe that their eyesight is their most precious possession. Whatever priorities they may have or whatever else they may have to cut back on, it is certain that they will still go for an eye test.

The Minister referred to the American figures. I suspect that the people who did not enter that category were excluded because they did not have great defects. Therefore, the glasses that they acquired off the shelf in a shop were adequate for their correction and suited them nicely. Some hon. Members have implied that people will crash into others in cars, knock into people and all that stupid nonsense. If that happens when someone puts on

[Mr. Geoffrey Dickens]

glasses, he will get the right glasses or a prescription. We must begin to treat people as intelligent human beings and not as imbeciles.

I was a member of the Standing Committee on the Health and Social Security Bill which became the Health and Social Security Act 1985. That deregulation Bill was shepherded through the House by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State when he was Minister for Health. That legislation has worked well. If we want inexpensive glasses we can acquire them, but if we want to pay a little extra for fashion we can do that. The vast majority of people will go to proper opticians. All the scaremongering is absolutely stupid. The Government are on the right lines. Opposition Members said that no Conservative Members would speak in favour of the proposal. I speak in favour and I think that I have spoken more commonsense than the rest of the speakers put together.

Mrs. Currie: I am sure that all hon. Members would join me in saying that we would never treat my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) like an imbecile because he clearly is not one and never has been.

My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) asked about having an immense education programme. We have already set aside £250,000 this year and we are considering whether we should set aside a similar sum next year. We look for sensible proposals from the profession which would answer many of the concerns expressed tonight.

My hon. Friend asked whether they would be simple glasses. I suggest that she looks at the detailed wording of the amendment. We adopted four dioptres because the professional advice was that that was a sensible cut-off point. As for a Government health warning, I shall consider what she has said, but, in all honesty, since the spectacles cause no harm we do not feel that that is necessary. I see that my hon. Friend is about to rise again. I hope that she will allow me to answer the other points and it may be that I will cover those that she has made.

I listened to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) with great care. I have the greatest possible respect for her. When I was a new councillor in Birmingham she was the local Member of Parliament and she treated me at all times with consideration and courtesy. However, I do not agree with a word that she has said.

In all honesty, this was not Government policy originally. It was not in the Bill. It was drafted by one of the nation's distinguished doctors, the noble Lord Winstanley. After some discussion, and after taking medical and optical advice, we decided that the best thing to do was to offer Conservatives a free vote. They had a full discussion and the other place decided to proceed, having taken into account many of the arguments that were put. It is now argued that the House should concur with the Lords in the amendment and take into account the advice that was given by a large number of medically qualified people.

My hon. Friend said that people would not be able to see properly. My hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth put it very well. He said that if they cannot see properly they had better get themselves some proper spectacles and that is what they would do. In all honesty, having given the matter considerable thought, the Government consider it highly unlikely that we shall end up with drivers with double vision at night toddling around wearing spectacles that are no use for them simply because the amendment comes into operation. We consider that it is a splendid small change that will widen the market. It will make it simple, easy and convenient for people with mild vision defects to purchase spectacles should they so want. It will do no harm and it may do some good.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Before the hon. Lady sits down——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Lady has sat down.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 224, Noes 30.

Division No. 484] **[2.06 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael

Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beggs, Roy
Canavan, Dennis
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hume, John
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAvoy, Thomas
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Mallon, Seamus
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 30 to 51 agreed to, some with special entry.

Ordered,

That a Committee be appointed to draw up a reason to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to their amendment No. 20.

Ordered,

That Mr. Secretary Clarke, Mr. Davud Mellor, Ms. Harriet Harman and Mr. Tom Sackville be members of the Committee.

Ordered,

That three be the quorum of the Committee.

Ordered,

That the Committee do withdraw immediately.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Reason for disagreeing to Lords amendment reported, and agreed to; to be communicated to the Lords.

Motor Vehicles (Air Pollution)

2.21 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4637/88 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Transport on 8th July on air pollution by the gases from the engines of motor vehicles; and supports the agreement reached at the 28th and 29th June Environment Council in Luxembourg.

We are considering a proposal from the Commission that deals with future standards for gaseous emissions from cars with engines of less than 1·4 litres.

When the "Luxembourg package", which later became directive 88/76, was negotiated in 1985, the Community put off one of its toughest decisions. It set only interim first stage standards for small cars, which form about half the European car market. The proposal now before us seeks to set definitive stage II standards for these vehicles. The word "definitive" is used imprecisely. The 88/76 directive is the fifth amending directive to the original one that set emission limits back in 1970. This latest draft directive now has an additional article committing the European Council to consider in 1991 another tightening of standards for all sizes of car.

It is proposed that the stage II small cars type approval limit value for carbon monoxide should be 30 g per test and the combined total of hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen 8 g per test. The limits are the same as those to be applied for medium-sized cars, between 1·4 and 2 litres, and nearly as strict as the United States equivalent limits set for cars over 2 litres.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. As he is probably aware, many thousands of motorists in Great Britain drive classic or vintage motor vehicles which are incapable of being modified to meet the requirements. I have read the documents and I am satisfied that those vehicles would not be placed at risk. Will he confirm and place on record that the matters to which he is referring relate only to new motor vehicles?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes. My hon. Friend previously asked a question which I was delighted to answer, because there is some confusion in the minds of some people involved in vintage, veteran and old cars generally. The rule is that the new standards will apply to cars which are manufactured after the set date. Therefore, I confirm what my hon. Friend has just said. He has done the House and the country a service by raising that point. I hope that people will no longer write to my hon. Friend in his role as secretary of the House of Commons Motoring Club, or to me as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, asking us to reconfirm what we have already confirmed in the House.

The dates of application—1 October 1992 for new type approvals and 1 October 1993 for all new registrations—are two years later than those set for the application of the small car stage I standards imposed by directive 88/76. That reiterates and remakes the point my hon. Friend has already made.

The proposal is for a permissive directive under article 100A of the Single European Act. It has two purposes. It prevents any member state from setting unique national standards. At the same time, substantial progress is made towards greater protection for the environment. The permissive nature of the proposal gives each member state the opportunity to set less stringent standards, or to delay the dates of implementation if it so desires. The United Kingdom Government intend to apply the new standards in full on the proposed dates and have negotiated on that assumption.

Surprisingly quick progress has been made in negotiations in Council and political agreement by qualified majority has been achieved, subject to several reserves, including a parliamentary one from the United Kingdom and an ad referendum one from France.

Earlier this year, we did not think that such quick progress was possible. That was made plain by the explanatory memorandum and the Scrutiny Committee report. Initial reactions to the Commission's proposal were mixed, to say the least. The United Kingdom shared a view held by all the major Community car producers except Germany, that the proposal was too strict. Others did not think that it went far enough. A minority voiced support for the proposal. The key figure is the combined limit for hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen. In directive 83/351/EEC, which sets the limits we currently apply, the standard is 19 g per test for small cars. The standard in directive 88/76/EEC, for small cars, stage I is 15 g per test. Some member states hoped to see a stage II limit of 12 g per test, while others preferred 5 g per test. The Commission's proposal, as it often does, almost splits the difference at 8 g per test.

These different limits would lead to different technical solutions. I think this is perhaps the most important part of the debate. At 12 g per test, most small cars could avoid the use of catalytic converters. Lean burn engine technology on its own would still be an attractive option. Several manufacturers have already developed models that can nearly meet this standard. It is not achieved easily. Although small cars could continue to use carburettors, they almost certainly would need sophisticated electronic ignition systems to achieve an acceptable balance between emissions, fuel economy and driveability.

Such systems are not cheap. I believe that it would be right to assume that their fitment would become commonplace in the 1990s. The reliability and long-term stability they offer would still be strong selling points, even if emission standards were not already pushing the technology in that direction. The Government initially saw the attractions of a 12 g per test standard—it represents a 37 per cent. reduction over the current standard at little real additional cost to the consumer.

The Commission's proposal of a combined standard of 8 g per test for hydrocarbons and oxide of nitrogen would impose the need to fit catalysts on almost all small car models. The need to fit controls of mixture strength, with electronic management of fuel injection, would be avoided. Systems could be kept simple, and lean burn engines would continue to be an option. When assessing the costs of a continued limit value of 8 g per test, the Government have used the 12 g standard as a new baseline.

We believe that the technology to achieve the 12 g standard will be available anyway. Our estimate of additional cost when the 8 g standard is fully implemented is about £250 million a year, or 3·5 per cent. of small car motoring costs. This fits in with the Commission's estimate of 4·5 per cent. increase in costs when compared with the current 19 g per test baseline. About £30 million of these

additional costs can be accounted for in increased fuel consumption. As modern engine technology becomes more sophisticated and efficient, such fuel consumption penalties can be expected to fall.

A combined standard of 5 g per test is another matter altogether. It is universally accepted that such a standard would be fully equivalent to current United States standards, and that the only proven technology to achieve it is the fully controlled, three-way catalyst with electronic engine management which holds the air-fuel ratio at a fixed level. The standard rules out entirely the possibility of the fuel economy benefits of lean burn. The Commission has estimated that small car costs would rise by 13 to 15 per cent. relative to the current standards. That is an enormous amount to the cost of motoring where the market is the most price sensitive.

There is no question about our needing to improve emission standards so that total emissions from motor vehicles can be contained and then reduced, in spite of increases in vehicle activity.

Detailed computer modelling of the effects of vehicle emissions on air quality has been carried out for the Department of the Environment by the Harwell laboratory. The standards the Government are already committed to apply—the medium and large cars standards and the stage I standard for small cars—are predicted by the model to achieve substantial reductions in nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbon emissions. As a result, peak ozone levels are expected to fall too. This is thought to be particularly important for sensitive vegetation.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): How far the Government seriously expect levels of pollution to decline is a fundamental point of the debate. Would the hon. Gentleman like to comment specifically on what estimates the Government base their claim that ozone levels will fall if this compromise is adopted?

Mr. Bottomley: The facts of the physical chemistry are not in dispute. It is expected that the 8 g per test standard compared to the 12 g will mean that the level of ozone harmful to the vegetation will be reduced by 6 per cent. more, the level of hydrocarbons by 7 per cent. and the peak ozone levels by an extra 2 per cent. Obviously, people can have their views on whether the limit can be reduced further. At 5 g per test, there would be a significant impact on the fuel economy of cars. That becomes important with small vehicles and even more important when we realise that half the cars sold in Europe are small cars. We need to look also at the costs to consumers. There is just as much cost benefit in ecology and the environment as in other respects.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): My hon. Friend is obviously aware that, no matter what system of engine management and combined catalyst one has, exhaust gases of some kind will come out the back of the vehicle. Usually, that will result in an increase in carbon dioxide emissions. Did the Commission bear in mind the concern, which has escalated as recently as the last few months, about the build-up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and the fact that this legislation will accelerate that process by the time European cars are converted to lean-burn catalyst devices? Does my hon. Friend agree that this will exacerbate a problem which is causing growing concern to everyone?

Mr. Bottomley: The Commission wants the Council of Ministers to be able to reach agreement. Britain has helped to lead the way towards general acceptance of the Commission's compromise between 12 g per test, which was put forward by Britain some months ago as the preferred level, and 5 g per test, to which some countries wanted the whole Community to move.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) rightly says that one of the consequences of catalytic conversion is increased carbon dioxide. Increased fuel consumption is also associated with the 5 g per test. There seem to be significant costs above the potentially justifiable costs arising from the 8 g per test standard. Renewed concern for the atmosphere and for the greenhouse effect, led in Europe by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, demonstrate that we need to be practical as well as idealistic.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): My hon. Friend referred to the academic research carried out, particularly at Harwell, on behalf of his Department. Is my hon. Friend aware also of the great volume of academic research being carried out into the very localised conditions caused by pollution from car exhausts? Where that is exacerbated by temperature inversions, much building damage occurs. I hope that my hon. Friend will bear in mind the consequences of pollution, not just in the very broad sense but in terms of local traffic management.

Mr. Bottomley: Anyone who works in this place will be aware of the effect on the buildings around here when traffic comes to a standstill around Parliament square. Hon. Members will be aware that the fumes pumped out do not just affect the buildings but may even affect the quality of some of our judgments as we do our work at 2.33 in the morning, or is it late evening? I do not know how one is supposed to refer to it.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): The Minister said that some countries advocated 5 g per test, as opposed to 8 g per test, which the British Government support. If the Minister thinks that 5 g is not a good idea, why did some countries believe that it was a reasonable and attainable proposition? What case did they make for it?

Mr. Bottomley: I do not want to get into deep water. These countries have coalition Governments. I make no secret of the fact that if we had a significant number of Green Members, that would show that our major parties had failed. Green issues should not be left to one party; they should be with us all. In countries with proportional representation minority groups may have more power, and may show it by demanding that their Governments commit themselves to programmes that are not cost-beneficial. It is far better to examine the science involved in going to 5 rather than 8 or 12 g per test. That is my answer to the hon. Gentleman's question; perhaps Opposition Members will advance others.

A stage II standard of 12 g per test would reduce nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbon emissions further, with a small decrease in ozone levels. At 8 g per test there is a jump in air quality impact. Hydrogen emissions would be controlled more than twice as effectively as by a 12 g standard, and ozone levels would be lower.

[Mr. Bottomley]

A 5 g standard would effectively mandate full three-way catalysts on all small cars. Compared with an 8 g standard it would reduce nitrogen oxide emissions but would have no significant effect on hydrocarbons or ozone.

A stage II standard of 8 g would lead to significant further improvements, and, for ozone, is probably close to the optimum that can be achieved by controls on small car emissions.

In consultations with the motor manufacturers the Government have been left in no doubt that their preferred outcome for the present negotiations would have been a standard of about 12 g per test. They have also recognised that European agreement at that level has become impossible, with many member states either supporting the Commission's proposal or wishing to go further.

Uncertainty in such a key area as vehicle emissions can be very damaging to industry. The detailed development of new engine specifications is one of the major tasks in preparing a new car for the market. When emission standards remain unresolved, manufacturers have no choice but to plan for several outcomes, since they must have models that they can legally offer for sale by the time the standard comes into force. That is wasteful of resources and should be avoided whenever possible. On balance, the advice that we have had from industry was that an early agreement at 8 g per test was preferable to continuing delay in agreement. It would allow the lean burn engine technology being developed by the United Kingdom manufacturers of small cars to show its worth, although oxidation catalysts would be needed as extra emission control equipment.

In the lead-up to last June's Environment Councils these considerations were leading the United Kingdom to reconsider its position in negotiations. We were aware that if we were to move, others might follow us. We were also detecting a willingness on the part of the Germans, who had the influential duties of the Presidency, to seek some sort of compromise.

It was in this climate that the United Kingdom decided, shortly before the first June Council, to be sufficiently flexible in its negotiating to be able to support the Commission's proposal if, by so doing, a qualified majority could then be assembled.

Member states that had stood with the United Kingdom in the 12 g camp quickly followed the United Kingdom lead to support the Commission's proposal. One other member state joined us from the 5 g camp. Others who wanted the 5 g per test limit wished to add conditions before they could agree to a compromise. The key conditions were, first, to commit the Council to a firm third stage for application some time in the 1990s at the limit of 5 g per test. Second, member states should be free to offer tax incentives to purchasers of cars that met the 5 g limit before the mandatory application date. Third, it was said that the revision of the test cycle to include high-speed driving sequences should be prejudged so that the Council agreed now on limits for the new cycle for medium cars in a way that forced the use of three-way catalyst technology for that category.

These three conditions were unacceptable to the United Kingdom and to several other member states. After some difficult negotiations, a qualified majority was able to support the Commission's proposal, with the addition of an article committing the Council to review vehicle emission standards in 1991. Whilst taking note of some member states' desire for 5 g per test for a third stage, there is no commitment to such a limit. Those participating in the agreement——

Mr. Tony Lloyd: One of the countries that wants to pursue the 5 g test is Denmark. The Danes may seek to go it alone in some sort of Nordic agreement. What would be the British Government's response to that?

Mr. Bottomley: That is a matter for the Commission, which should take them to court. The same would apply to any country that tried to impose a standard beyond that agreed in the directive. It is a permissive directive that allows countries to come up to standards set in the directive, but not to go beyond. If I have that wrong—*[Interruption.]* I had hoped that by giving way there would not be too many speeches, but obviously I am provoking comment so I shall continue with my speech and then answer points raised in the debate.

Those participating in the agreement have also undertaken not to extend the use of tax incentives, which undermine the harmonisation of the market by creating the unique specifications of car models for sectors of the Community market in advance of dates set out in the directive.

On the test cycle, the Commission has reaffirmed its intention to make a proposal within the next year. The agreement is still not assured since the French believe that some improvement on the conditions surrounding it should be made. They have sustained their reserve, and we can expect further negotiation on details at the November Council.

We now have the makings of an agreement that still leaves many issues on vehicle emissions to be decided by the Council. We look forward to further proposals from the Commission on the high-speed cycle, evaporative emissions, durability testing and further tightening of limits on gaseous emissions from commercial vehicles and the introduction of particulate limits for large diesel-engined vehicles, which are now a dominant source of black smoke in urban areas.

I say to all those concerned about the environment that there are opportunities for people to contribute. About 49 of the 50 people in every 80 who could use unleaded fuel do not do so. Most people have cars that can use unleaded fuel. Most people with those cars could save 4p to 6p a gallon. The numbers of petrol stations that have unleaded fuel are growing dramatically. Sales of two-star are falling and I expect most petrol stations to switch to supplying unleaded fuel. I ask everyone, whether in business or individually, to find out as soon as possible whether his or her car can use unleaded fuel so that we can get the lead out of the atmosphere.

To return to the emissions in the directive, we have made significant progress at a faster rate than we had hoped. The agreement will be good for the environment and will give the motor industry the opportunity to show us the real benefits of advanced fuel emission technologies such as lean burn. It is now up to it. I commend the agreement to the House.

2.42 am

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The Minister's comments tonight do not allow us to give even one cheer for the Prime Minister's conversion to a greener Britain and a greener Europe. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister believes that we can have bolt-on environmentalism—almost like a bolt-on catalytic converter—that can be assembled and make no difference to any other aspect of policy.

The agreement is a compromise that is fairly typical of many things that are happening within the European Community. It is a compromise at almost the worst possible level because it advances the argument hardly a jot and the cause of a cleaner and better environment scarcely at all. It is rather ironic that the translation of the letter from the Vice-President of the Commission, Lord Cockfield, should make the point that the Luxembourg agreement was premised with the view that the basic principles of future emission requirements of the European Community should be adapted by categories of motor vehicles so that the effect on the European environment would be equivalent to that produced by USA standards, taking into account different patterns of use for each category.

It is ironic that the Minister prays in aid the idea that there should be some approximation to USA standards when, in reality, under existing regulations—we are moving on from those—a car in the United Kingdom, on an annual basis, produces about eight times more hydro carbons, carbon monoxides and nitrogen oxides. Even under the new proposals, the smaller vehicles of less than 2 litres will produce about twice the pollution of an equivalent vehicle on the USA.

Mr. Bottomley: Is the hon. Gentleman basing his remarks on United States standards or United States car emissions? I understand that about half the cars in the United States which start off in theory meeting the regulations do not meet them shortly afterwards. That may be a question, as I said in my earlier remarks, of whether Britain is right to try to agree to measures which we will make happen, rather than do what others do, and pass laws but do not get people to live up to them.

Mr. Lloyd: Perhaps the Minister would care to say how many prosecutions there have been in Britain in recent years for emissions that transgressed existing laws. Most vehicles on the roads of Britain are in breach of existing regulations which prohibit emissions dangerous to health or which cause damage to property. Any vehicle on our roads that is pumping out carbon monoxide or nitrogen oxides of different kinds or hydrocarbons is already in breach of our regulations.

Even if the Minister says that that is a technical point—I concede that it is—he will be aware that one can walk outside this building at any time of the day or night and find lorries belching out exhaust emissions which fall foul of the Minister's pragmatic levels reached by negotiation. So as we in Britain do not control emissions either, it is disingenuous of the Minister to refer to the state of affairs in America, when the United States can point to a real improvement through emission control—an improvement which Britain cannot claim.

I speak of the irony of the Minister praying in aid the example of the situation in the United States and the approximation of this European compromise to it—ironic because the European compromise is massively worse than the United States position—because this debate is taking place on the day when Lord Caithness has been signing the United Kingdom's acquiescence to a freeze on nitrogen oxide emissions which will have the effect that by 1994—not by 1992 or 1993, as applies in this directive—those emissions from all sources will be cut back to the levels of December last year.

That may seem a great achievement, but there is a problem for Opposition Members, who regard the Prime Minister's conversion to environmental issues as being totally bogus, when we consider the situation in other EC countries. France, which has a generally bad record in these matters, and Italy, which, in defence of the small car industry, has been as recalcitrant in the past as has Britain have agreed to support the more aggressive and more acceptable 30 per cent. reduction in nitrogen oxide emissions by 1994. The British Government, on the other hand, have said that they do not want to know about that level. So it is ironic for the Minister to claim that the British Government have credibility in this sphere when the rest of Western Europe is out of step with the Prime Minister's newfound environmental credentials.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The hon. Gentleman makes much play with the commitment of certain other countries. The Soviet Union is a signatory to the 30 per cent. declaration. Should one therefore attach any credibility to that? Is it not better to approach this issue in the way the British Government have—to mean what they say and get down to the objective level instead of going along with political ploys, as do many Governments in Europe and elsewhere?

Mr. Lloyd: The credibility of the British Government is not high in this area. They have resisted any move towards more acceptable controls of pollution. The compromise now before the House, as I shall demonstrate, is unsatisfactory because it will not achieve the improvement in the environment that the Government claim that it will. It is ironic that the directive should come before the House today, given that last night—the night when the Minister discussed penalty points with me—it was recorded that at the York road junior school not far from here the World Health Organisation's recommended maximum of 10 mg per cu. m of carbon monoxide was exceeded. In the area of the Houses of Parliament the level of carbon monoxide was 11·3 mg per cu. m.

Most of the carbon monoxide in a city such as London comes from emissions from motor vehicles. In the period from 7 o'clock last night until this morning, at Bedford junior school near Heathrow airport, the World Health Organisation's recommended maximum for emissions was exceeded when 10·7 mg per cu. m were found. In the area of the York road junior school last night the World Health Organisation's recommended maximum nitrogen oxide level of 400 mg per cu. m was also exceeded. This morning, during the peak period of travel for commuters in London, the level reached 482 mg, which is way over the figure that the WHO finds acceptable.

I hope that the Minister accepts that the consequences for the health of those travelling through the area at that time may be serious. I hope that he will accept that it is ridiculous for the Government to lay claim to any credibility, given that we experience the physical impact of the problem on a day-to-day basis. I now remember what the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) said.

[Mr. Lloyd]

It is ridiculous to talk in terms of global or national limits. The problem exists in local areas, and particularly in London because of high traffic density.

Mr. Roger King: I do not say that such levels of pollution are in any way acceptable; of course they are not. However, it must be remembered that over the past few days, and last night, weather conditions were especially conducive to a build-up of pollution. We have had fog, temperature inversion and all the rest of it. Such conditions are exceptional in London. There is usually a wind so that exhaust fumes can dissipate. I hope that the House is not concluding from the hon. Gentleman's remarks that such pollution is an everyday occurrence with which we have to live, with the consequent danger to us all.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman seems to misunderstand what a maximum recommended limit means. It means just that. It is extremely dangerous for those in the vicinity when that limit is exceeded. There is some merit in the hon. Gentleman's argument that so far such events have been relatively infrequent, but in London the limits have already been exceeded twice in the past week.

The hon. Gentleman may want to talk about unusual weather conditions, but they are not so odd. It was predicted that the limits would be exceeded in November and December this year because the amount of nitrogen oxides and carbon monoxide being pumped into the atmosphere in London has increased year by year as a result of the increase in the volume of traffic on the roads of London. The Minister knows that some of the increase in the volume of traffic is due to the relative affluence of commuters in London but that much of it is also due to the Government's refusal to invest in public transport.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Nonsense.

Mr. Lloyd: The Minister must accept that important point. He made some play of trying to justify lean burn engines in terms of national fuel consumption. He knows that there are far more efficient ways of reducing the national consumption of fuel—among them better and slower traffic systems and getting people out of motor cars and on to a more efficient public transport system.

Mr. Bottomley: May I abbreviate parts of this debate? Will the hon. Gentleman accept that the number of people commuting by car into London in the past six or seven years has fallen from 190,000 to 160,000, that the number of people using the underground each day has risen by 60 per cent. since it was taken back from the GLC, that the decline has been reversed in the number of people using the buses and that investment in the public transport system has been running higher than the investment in national roads? Almost everything that the hon. Gentleman has said is wrong. Why do we not come back to emissions and concentrate, perhaps, on the 5 g. and 8 g. standard? Perhaps he will accept that putting three-way catalysts on to small vehicles, with the fuel injection control equipment, is likely to worsen the fuel economy by 10 per cent., which will not only lead to extra carbon dioxide, but to increased fuel and fumes.

Mr. Lloyd: The last point is not true, because the difficulty of especially the lean burn technology is that it offers very little in the reduction of nitrogen oxides, and that is the most fundamental criticism of that technology. It is an untested technology and cannot even guarantee to deliver what the Minister claims. It certainly will not reduce at high speeds the amount of nitrogen oxides that are pumped into the atmosphere. As nitrogen oxide is the most important of the three pollutants from vehicle emissions—because of its impact on acid rain and the creation of ozone in connection with hydrocarbons—the Minister cannot wriggle out of the problem simply by referring to fuel efficiency or cost.

The Minister waxes eloquent about the Government's success in transport, but the reason why tubes in London are overcrowded owes nothing at all to Government investment, but a lot to the Government's incompetence in the management of traffic systems in London. Because of the way that traffic operates in London, there is more pollution in the atmosphere now than there has been in previous years. That is a statistical fact which cannot be altered by any argument put forward by the Minister. I will let him think about that while his hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) speaks.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does the hon. Gentleman concede that the clean air Acts were passed by a Conservative Administration, and that much of the argument that he is constructing in attacking the Government on this point is absurd?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman picked on someone from the wrong city to talk to about clean air Acts, because pressure for clean air Acts came from northern cities and from the Labour councils. Labour councils were putting pressure on a Conservative Government that operated down here, but it was their pressure that led to those Acts. The hon. Gentleman should know that Manchester, which has been Labour-controlled for far longer than the hon. Gentleman has lived in a northern city, took the lead in clean air matters.

The specific question must be where we go from here, because the present EC compromise will not begin significantly to reduce the amount of environmental pollution caused by vehicle emissions. When we study the Warren spring calculations of the impact of nitrogen oxides by the end of the century, we see that, if the present Luxembourg compromise is brought into effect, the reduction will be 12 to 32 per cent. If three-way catalytic converters are introduced, the reduction will be 60 to 70 per cent. We are told by environmental scientists that that is the sort of level that will be necessary if we do not simply maintain our present position, but we begin to undo the damage of the impact of acid rain. The Minister must deal with that because skirting around and saying that we can achieve stability is not satisfactory. Stability is not a position of credibility if we are to take seriously the Minister's cost balance of trading off cost and improvement. We will not improve if this order is to be the full stop for Western Europe.

The Minister must recognise that if the directive comes into force in the early 1990s, its full impact will not be felt until well into the next century. Even in 1992 or 1993 any attempts would mean that we delay the inevitable need to take any practical action until 2010 or even after that. We are playing with a 20-year time scale that we do not have.

There is no sense in allowing permissive legislation of this kind——

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): I should like to ask the hon. Gentleman one small question. What is the Labour party's policy on exhaust emission and has it been discussed with the car manufacturers and the trade unions? Will the hon. Gentleman tell us what he would do?

Mr. Lloyd: I think that I have made quite clear what I would do, but I shall spell it out to the hon. Gentleman in case I was not clear. We would press for the introduction of three-way catalytic converters on all new motor vehicles because that is the only way that we can begin to tackle the problem of vehicle emissions.

Conservative Members will obviously want to pray in aid all sorts of bogus statistics, but the most important statistic is that a third of the world's vehicles are now fitted with a technology which was developed in Britain but rejected by British Governments on the most ridiculous grounds. That third of the world includes the United States, Japan and Australia. The technology is already there and will, inevitably, have to be imported into this country at a later stage. I hope that that makes what I am saying clear to the hon. Gentleman.

The point that I was making before I gave way to the hon. Gentleman was that this permissive legislation does not offer a realistic prospect of improvement because permissive legislation is designed to prevent countries such as Denmark from introducing a more acceptable standard.

I readily accept the argument that one country's solutions are not totally adequate because pollution knows no boundaries. The Minister has made it clear that the British Government's view is that the Commission should take action against Denmark to prevent Denmark from trying to improve its own environment. That is an act of the utmost folly. Rather than trying to prevent the Danes from moving in that direction, perhaps the British Government should take seriously what the Danes are saying and move in that direction.

If we are to take seriously the problems caused by vehicle emissions, we will not achieve our aim by this shoddy compromise. If we are to begin to reverse the damage that has already been caused, we must be prepared to embrace a more radical technology. The Government are clearly not prepared to accept that and in being unprepared to take that step they are making it clear that the Prime Minister's recent claims of an interest in the environment are as bogus as most people in this country thought that they were.

3.2 am

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Some of the interventions that we have heard from the Government's Benches have convinced some of us that one speech does not change a party. The Government will have to come up with something rather more forceful than they have yet produced if they are to convince the wider public that the conversion to green issues will bear fruit in any radical changes in policy, rather than in attempts to justify policies that will be pursued anyway. One of my party's supporters has commented that it is apparent that the Prime Minister has developed green edges but that only time will tell whether that turns out to be mould.

We are debating some fairly mouldy proposals because, as the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) said, the Government are supporting a compromise permissive resolution of the European Commission which simply freezes the agreed emissions for 1994 at last year's level. If we are supposed to accept that as a radical new departure and a great new "greening" of the European environment, I for one am less than convinced of it.

The Minister acknowledged that other countries want to go further. He had the grace also to acknowledge that this compromise goes further than Britain had originally wanted. It is now being accepted on the basis that any agreement is better than no agreement, especially if it is an agreement that does not cause us too much trouble, does not cost us too much and is not very inconvenient—it is only permissive.

The European Parliament's environment committee was pushing for 5 g and 20 g limits which are still substantially higher than the limits accepted for many years in the United States. The Minister argued that it was all very well for the United States to set those limits, but they were not necessarily enforced and did not necessarily produce significant achievements. The United States monitoring system has suggested that, at least since the more radical proposals than we are debating were introduced 18 years ago, the quantities of the relevant gases in the United States atmosphere have reduced by one third in one case and 6 per cent. in others. Those are measurable reductions, but no one is suggesting that they are closely connected with the measures.

The standards adopted in the United States have been taken up by Canada, Japan and Australia and are being taken up as objectives by other European countries. As this motion proves, Europe is collectively lagging behind the rest of the world. Britain was conspicuously absent from the declaration in Sofia. That was only a declaration of pious intent, but the fact that we are not prepared to make such a declaration suggests that we are a long way from achieving radical changes.

The harm done by these gases is no longer in dispute. In debates on environmental pollution, the Government have sometimes argued that there was no proof that particular emissions cause problems and that, until there was proof, they were not prepared to take any action. The situation should be reversed. It does not require a great deal of scientific research to know that exhaust fumes are noxious and that maximum control over those emissions, to ensure minimum pollution, is desirable.

How do we achieve a sensible balance? For a number of years, the Government, backed by the motor manufacturers, have argued that that they do not want to become involved in catalytic converters. They want to develop the lean-burn engine as British technology, again ignoring the fact that the catalytic converter was British technology. However, the people of Europe do not have time to wait. That is not to suggest that this development should not continue or that the lean-burn engine does not have a contribution to make, but it is not ready to go into commercial production. One wonders why a company such as Ford appears to be so resistant to the idea of catalytic converters here, when it has accepted them in its home base because the legislation decreed that. How did Jaguar manage to cope with a successful export drive to the United States, meeting United States standards?

Mr. Roger King: That was as a result of legislation.

Mr. Bruce: That is exactly the point. Legislation and pressure to raise standards force the pace of technology

[Mr. Bruce]

and develop the ability to meet those standards at a cost-effective level. The cost of introducing such changes is often lower than forecast.

Mr. Roger King: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has read the document that we are debating today. He talked about Jaguar, but we have already dealt with that kind of car which will be fitted with three-way catalysts. We have dealt with cars of 1·6 litres to 2 litres and tonight we are talking about cars of 1·4 litres and below—a type of car which is not freely available in the United States where the system of three-way catalytic converters is more suited to the large V8 car or our export Jaguars, BMWs and Mercedes. However, with the smaller cars, such as the Metro and the Mini, there are problems in fitting these installations. The hon. Gentleman should address those problems and note that Ford already has a lean-burn engine in production.

Mr. Bruce: It is true also that Ford has said that if it were required to introduce catalytic converters, it could and would do so. I do not dispute the specific terms of reference of the document and supplementary explanatory memorandum that we are discussing, but it should be said that on previous occasions manufacturers have resisted changes of this sort. They have not wished to make them, but when put under pressure they have been able to respond in a cost-effective and technically acceptable way. Pressure in the area with which we are concerned would produce similar results. Many who are pressing for change know that that is the position. As long as pressure is not produced because Europe cannot agree to proceed to sufficiently restrictive standards, the technology will not be developed and the necessary cost reductions will not be achieved.

The Minister referred to the gradual phasing out of two-star petrol and the gradual growth of availability of lead-free petrol. Perhaps we should look to the West German example and ban two-star petrol. The Minister's ministerial colleague and wife, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, has said that that would be undesirable because users should have choice. The Minister has said that the problem is that we have lead-free petrol and that motorists are not using it. The Government should be considering how they will hasten the process.

The Select Committee on Trade and Industry, of which I am a member, has recently investigated petrol retailing. It found that the introduction of lead-free petrol with wide availability is proceeding at a relatively slow pace. It will be about two years before there will be sufficient distribution to unleaded petrol outlets to make consumers feel confident, especially if they live in an area such as my constituency, which is a large rural patch, that unleaded petrol is freely available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is probably better that I make an intervention in the hon. Gentleman's speech and not wait to deal with the matter when I reply to the debate. A motorist will know that his car does not have a catalyst because he will be aware that he can put ordinary two-star or four-star petrol into the fuel tank. Anyone whose car can use unleaded fuel without adjustment, or after having been adjusted, and who finds that unleaded fuel is not available will be able to use ordinary two-star or four-star petrol. He will find that it will have no noticeably different effect on the engine.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will help my colleagues in the Department of the Environment and myself, as well as CLEAR and Friends of the Earth, to deal with the appalling ignorance, as well as apathy, which is preventing motorists from having their cars converted so that they are able to use unleaded fuel and then using it. If a car can use unleaded fuel, it can also use leaded.

Mr. Bruce: I accept that that is a useful contribution to place on the record. In a sense it reaffirms my argument that the message is not getting through. There is a lack of knowledge, understanding and action. It seems that potential users are not responding. Indeed, the oil companies are not responding.

The Minister has said that if someone has had his car converted so that it is able to use unleaded petrol, his natural wish will be to buy unleaded petrol for economic and other sound reasons. I accept that what the Minister has said is true, but I think that he will accept that users will be looking for outlets with unleaded fuel. The sooner that they are available throughout the country, the sooner we shall be able to speed up conversion and use. There is no doubt that it is accepted that the lead emissions in car exhaust fumes are inflicting considerable damage to both the environment and human beings.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Surely we need to deal with the inertia factor in the use of unleaded petrol. Surely it would be sensible to persuade or if, necessary, to legislate for car manufacturers to produce cars that will use unleaded petrol so that users do not have to go to the trouble or expense of having them converted to enable them to use leaded petrol. Would not that be a major step forward?

Mr. Bruce: I am sure that it would. I am sure that we have established a useful understanding across the Floor of the House. I am saying that we can deal with the problem through legislation, the raising of standards within areas of known technology and the forcing of the pace of technological and social change. The proposal from the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) is perfectly sensible and reasonable. The Government may have to take the suggestion on board and it may require legislation which I hope will be forthcoming if it is needed.

I do not think that anyone can now fail to be aware of the serious concerns about the consequences of acid rain and lead pollution on the physical environment in Europe. It is interesting to note that when the West Germans saw the trees in the Black Forest suffering and dying they thought initially that the cause was British power stations. Subsequent findings caused the West Germans some embarrassment over their initial hypothesis. Incidentally, I have friends in the Black Forest area and I witnessed the damage to the trees, which were a pitiful sight. The West Germans put a lot of pressure on us. In case I am misunderstood, I must state that I believe that British power stations contributed to the problem in West Germany.

It was interesting that the West German research showed that their biggest single problem came from pollution from car exhausts. Once that was brought home

to them, they acted more speedily as they have a high proportion of high-powered cars to which catalytic converters could easily be fitted.

This has been a very lacklustre debate about a proposal over which no one can get very excited. It is a pretty lame, rough old compromise and it does not really force the pace on the issue anything like far enough or fast enough. I am worried that the directive may well be taken as the marker for all that we have to do over the next five years. If that is the case, it is a very inadequate marker. We should be forcing the pace. If the British Government want to take up those green issues, they should accept that they should take a lead. To pretend that a loose compromise which is further, sharper and more radical than what they originally wanted is some kind of radical initiative that arose from the Government's forward thinking is simply not credible.

We will still be operating at standards of half the United States level. The proposals are only the beginning of the debate. The European Parliament environment committee will want to force the pace. The fact that others like France are being disruptive should not allow us to use the disruption as an excuse to settle for a compromise that takes us nowhere. The Government must accept that they should look ahead and recognise that the commitment to the lean-burn engine will not solve the problem, but will make only a contribution to it. We must think in terms of the standard objective of reducing emissions by 30 per cent. plus over the next five years. I hope that the Minister will come back to the House well within the five-year period with radical proposals from the Government on how a 30 per cent. reduction can be achieved. The present proposal makes no contribution to that.

3.18 am

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): I must first declare an interest as I am adviser to Johnson Matthey plc. I am also a member of the Select Committee which recommended that the House debate this matter. We have had an interesting if somewhat low-key debate. Perhaps that is explained by the late hour.

I welcome the Government's realism in the way in which they have moved on the proposal within the confines of the political constraints in the Community. At least we are taking a step forward in the right direction. We should not approach the subject in a spirit of hesitancy. We should understand that, without making party political points, there is growing recognition of the need to protect our environment. Pressures for further improvement will grow. Therefore, the spirit of the House in approaching the matter should be to support and encourage the Government to press on as fast as they possibly can.

It is understandable that, being responsible, the Government must recognise that the British car manufacturing industry must adjust to such changes, but I hope that it will equally be recognised that some car manufacturers are already prepared to go faster on this issue, even if they are not all prepared to move at the same time, and so there are signs that the industry is coming round.

My hon. Friend the Minister said that there is a desire for certainty, which the Government have recognised and which he dealt with in his opening speech. The Government are also concerned for the consumer, but I wonder whether added costs that might come from pressing on not only with this proposal but going further eventually would be too severe a deterrent. If people are to become more aware of the need for the protection of the environment, they might be prepared to pay an additional sum in order to ensure that they were making their contribution.

I do not want to be controversial, but we spent the earlier part of today discussing why charges should be imposed for dental check-ups and eye tests and it was suggested that people would pay those charges because they would be in their interests. It could be said that they might not be completely put off by having to pay a bit more. But if the Government did think that they would be, they have a weapon that might help to alleviate the problem.

I am not clear that we are obliged by Community law to impose a car tax. If the Government want to help in adjusting to the change, it would be possible to tinker with the car tax without at the same time causing a boost to consumer demand if the price of more environmentally friendly cars were to increase because of the adjustments made to them.

My hon. Friend made an impassioned plea for greater use of lead-free petrol. This is national lead-free petrol week. I endorse that because it is the obvious preliminary to some of the other changes that will have to take place if car engines are to become cleaner. I urge my hon. Friend and his colleagues to persuade my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he next considers these matters, that he should go much further in what he has already done because the gap between lead-free petrol and leaded petrol in countries such as Germany is much greater than it is here.

When it is possible, by shopping around, to see a spread of between 12p or 14p a gallon on leaded four-star petrol, the difference that we have instituted so far, which I welcome, will not be a positive attractive incentive to people to change over. That could be achieved at no cost to the Exchequer if adjustments were made by increasing the duty on leaded petrol and reducing it still further on unleaded petrol. There must be an equation at some point where that could be done at nil cost to the Exchequer. But there would not be a great cost to the Exchequer, nor would it add to the consumer demand which is causing the Chancellor concern at present, if there were a substantial reduction in the duty on unleaded petrol so that there would be a clear incentive for people, other than that of good sense and care for the environment, to switch over to it.

That would be an important boost to the campaign which my hon. Friend and his colleagues are trying to press at the moment. The Government would make their enthusiasm on this subject clear beyond all doubt in a means that they have at their disposal which is not conditional on the support of any other Government in the Community.

3.22 am

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): The Opposition's curmudgeonly attitude quite took my breath away, so much so that I was almost bereft of speech until I reflected that their attitude could lead only to the conclusion that they would join us in supporting the construction of

[Sir Hal Miller]

further nuclear power stations as the only environmentally acceptable way of power generation to meet the growing needs of our economy and country.

The way that the Opposition appear blithely to ignore the 25 million driving licence holders and the owners of more than 20 million cars in Britain is staggering. Their mathematics seem to be at fault. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister, to whose work I pay tribute, could confirm that the shift that he is announcing represents a reduction of more than 30 per cent. on the figures obtaining in the first stage programme, from which we are now moving more rapidly than originally envisaged. How we can be chided for achieving more rapidly a reduction in excess of 30 per cent in the face of a difficult political situation in the Community strikes me as odd.

Pace my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst), the Opposition's devotion to the cause of the catalyst also strikes me as odd, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) briefly remarked, because the experience of looking after catalysts leads us to suppose that we have a long way to go, not only in terms of education, but perhaps, I fear, of regulation, on the efficient continuing maintenance and use of catalysts, particularly as related to small cars. They are of course already fitted to larger vehicles.

We should like to know what the European Parliament has said about this matter because the documents before the House state that a decision is still awaited. That was in July, so I wonder whether there is any news of what was decided.

We are retrospectively debating these issues because decisions are being taken on the continent by majority vote. By the time those matters reach us, they have already been settled. That is why the Opposition's strictures are even more absurd. To chide the Minister for having moved his colleagues is a very curious way to proceed. I support my hon. Friend the Minister, if only because of the certainty that is being offered to our manufacturers—and the need for such certainty could not be more clearly illustrated than by the recently announced engine facility, with more than £350 million being invested by the Ford motor company. I wish my hon. Friend the Minister every success in his efforts.

3.26 am

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am grateful to my hon. Friends. It is worth noting that, as this debate concludes in the early morning, there are present 12 Government Members, but that the Liberal, the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), has no supporters, and nor has the Labour Member, the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd). Yet we are supposed to believe that the environmentalists are not on the Government Benches.

The Royal Society speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was a reflection of the Conservatives' interest in the environment. We do not deny that other parties also have an interest—we just wish that they would manifest it more often and in greater numbers. Looking around this Chamber, it is evident that we not only outnumber the other parties—that might be expected—but also that we outnumber them by a factor of seven or eight to one. We also outdo them in our understanding of the subject.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Will the Minister educate the House on one important point? If he wants serious discussion of this issue, why was this debate arranged to begin at 20 past two in the morning, thus preventing any serious discussions? Also, will the Minister respond to the question put by his hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller): why are we discussing this matter now—after the event, rather than before?

Mr. Bottomley: I explained the reasons at the beginning of this debate and I am happy to do so again now. However, I want to deal with the 30 per cent. point raised by the hon. Member for Gordon. The 20th report of the Select Committee on European Legislation of 30 March states:

"The application of Directive 88/76/EEC in combination with a 12 grammes/test standard for small cars would give a 53 per cent. (HC + NOx) average limit reduction for all cars, when compared with the current 83/351/EEC Directive limits."

That provides some encouragement.

In this Parliament, we should try dropping some of the adversarial politics that may be necessary in other debates. This is a take-note motion on a Community proposal that is almost a British-led compromise. We have brought other countries together in arriving at the 8 g test standard and that deserves some recognition—even from the hon. Members for Stretford and for Gordon. I believe that the whole House welcomes the movement towards an 8 g standard and Britain's leadership in persuading other Community members to arrive at that acceptable compromise.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: It is rather curious that last night when the Minister was being savaged by his own side the only person who spoke in his support was me, from the Opposition. For him to argue that in no circumstances is there agreement across the Chamber is ridiculous. I must say, however, that there is no all-party welcome for this agreement: it is rubbish, and we have made that clear.

Mr. Bottomley: Now we have the Socialists in Britain saying that the agreement is rubbish. I thought that when Jacques Delors came to speak to the Socialists they turned around and began to accept that Community agreement would be good not only for our common European environment but for our common European car and engine manufacturing, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove has said. Because we are becoming increasingly efficient in this country, we have more to gain in terms of both manufacturing and being able to trade across Europe without unnecessary barriers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) put a very fair argument. He mentioned his interest in Johnson Matthey, which the House acknowledges; but he also talked about a sensible approach. I think that it makes sense to go for the oxidation catalyst on small cars, with the 8 g per test limit, and developing lean burn. I said in my opening remarks that we could not expect the lean burn technology automatically to work, and that it was up to those developing it to prove that it would meet the standards. We are perfectly aware that if it does not, a different approach will be necessary.

Let me return for a moment to the subject of unleaded fuel. My hon. Friend talked about the need for an increased differential, but I feel that the existing differential can work. Unleaded fuel is being supplied by some major firms—such as Tesco, which is never knowingly undersold.

Even the cheapest petrol station in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), the Jet petrol station on the way to Godalming, sells unleaded fuel. I think we shall see more and more competition involving not only the major fuel companies but the smaller ones as well.

I am delighted to announce that I have made arrangements for a sign to go up as soon as possible on every motorway where there is a motorway service area selling unleaded fuel saying that it is for sale there. I think that that will help to get the information across.

According to a newspaper report, when the director of Friends of the Earth was asked whether he had a car, he said no. When asked if his wife had a car, he said yes. When asked it he used it, he said occasionally. When asked if it used unleaded fuel, he honestly said that it would soon. That is the problem. If our "greens" in Friends of the Earth need a bit of reminding from a newspaper journalist, think how many of the rest of us need to have our cars adjusted. I am delighted to learn that manufacturers such as Ford and Vauxhall have arranged for the conversion to be done virtually free, or free in most cases. I would ask all other manufacturers to find out whether their cars can use unleaded fuel and to put a sticker—preferably green—on the dashboard and fuel cap to make sure that people buy unleaded fuel, because it saves money and the environment.

It has been suggested—I am grateful for the help of my hon. Friends in this regard—that if we want emissions reduced, we must go for a greater element of nuclear fuel. It is a straight fact that that is one of the ways of reducing the greenhouse effect. Otherwise, people are opting for conventional pollution. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment made that point in some excellent replies to questions put to him on Sunday by Jonathan Dimbleby.

We should also try to make the Opposition realise that they can approve of something that is being agreed in Europe. That is what this take-note motion is about. The hon. Member for Stretford and I will continue to have debates while I have my job and he has his position, but he might try to discover from the leader of his party whether that party is in favour of more road spending or against it. It is rather odd to read many reports saying that we are spending too much on roads and others saying that we are spending too little. The Leader of the Opposition seems to be saying that we are spending too little. I do not want that question answered now, but it would be useful to learn the party's view in the future.

The hon. Member for Gordon says that we are trying to put forward a freeze at last year's level for 1994. The position is exactly the opposite. The 12 g per test limit would bring about dramatic reductions in emissions and pollution. Moving to 8 g per test will go even further. The reports of the Select Committee on European Legislation suggest that we may have been going too far already. I consider that the 8 g per test is easily defensible, and I should like a bit more help from the Opposition in avoiding the tag that Britain is the dirty person of Europe. Because we make agreements that we stick to, we are ahead of many other countries.

I give the hon. Member for Stretford this challenge. Perhaps he should take a bit of water out of the Rhine and a bit of water out of the Thames and decide which he wants to drink.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4637/88 and the Supplementary Explanatory memorandum submitted by the Department of Transport on 8th July on air pollution by the gases from the engines of motor vehicles; and supports the agreement reached at the 28th and 29th June Environment Council in Luxembourg.

Industrial Chemical Premises

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

3.35 am

Mr. John Ward (Poole): May I first thank my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment for being present to answer the debate at this late hour?

Although the reasons for the debate are mainly concerned with an incident that took place in my constituency, the lessons learnt from that incident could have much wider application on a national basis in ensuring that other towns do not have to go through the same experience as some of my constituents did last June.

It would be helpful if I set the scene and gave the background to the fire and explosion which took place in BDH Limited's chemical works at West Quay road in Poole on 21 June this year. The fire broke out in a building used as a chemical store at the factory. The building was constructed in 1982 and was divided into three sections —one used for storing oxidising substances, a larger area used as a main chemical store and a smaller area used as a flammable solids store. The three sections were separated by concrete block walls. Immediately outside the oxidising substances store was a bonded and protected area used for the storage of flammable liquids in drums.

At about 6.15 in the evening of 21 June a fire was discovered in the oxidising store and it took hold of that area rapidly and spread to the adjacent area containing flammable liquids.

Many hon. Members will have seen the television news reports of the fire, showing a large fireball accompanied by a plume of yellow-brown smoke rising over the old town section of Poole. In addition, some of the drums of chemical liquid exploded and travelled up to 300 ft in the air before falling back to the ground, some within the factory premises and others outside. At the peak of the emergency, some 100 firemen were in attendance, together with police and ambulance services and other local organisations.

Because it was not known precisely what chemicals were involved in the blaze—I shall refer to this later—a decision was made by the police and fire brigade to evacuate more than 2,500 people from the area and emergency centres were opened at Poole arts centre and the Henry Harbin school for their accommodation. This was the biggest mass evacuation in the United Kingdom since the second world war. The residents were not allowed to return to their homes until 5.30 the following morning.

The police and fire brigade officers who took the decision to order the evacuation are to be praised for their clear thinking. The back-up services which ensured that the operation was carried out smoothly and without undue distress to those concerned were a model of how such an operation should proceed. Again, I shall refer later to their activities.

I visited the site the morning after the fire and again during the clear-up operations and was impressed with the quiet efficiency of all concerned, but I have to acknowledge that there was also a sense of profound relief that what could have been a major disaster had, with a certain amount of good fortune and a great deal of skill from the emergency services, been contained so that most of the damage done was to property rather than people. If I do not describe the events of the night in great detail, it is because they are already on the record and I believe that we now have to examine them to learn what action we can take to prevent such an occurrence in the future, either in Poole or elsewhere.

Before leaving the events of 21 June, it would be wrong if I did not put on record the admiration and gratitude which all the citizens of Poole feel for the many people who helped that evening. I have already mentioned the police and the fire brigade. Others who gave valuable assistance were Poole district council staff, the county emergency planning officer and his team, the staff of the Poole arts centre, who opened their doors to the evacuees, and the cast of the show which was appearing at the arts centre at the time, the New Vic theatre company, who put on a free show for the evacuees in the arts centre starting at midnight. The WRVS lived up to the high esteem in which we have always held them, as did the St. John Ambulance Brigade and the Red Cross.

Poole general hospital staff were both helpful and co-operative, as they always are, and so, too, were the bus operators who helped with the evacuation. Wessex Water was immediately on hand to ensure that drinking water supplies were protected and that there was no pollution of Poole harbour, and the Poole harbour commissioners rendered valuable assistance. The gas and electricity services worked tirelessly to make apparatus safe and to ensure supplies, and the Royal Marines, Poole, helped by providing such things as bedding material for those evacuated to the Henry Harbin school. It was a model of what should take place in a well-planned emergency operation of that nature, and I hope that any other local authority in the country which has any doubts about the need for good, planned emergency procedures to deal with such incidents will learn from the lessons of Poole.

The Health and Safety Executive has conducted an inquiry at the request of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary and I should like to refer to some of the conclusions that it reached, which were published in the form of a summary of its inquiry report, with a press release, on 17 October. The primary cause of the fire appears to have been a lack of proper segregation of chemicals in the store concerned, which led to a rapid and violent spread of the fire. It has been the practice of BDH for a number of years to accept out-of-time and unwanted chemicals in even very small quantities from customers and to dispose of them as a service to those customers.

It appears that some of the chemicals which had been returned and awaited sorting were not compatible and should therefore have been separated immediately, but that was not done. Because of the massive destruction in the immediate area of the fire, the Health and Safety Executive was unable positively to identify the cause of the fire, but the summary of its report suggests that a probable cause was the leakage of strongly corrosive substances on to organic materials, or exothermic decomposition of stored material. It concludes that incompatible materials had been placed too close to each other because the sorting system for returned chemicals had become overloaded. That probably resulted in the fire which took hold extremely rapidly and with violent consequences. The fire penetrated the exterior walls of the immediate store and overheated drums of flammable liquid stored outside the oxidising store. The HSE also said that the decision to locate oxidising materials close to flammable liquids was flawed because, although the building was originally built

to the building regulations in force at the time, it did not conform to Health and Safety Executive guidance issued subsequently.

The HSE concludes that the storage practices adopted by the firm failed to cope with the problems created by the need to store and dispose of such a vast range of chemicals. It says that the public were not at risk from the drums of cyanide stored elsewhere in the building.

The HSE supports the police and fire brigade decision to evacuate the public because there was a mixture of a wide range of chemicals, some of which might have been hazardous and some of which were unidentified at the time of the fire.

I should like my hon. Friend to comment on the following matters. The full report has not been made public. Although I am sure that the HSE has done its best to provide an accurate summary, like all summaries it leaves a number of points unanswered, and I urge my hon. Friend, even at this late stage, to use his best endeavours to have the full report made public.

I hope that my hon. Friend will not underestimate the real sense of fear that will persist in the old town of Poole until the rumours which feed on part information are countered. I believe that my constituents are as entitled as anybody else to know exactly what the HSE inquiry revealed, whether or not it proves embarrassing to other parties. I am supported in this view by Poole borough council which, at its meeting a few hours ago, expressed its disappointment that the full report has not been published and gave its full support to my request to my hon. Friend the Minister.

My hon. Friend will be aware that on 15 July I asked him whether he would ensure that the results of the inquiry conducted by the HSE would be made public and whether he would set up a public inquiry. He said that a summary of the results would be made public. That has been done. He also said:

"I do not propose to set up a public inquiry since this would be unlikely to identify any causes or contributory factors which will not be identified by the HSE investigation." —[*Official Report*, 15 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. *383*.]

I tend to agree with the last sentence of my hon. Friend's reply, but I hope that he will understand that the summary of the report issued by the HSE prompts a number of questions and it has certainly not satisfied members of the Poole residents association, who are still calling for a public inquiry. They have told me that they consider that there are questions still to be asked which are not answered in the HSE summary. It is ironic to consider that, if lives had been lost and we had had a tragedy instead of a serious incident, there would almost certainly have been a public inquiry and all the evidence which is at present being withheld from public examination would have been given in open court.

Given that, so far, the report has not been made public, the summary issued by the HSE prompts me to make a number of observations.

A brief assurance is given in the summary that there was no danger to local people from cyanide and a reference is made to what is said to be a similar incident at River road, Barking in 1980. Frankly, without further information, that is not reassuring. Can we know whether the conditions were precisely the same, whether the dangers were similar and, in particular, whether, if cyanide needs to be kept on that site in Poole, as I understand it may well need to be for some industrial processes, there was at any time any risk that it would affect the local population?

The HSE summary says that off-site damage was limited. I hope that that does not mean that it has ignored the fact that at another time of day, for instance, in the rush hour, when perhaps the bridge connecting old Poole with Hamworthy was open and with much more traffic on West street, there could have been considerable off-site damage with catastrophic consequences. It was also fortunate that many of the surrounding office buildings were empty at the time and even the wind direction that evening helped to limit the effects of the fire. I therefore regard the fact that off-site damage was limited as due to luck rather than skill.

Referring again to good fortune, the HSE summary says that the vast majority of fire brigade water was contained in surface water holding tanks and these presumably are part of the Wessex Water drainage system. No thought seems to have been given to what would have happened if there had been heavy rain before the fire or if the tide had been at a different state. In those circumstances, can we be reassured that harbour pollution, with its effect on both the amenities and the fishing industry in Poole, would not have been much worse?

The HSE summary refers to the fact that the building concerned met the building regulations at the time it was built, but there appears to have been no requirement to update it if the building regulations changed, and that is perhaps understandable. What is not understandable is that, subsequent to the construction of the building, the Health and Safety Executive issued guidelines which underlined the need for considerably more protection against fire than the building had at the time of the fire. I would ask my hon. Friend what provision there is for ensuring that HSE guidelines are complied with and, perhaps more important, what provision there is for ensuring that HSE guidelines are applied retrospectively in such areas where there is a danger to the public from the storage of toxic and flammable materials.

Although I understand the policy that it is for the commercial organisation concerned to devise and implement its own safety requirements, these should surely need HSE approval. The summary of the report prompts me to ask whether there is sufficient supervision in sufficient detail by the HSE. The summary of the HSE report recommends that all chemical companies ensure that their segregation policy for chemicals is clearly set out and fully implemented. Does this imply that there is room for doubt about whether this occurs as a matter of course? If so, surely everyone would agree that it is a matter for major public concern. My hon. Friend may well consider that this would lead to additional costs on HSE expenditure, but, with all the worries about environmental pollution at the present time, it would seem that there is a case for looking closely at the manning of this important Government agency.

I now turn to the actions of BDH since the fire. I should explain that it is a reputable firm employing several hundred people in Poole on two sites and that the firm has been a valued member of the Poole community since 1942. Immediately after the HSE press conference on 17 October, the company issued a statement in which it went further than the requirements now laid upon it by the Health and Safety Executive. It has agreed to remove all the chemicals arising from production from the West Quay

[Mr. John Ward]

road site, and in future chemicals returned from its customers for disposal will go to other depots or be transferred straight to waste disposal sites. I believe that that will go a long way towards meeting the anxieties of my constituents.

The company has also agreed that the open drum store, which was the immediate cause of much of the damage and spread of fire, will be removed to another site and kept in a specially constructed store which will be fitted with automatic fire extinguishing equipment.

The company is preparing a detailed and comprehensive storage policy document, which I am sure it will discuss with the Health and Safety Executive, and any reconstruction of the chemical store which is needed will take place in accordance with conditions to be agreed with the Health and Safety Executive.

I believe that, following the fire, the company has behaved responsibly, and that it will continue to be a valued employer in Poole for many years. However, there are a number of lessons which I believe may well have application not only in Poole but throughout the country. I have already queried whether the HSE resources are sufficient to carry out the important task of ensuring that chemicals and toxic substances, particularly those stored in urban areas, are properly stored and recorded. It is essential that a list which is detailed and comprehensible to people other than chemists must be immediately available at every chemical store, for use by the police and fire brigade.

I believe that when guidance books are issued by the Health and Safety Executive which, in the light of experience, call for a tightening of regulations, some further consideration must be given to how all users of chemicals and toxic materials are informed and, more important, how the Health and Safety Executive will ensure that the new safety regulations are applied retrospectively. I have already referred to the value of proper pre-planned emergency procedures for such events as took place in Poole on 21 June. I hope that my hon. Friend will use his influence to ensure that all other local authorities learn the lesson.

As our chemistry research finds new materials, life will become increasingly complicated in the area of industrial safety, and I hope that my hon. Friend will think it worthwhile that the chemical industries and their trade associations should, together with representatives of the Government, continuously monitor safety requirements, particularly as they are applied in urban areas such as Poole.

I have spoken of the luck and good fortune associated with the outcome of the events in Poole on 21 June, but I remind the Minister that 2,500 of my constituents were evacuated from their homes late at night, experiencing considerable fear and distress, and I hope that he will appreciate that they will not be satisfied until the full facts surrounding the incident are made available to them. I therefore once again plead with the Minister that he should seek, with the agreement of the company if possible, to ensure that the whole report is made public. I believe that, following their experiences on 21 June, my constituents deserve nothing less.

3.52 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) on bringing this important issue before the House—despite the eccentric hour at which he has managed to do it.

The fire at the British Drug House plant in Poole on 21 June was a serious incident and I fully appreciate the concerns that my hon. Friend has expressed so eloquently. He was extremely prompt about contacting my office and making clear his worries; his constituents need be in no doubt about that, or about the steps that he has taken to bring the matter to my attention, to ensure that such an incident never occurs again.

I will do my best to return to my hon. Friend's detailed points, but first I will need to say a word about the regime of control measures covering the use of chemicals at work, because it is necessary to understand the context in which these events took place.

To say that life in an industrial society involves coping with processes and substances of great complexity and potential danger may be atruism, but it is an accurate statement for all that. Industrialisation brings great benefits, but at the same time it poses great hazards and risks. Fuels, for example, are a potent source of energy, but are also potentially dangerous because of their highly flammable nature. By the same token, no one seriously doubts the need for effective pesticides, but their very effectiveness derives from their toxicity.

The key issue which my hon. Friend has brought before us is how to enjoy the benefits of these substances and processes without putting in undue jeopardy the safety and health of the workers who produce and handle them or of the people, like those living near chemical plants or warehouses, who will be at risk if things go wrong. A balanced approach is required, and the framework for achieving that balance must be enshrined in law. It must maintain essential levels of safety, but avoid imposing unnecessary rigidities and costs.

The fundamental law in this area is the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. It places general duties on employers, and anyone else who is in control of a work activity, to safeguard the health and safety at work of all employees, and to ensure that the public are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. These general but very powerful obligations are further strengthened by a number of more specific regulations, many of which directly address chemical safety. Within that framework it is especially important to have specific systems of control for places where hazardous chemicals are concentrated in significant quantities.

Our approach—both domestically and in Europe—is to identify which substances—and, indeed, what quantities of a particular substance—are a hazard or risk, and then to set out the necessary precautions. Central to that approach are the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984, which implement a European Community directive. Those apply to sites with the greatest potential danger and impose some stringent requirements. They include the submission to the Health and Safety Executive of detailed safety cases analysing hazards and risks, the preparation of emergency plans to protect people both on and off the site in the case of a serious accident, and furnishing information to people living nearby who might be affected by a major accident.

In addition, the regulations are now to be amended to apply to a greatly increased range of places, including many warehouses containing packaged goods.

As I have said, the regulations apply only to workplaces handling the most dangerous substances, but the Notification of Installations Handling Hazardous Substances Regulations 1982 apply to a larger group of chemicals and prohibit any person from using them unless he has notified the Health and Safety Executive at least three months previously. There are also other important statutes, like the legislation on fire precautions and pollution control and the town and country planning legislation, which serve to protect people from the hazards of chemicals.

The Health and Safety Commission is shortly to consider some possible further regulations that would require the notification of sites containing an aggregate quantity of 25 tonnes or more of dangerous substances and the erection of warning signs. Those regulations would assist enforcing authorities and the fire services in carrying out inspections, and most importantly would alert firemen to the presence of dangerous substances when they arrive on site, which is one of the specific points raised by my hon. Friend. Taken together, the regulations represent a system of graduated response, according to the severity of the hazard. They seek to give enforcing authorities and the emergency services the right degree of control, information and capability.

I hope that it is clear, from what I have said about the impending extension of major hazards legislation and the proposed regulations on notification and markings of sites, that we are far from complacent in this area. However, while the legal framework is essential, obviously it cannot be the whole story. What the law can do is to set conditions and make provision for enforcement, but what really matters are the working practices where chemicals are made, combined, stored or handled.

It is, of course, vital that those dealing with hazardous chemicals have a full understanding of their properties, not only on their own, but as they might interact. Chemicals that may be relatively harmless when stored separately can produce devastating effects in combination with others. That makes the proper segregation of groups of chemicals and the provision of fire resistant structures absolutely essential. Those, of course, were factors in the fire at BDH Ltd in my hon. Friend's constituency.

Having set out the general framework briefly, I should now like to address some of my hon. Friend's more specific concerns. The House has already heard some of the details concerning the explosion at the BDH plant. I agree with my hon. Friend that the severity of the incident should not be underestimated, and I should like to join him in paying tribute to the work of the emergency services and the many other organisations and individuals involved. There is no doubt that their calm and responsible action did much to mimimise the inconvenience and fear suffered by the residents of my hon. Friend's constituency.

In addressing my hon. Friend's specific points, I should first like to emphasise that the Health and Safety Executive carried out a very detailed investigation into the incident. It has produced a comprehensive report of its investigations and copies have already been made available to all public authorities with an interest in the incident. In addition, it held a press conference on 17 October when it made available to the public not only a statement but a detailed summary of its investigation. Having seen both that and the full report, I should like to think that my hon. Friend agrees that the detailed summary gave a full and comprehensive list of the HSE's recommendations and conclusions.

While I appreciate my hon. Friend's point about a wider dissemination of the report, I must emphasise that the requirements of section 28(3) of the 1974 Act, which deal with matters of confidentiality, mean that the report cannot be published in full. But I was pleased to hear my hon. Friend agree that he did not see any advantage in setting up a public inquiry.

I am confident that the HSE's investigation was thorough and has gone as far as possible towards identifying the causes and contributory factors surrounding this incident. The House has already issued an improvement notice to BDH Ltd. to ensure that the key recommendation of the report is implemented, and I understand that the company agreed and accepted that recommendation. I was encouraged to hear my hon. Friend's description of the various actions taken by the company since the fire occurred.

However, I appreciate that the residents of Poole may still have questions that they wish to raise. I shall be more than happy to meet the Poole residents association to discuss with it any concerns which it has.

My hon. Friend raised a number of other points about the events at Poole. On the question of sodium cyanide, the HSE does not consider that this substance in itself presents a hazard in a fire. If it were to come into contact with an acid solution, cyanide gas may be given off, but I am advised that in a fire the heat involved would almost certainly destroy this gas.

I agree that there was some good fortune that the off-site damage resulting from this explosion was not more extensive. But it was also bad fortune that the incident occurred at all. The HSE and the public authorities involved are looking closely at the conclusions of the investigation and will obviously consider existing procedures in the light of this experience.

My hon. Friend also asked about the adequacy of the water holding system. I understand that the bulk of the liquid was contained within the effluent plant on site. Any fire water that was not contained went to the pumping plant, which has two holding tanks. In any case, the quantities of water involved would have significantly diluted any particularly hazardous substances, and any rain would only have helped this process.

I come to the question of the HSE's resources. My hon. Friend asked a number of times whether I was satisfied with the manner in which the HSE carried out its responsibilities and with the measures it takes to ensure compliance with new and existing safety requirements. I am fully satisfied that the HSE has sufficient resources to carry out its responsibilities and to monitor safety standards.

But I must also add that the prime responsibility for the prevention of accidents clearly lies with employers, employees and others at the workplace.

On any basis, the incidents at Poole which my hon. Friend has brought to our attention tonight were, frankly, terrifying and I well understand the concern which he and his constituents have had to ensure that such a thing should never happen again.

I hope that in what is inevitably a brief contribution in a brief debate I have been able to offer my hon. Friend some of the consolations and assurances he sought. I stress

[Mr. Patrick Nicholls]

again that I shall be delighted to meet the delegation he wishes to bring to me and to do what I can to set their minds at rest still further.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes past Four o'clock on Wednesday morning.

House of Commons

Wednesday 2 November 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Royal Assent

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Housing (Scotland) Act 1988
2. Foreign Marriage (Amendment) Act 1988

PRIVATE BUSINESS

RIVER HUMBER (BURCOM OUTFALL) BILL *[Lords]*

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords]*

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *[Lords]*

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL *[Lords]*

AVON LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[Lords]*

CITY OF LONDON (SPITALFIELDS MARKET) BILL

Orders read for consideration of motions.

To be considered on Thursday 10 November at Seven o'clock.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Starts

1. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the number of housing starts in the north-west region between 1979 and 1987.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): One hundred and sixty-four thousand seven hundred dwellings were started in the north west in the nine years 1979 to 1987. In 1987 there were 14,500 private sector starts—more than 2,000 more than in 1979.

Mr. Lloyd: Will the Minister confirm that in every year under this Government the rate of housing starts in the north west has been as low as two thirds of what it was in the last full year of the Labour Government? The Government claim, perhaps truthfully, that the private sector has made up for the public sector in the south-east, but that is massively untrue of the north west.

Does the Minister accept that every credible survey of housing—the Duke of Edinburgh, the Institute of Housing and the local authorities' inquiries—has said that there is massive under-investment nationally in housing, particularly in the north-west? When will the Government do something serious about the approaching housing crisis in that region?

Mr. Trippier: What really matters is that the total stock, public and private sector, has increased since 1979. The number of households in the north-west increased in the last years on record—1981 to 1986—by 2·3 per cent., compared with an increase in dwelling stock of 60,000, or 2·4 per cent. Therefore, the growth in dwelling stock has more than kept pace with the growth in the number of households, which is the most important point. In the same period, the population in the north-west declined slightly.

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend will know of the need in the north-west, as in many other parts of the country, for low-cost rental accommodation. Bearing in mind the Government's justifiable concern about the way in which some local authorities manage their housing stock, may I ask what the Government are doing to boost housing associations, which greatly contribute to low-cost rental housing? Will more be done for them in the north-west?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend will know that, in the Housing Bill, we are directing more resources to the housing corporations, and thus to housing associations. He should draw comfort, as I am sure do many Conservative Members, from the substantial increase made available by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer yesterday—a rise of £1·328 billion by 1991, which is 80 per cent. above this year's estimated outturn.

Mr. Alton: Does the Minister agree that one way of providing more homes for people on waiting lists would be to liberate under-occupied properties? The key to that is to build more sheltered accommodation for the ever-increasing number of elderly people in our region. Does the hon. Gentleman also agree, based on his recent visit to Liverpool, that the key to good management of properties is to hand them over to tenants, and that a good way of doing that is through housing co-operatives?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman is certainly right. The Government are keen on housing co-operatives, and at the moment we are studying the under-occupation of dwellings. We need to address our minds to that problem. The current review on homelessness will be a major feature in the decisions that we shall eventually reach.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my hon. Friend pay a well-deserved tribute to the stirling work of the Abbeyfields Society, which has just opened another charming home in Lancaster and is hoping shortly to build one at Garstang?

Mr. Trippier: I am happy to concur with my hon. Friend. The Abbeyfields housing association is incredibly well known, especially in the region from which my hon. Friend and I come and represent. I am delighted to put on record my praise for that organisation.

Housing Bill

2. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the Housing Bill since July.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I and my colleagues have received a number of representations from hon. Members, interested bodies and the general public on a wide range of matters relating to the Housing Bill.

Mr. Winnick: Why are the Government apparently so determined to reverse the decision of another place that council tenants should be balloted to allow them to decide whether their property should be included in a housing action trust? Why should council tenants be denied the right to decide on this issue, and why are the Government so afraid of democracy?

Mr. Ridley: I have never quite understood why the Labour party seems so determined to whip up a campaign of misinformation about a matter that is of pure benefit to tenants, who will have a large amount of public money put at their disposal to improve the rotten houses in which many of them have to live.

Mr. Heddle: Has my right hon. Friend received any evidence at all that some Labour-controlled councils are using municipal harassment to discourage tenants from eventually opting out of their control by threatening not to carry out repairs if they do vote to opt out? Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to deplore such tactics, and will he take action against authorities that use those tactics?

Mr. Ridley: I have heard all sorts of rumours. If Labour councils want to be seen as sensible and fair and want to provide for their people, they must try to maintain higher standards of accuracy about what the Government are trying to do.

Dr. Cunningham: If the Government's housing proposals are so good for tenants, why is the Secretary of State so reluctant to let tenants decide for themselves? Is it not significant that in a leaflet of proposals about the balloting of tenants the Government fail to say or deliberately omit the fact, that if tenants do not vote they will be counted as voting in favour? What bigger gerrymandering of a vote can there be?

Mr. Ridley: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on scraping back. We hope that he will spend many years on the Opposition Benches, asking questions such as the one that he has just asked.

In reply to his first point, I suggest that the time to debate any amendments made in another place is the next time that the Bill comes before the House.

The hon. Gentleman's second point is entirely separate. He knows full well that any tenant who does not wish to go with the majority who are exercising their right to choose a new landlord has a right to go back to the local authority for a direct tenancy.

Mr. Squire: Does my right hon. Friend agree that when the miasma of distortion mounted by the Opposition on the Housing Bill is finally revealed, most people will welcome the Bill, not only because of the substantial resources in the form of increased housing benefit, but also for the increased protection that private tenants will enjoy in future?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is right. The attitude of the Opposition is beginning to raise questions about whether they are interested in the benefit and welfare of tenants, many of whom have real problems, or are simply trying to stir up opposition to try to make some sort of political capital, the point of which I do not see.

Conduct of Local Authority Business

3. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in response to the publication of the White Paper on the conduct of local authority business.

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): My right hon. Friend has received 65 letters from Members of Parliament, local authorities, councillors and interested organisations, commenting on the White Paper.

Mr. Banks: Is the Minister aware that the White Paper is nothing more than a long essay on Government hypocrisy? How dare the Prime Minister go to Poland and start lecturing the Poles about freedom when she is dismantling local democracy? For how much longer are these attacks on local authorities going to continue? Is the Minister aware that no Government this century have sought to interfere in the affairs of local authorities as much as this Government. have done? When will he start defending, instead of destroying local democracy?

Mr. Gummer: The greatest damage to local authorities and local democracy has been caused by Labour councils run not for the benefit of ratepayers or for those who are in need but for the benefit of the furtherance of extreme Left-wing Marxist ideas. Any hon. Member who can make that kind of comment after the revelations about Brent today should be ashamed of himself.

Mr. McLoughlin: Will my right hon. Friend, when looking at the responses that he has received on the conduct of local government business, bear in mind what happened on Cannock Chase district council when I was a member of it? The then chairman of the council lost his seat in the May election, but remained as chairman until the annual meeting. In between there was another meeting of the council and he used his casting vote, despite not being a member of the council. Will my right hon. Friend consider whether that has any relevance to the conduct of local authority business?

Mr. Gummer: The conduct of local authorities is best seen when people obey the rules and carry them out and do not try to make party political propaganda out of following the rules.

Dr. Cunningham: Before we have too many sanctimonious lectures about local government from the Tories, will the Minister comment on the conduct of the Conservative-controlled Westminster city council, which sold cemeteries for 15p, which are now being advertised for sale at £5·5 million, and which is not charging for refuse collection from commercial organisations, which

the district auditor has quite clearly said is unlawful? If the Minister has something to say about standards of conduct, why does he not look a little closer to home?

Mr. Gummer: I am willing to condemn unlawful action from wherever it comes. I only hope that the hon. Gentleman will condemn his hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who is a Labour Front-Bench spokesman on the Health Service, for refusing to pay taxes, which are lawfully levied, and encouraging other persons to do the same.

Factories (Sale and Letting)

4. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the sale and letting of factories by the Commission for the New Towns in 1987-88.

Mr. Trippier: During 1987-88 the Commission for the New Towns made good progress in the letting of vacant factory space and with the implementation of its programme of property sales, including the sale of factories.

Mr. Hind: Has my hon. Friend had an opportunity to read the article in the *Sunday Express* of 16 October entitled, "Skelmersdale Bounces Back in New Towns Bonanza"? Is that not a major tribute to the Commission for the New Towns, which, over the past two and a half years, has let or sold 3·5 million sq ft of empty factory space in the new town and introduced 78 new firms, with a parallel reduction of unemployment of more than 2,100 over the past two years? Is it not significant that Skelmersdale, like many other new towns, is represented by Conservative Members of Parliament?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend has made a significant point. Yes, I saw the article and I thought that it was a tribute to the Commission for the New Towns. I had the opportunity to meet the members of the board yesterday, and they particularly remarked on the significant change round in the industrial situation in Skelmersdale, which is to be commended. I have seen what has been done. It is truly remarkable that there is hardly any vacant factory space available to let in that area.

Mr. Conway: Does my hon. Friend feel that there is growing conflict between the activities of the commission with regard to factory lettings and those of English Estates? Are we not approaching the time when one or other of the organisations should be subsumed?

Mr. Trippier: No. Their briefs are entirely different. Obviously, there is a finality to the work of the Commission for the New Towns. That is enshrined in legislation. I was discussing that matter with the commission only yesterday. English Estates, however, has a very important regional role.

Westminster City Council (Freehold Sales)

5. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will exercise his powers under section 22(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1982 to require the Audit Commission to direct the holding of an extraordinary audit into the accounts of Westminster city council relating to the disposal of the freeholds of 32 Smith square and 67 Tufton street, London, SW1.

Mr. Ridley: No, Sir.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: How else will we find out the truth? Does the Secretary of State know that, despite being pressed by Westminster councillors, Lord McAlpine, treasurer of the Conservative party, refuses to divulge any information about that transaction? What is he trying to hide? Why does he not let us have the figures or let us have sight of the documents so that we can stand the allegations up or the Conservative party can knock them down? All we want is the truth. Will the Secretary of State go to Lord McAlpine and ask him to publish the documents in the public interest? As a Westminster ratepayer, I want to know what is happening.

Mr. Ridley: I am delighted to give the hon. Gentleman such information as I have, including the figures. At the beginning of this decade Westminister sold quite a number of freeholds to sitting tenants. The freehold, plus the lease, is worth more combined than the two separately. The council's policy was to obtain 70 per cent. of the gain that arose from combining the lease with the freehold.

In the case of Smith square, the council sold a freehold valued at £60,000 for the sum of £1·325 million—a profit for Westminster ratepayers of about £1·25 million.

As for Transport house next door, the council sold the freehold of the Labour party's headquarters to the Transport and General Workers Union for £2·25 million —a profit for Westminster ratepayers of about £2 million. In the two transactions, the Transport and General Workers Union probably made a far bigger profit than Conservative Central Office on the sale of the lease. I quite understand why the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), who is sponsored by that union, has not raised this particular question. He must know what a bonanaza that union has made by its very wise purchase of the freehold.

I can assure the House that the district auditor will give his views on whether the original transactions were made at the proper market value, as all those concerned believe they were.

Mr. Wilshire: Does my right hon. Friend agree that trying to score cheap party points off the sale of one property in Smith square is really bringing politics to an all-time low if Opposition Members do not admit to profits being made by their friends in the trade unions?

Mr. Ridley: I make no complaint about either transaction. I believe that they were both at proper market value, I am delighted that both purchasers and many others managed to take advantage of the rise in the property market later on. However, I believe that the Labour party should stop being so partial and selective.

Mr. Rooker: The Secretary of State is not telling the whole truth; he is misinforming the House. Is it not a lapse in accepted standards of conduct of public administration in this country when the governing party conspires with a local authority in a property transaction which, as the Secretary of State did not say in his reply, leads to the governing party making a profit of £2·4 million at the expense of ratepayers? That is what actually happened as a result of the transaction in 1983, which is not the transaction about which the right hon. Gentleman told the House. The governing party of this country made that profit. No other political party or trade union has been involved in making a profit further down the line.

Mr. Ridley: That really was lame. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that there was an interval between the two transactions, during which property values rose. He knows that the TGWU has made just the same profit over the same period, although it has not yet chosen to cash it in.

Mr. Speaker, if you are not able to call the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who has been rising to intervene, let me say that I would ask him to withdraw the allegation that he made in his speech on Monday—column 728 of *Hansard*—that the sale of the freehold for Conservative Central Office was a scandal. I have now made it clear that it was not a scandal, and I hope that he will do the decent thing and withdraw that remark.

Homelessness (Rural Areas)

6. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take in the light of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux report concerning homelessness in rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

12. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has made of housing need in rural areas.

Mr. Ridley: I have received this valuable report, which is now being studied. My officials will be meeting representatives of the association shortly to discuss the report's findings. On 5 July I published consultation papers on planning and low-cost housing in rural areas. I hope that the hon. Gentlemen have studied these.

Mr. Taylor: The Secretary of State may be aware that homelessness in rural areas in the south has nearly doubled since 1979. Does he agree that he sold the homeless down the river by yesterday's announcement that the Department of the Environment's housing budget will be slashed by 21 per cent., and that, of the council house receipts which he says he is putting back into housing, a full £500 million will be returned to the Treasury? Did he not wave the white flag to the Chancellor, rather than defend the homeless?

Mr. Ridley: In the hon. Gentleman's local authority, Carrick district council, in the first quarter of 1988, 34 households were accepted as homeless and there were 19 empty council houses. I do not believe that the figures support what he said. I agree that in many rural areas there is a shortage of planning permission to build houses for the people who want them. However, the hon. Gentleman seems to have failed to study the Department of the Environment's spending plans. If he had looked at them, he would have seen the Housing Corporation line rising to £1,328 million in 1991-92—an increase of 80 per cent.—for the provision of new low-cost housing for rent or sale. I will ensure that a sufficient proportion of that is allocated to rural areas.

Mr. Worthington: When will the Secretary of State realise that it is a shortage, not of planning permission for those who want to build houses, but of houses for those who already live in rural areas? The Secretary of State should realise that market forces will not deal with that problem and that it is essential for public action to be taken to ensure that low-cost houses are built, for purchase or rent, for people who legitimately want to continue to live in rural areas.

Mr. Ridley: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the benefit of any knowledge that I have about Clydebank and Milngavie. However, I can tell him that in the south of England the problem is very much one of sites as well as houses. It is no good having more money for more houses if we do not have the plots on which to build them.

Mr. Steen: With regard to housing needs in rural areas, will my right hon. Friend confirm that, where there are properly constituted local district plans—following discussions between parish and district councils that have been confirmed by the Department of the Environment—and where the housing allocation for villages or towns has been reached, if the district council planning committee turns down a development application for more houses because it exceeds the local plan, on appeal his inspectors will be instructed to refuse that appeal because the local plan housing allocation has been exceeded?

Mr. Ridley: I do not instruct inspectors to do anything. They follow the pubished guidance and the published local plan, provided it has been properly adopted and is up to date. In the circumstances that my hon. Friend described, it is unlikely that they would overrule a planning committee on appeal. If such development were not allowed on appeal, it might—indeed, probably would—result in a shortage of houses in some rural areas, which is the cause of the problem.

Mr. David Martin: Is not one of the main problems of the shortage of houses in rural areas that those already living in such areas, and those representing them, strongly object to new proposals for development, while pushing them in the direction of cities that are already well developed, such as Portsmouth?

Mr. Ridley: I am afraid that there is much truth in what my hon. Friend said. Those of us who live in the pressure areas of the country—mainly the south—must come to terms with the dichotomy between the undoubted need for more houses and the need to find places to put them.

Mr. Madden: As the question concerns a report from the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux on the homeless, is the Secretary of State aware that in one fell swoop Bradford Tory council is proposing to stop funding a hostel for homeless——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is nothing to do with homelessness in rural areas.

Mr. Madden: There is homelessness throughout the rural areas of Yorkshire, and Bradford Tory council is proposing to stop funding that hostel. It is also proposing to withdraw funding from Bradford Citizens' Advice Bureau. As the Secretary of State made an urgent visit to Bradford in the past fortnight to praise the policies of Bradford Tory council, will he make urgent investigations to ensure that funding is made available to keep that hostel open?

Mr. Ridley: I was not expecting rural Bradford to arise from this question, but if Bradford city council is able to avoid wasting money extravagantly on unnecessary things, it will have more money to spend on the homeless and on securing more homes for people who need them.

Mosques

7. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from Ealing, North constituency about the operation of the planning regulations as they relate to the construction of mosques in industrial areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: A number of representations have been received from my hon. Friend and many of his constituents about a proposal to erect a mosque on the site of the former Sadia industrial works in his constituency. The planning issues to which the proposal gave rise were for the local planning authority to determine.

Mr. Greenway: Will my hon. and learned Friend confirm that Ealing council should rescind its mistaken planning permission for a mosque on the Northolt industrial site and find the Dawcodis Bhora community an alternative site? Is he aware that the people of Northolt have unanmously opposed the granting of planning permission for two years, most recently at a meeting attended by 1,000 people, which I chaired? They have written thousands of letters to the council which have been ignored. The council is refusing industrial applications on industrial sites which would bring jobs to the borough, so there is a perceived threat to jobs. Is this not a serious position that is damaging for race relations?

Mr. Howard: I certainly confirm that the powers to revoke planning permission are contained in the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, but the exercise of those powers is, in the first instance, for the local planning authority.

Water Meters

8. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further statement on the introduction of water meters in private homes.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): It is for each water authority and company to decide whether to charge domestic customers by meter, taking into account all the circumstances. The metering trials which are to take place over the next three or four years are intended to help water undertakers take their decisions.

Mr. Atkinson: Does my hon. Friend accept that large numbers of elderly people will be especially grateful to him and to his Department for seeking to end the unfair system of water charges based on rateable values instead of on usage? How much will consumers in the trial areas be expected to pay towards the cost of metering, and does that represent the actual cost of installation?

Mr. Moynihan: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's first comment. Under the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Act 1988 the cost of installing meters compulsorily will be paid for by the water authorities or the companies concerned, which will recover those charges from the generality of customers. The customer cannot be charged directly for the compulsory installation of a meter. As my hon. Friend knows, the costs of the current trial programme is being shared between the Government and the water authorities.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that any move towards metering will involve large capital and ongoing revenue costs for the water authorities? Will that not mean that the water authorities will have to obtain increased income from consumers unless there is a massive saving of water because of the introduction of meters? Who, ultimately, will pay the costs involved with a metering system?

Mr. Moynihan: It is clear that the customers, ultimately, will have to pay those costs. We are considering whether to include a condition in the privatised utility companies' terms of appointment so that they can recover the cost of installing meters through their water charges to customers.

Mr. Barry Fields: Will my hon. Friend reconsider the trial meter areas and his Department's request that a certain number of meters be installed in homes? Does that not run contrary to the intention of the Home Office to reduce the number of people required to enter homes to read meters? The Isle of Wight is the largest meter trial area in the country, with more than 50,000 homes having meters installed and includes the homes of many elderly people. Will my hon. Friend reconsider that policy? Will he also commend the Southern water authority for its excellent consultation process on its trial area scheme?

Mr. Moynihan: It is right that proper care and attention is taken over the vetting of anyone entering a home to install a meter for any utility purpose. I am happy to congratulate the Southern water authority on its excellent work in the Isle of Wight. It has been wise enough to set up a free hot line so that anyone can telephone direct if he or she is in the least bit concerned about the validity of the individual coming through the door to install a meter during the trial period.

Mr. Boyes: Does the Minister recall that during the passage of what is now the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Act 1988, he gave an assurance that the views of those taking part in the meter trials would be fully taken into consideration during the consultative process? Will he prepare a report on the problems experienced during that consultative process? Is he aware that, in particular, the people of Normanton have been shabbily treated by the Yorkshire water authority and are highly dissatisfied? Will he visit Normanton so that he can appreciate the deep opposition to the introduction of universal water metering?

Mr. Moynihan: All schemes for approval have detailed proposals on the consultation process undertaken. They are considered in detail by my right hon. Friend before he gives approval for any of the schemes. I am aware of the strength of feeling in south Normanton and I have given an assurance to the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) that, once we have received the formal proposal, I shall go with him to a public meeting in the area to hear the views of local residents on its terms.

Sports Council

9. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Sports Council.

Mr. Moynihan: I regularly meet the chairman of the Sports Council. The next occasion will be on 10 November.

Mr. Jessel: When my hon. Friend meets the chairman, will he discuss the damage to the goodwill of the Sports Council because of its part funding of a horrible scheme to erect eight floodlight towers, 52 ft high and emitting 66,000 W in the heart of a residential area of Teddington? Richmond-upon-Thames council scheme is so unpopular that two public meetings voted against it, first by 132 to 17 and later by over 400 to 12. Will my hon. Friend invite the chairman of the Sports Council to consider instead an improved playing field for Teddington school, but without any floodlights?

Mr. Moynihan: I am aware of the Teddington school scheme and my hon. Friend's detailed representations on the subject. He will understand that, on planning grounds, I have no locus to intervene, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already published his decision not to call in. However, I am aware that further local developments of significance to the sports initiative are now available, and I undertake to ensure that the chairman of the Sports Council receives details of my hon. Friend's representations to the House and myself.

Mr. Pendry: The Minister seems to be quite proud of his so-called streamlined Sports Council, but should he not feel quite ashamed that, despite the great successes of our black athletes at the Olympic games, he has chosen this time to snub ethnic minority sports people by removing their representation from his diminished Sports Council?

Mr. Moynihan: I regard that as a deeply offensive reflection on the enormous hard work that has been done by members of the Sports Council, whatever their colour, on behalf of everybody who enjoys participation in sport and the development of excellence. I am glad to say that we in this country do not have positive discrimination in public appointments, based on colour. It is quite right and proper that we put people into the Sports Council who are competent and capable of reflecting the needs of everybody in the community on their merits.

Mr. John Carlisle: When my hon. Friend next meets the chairman of the Sports Council, who is also the chairman of Liverpool football club, will he re-emphasise to him Her Majesty's Government's determination to press ahead with a full membership scheme for soccer at an early opportunity, based on the lines of the successful experiment at Luton Town football club, as being the only real answer to hooliganism and violence which, sadly, still besmirch the game of football?

Mr. Moynihan: Yes, Sir. Those guilty of hooliganism must be stopped from entering football grounds. A full package of measures for inside and outside grounds is needed.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: When the Minister next meets the chairman of the Sports Council, will he draw his attention to an article in today's edition of *The Independent*, which outlines the plight of the British Bobsleigh Association and the British Ski Federation, both of which have had to abandon plans for their high-level competitors? Does the Minister accept that receptions at No. 10 Downing street are no substitute for proper, substantial and systematic support for our Olympic competitors?

Mr. Moynihan: Of course. Receptions were never intended to be a substitute, nor has anybody ever suggested that they should be. The hon. and learned Gentleman will know that, in the build-up to an Olympic games, the Sports Council places additional resources available to several governing bodies in the Olympic games. If we separate the Olympic review money, as I wish *The Independent* had done, to give a fair representation, we will note that, over the past three years, money going from the Sports Council to the British Ski Federation has risen from £207,500 to £227,500, and to a higher figure of £236,000.

Mr. Lord: When my hon. Friend next meets the chairman of the Sports Council, will he suggest to him that the Seoul Olympic games should be the last in their present form? Is he aware that many lovers of sport believe that they were rather more of a professional sporting circus than a true Olympic event, which will be remembered more for the drugs that were taken than for sporting achievements? Will he urgently consider establishing a permanent site for the Olympic games, perhaps in Greece? More important, will he take urgent steps to try to re-establish true amateurism among participants in the games, to try to regain the true spirit of the Olympics?

Mr. Moynihan: I do not accept the premises that my hon. Friend has brought to the attention of the House. However, I will raise his specific comments with the chairman of the Sports Council, although it would be even better if my hon. Friend were to direct his comments towards the British Olympic Association.

Mr. Denis Howell: Will the Minister kindly tell us why last weekend he was selectively and anonymously engaged in leaking new Government proposals to tax football transfers in order to pay for the Government's new computer? Why did the Minister not have the decency to make a statement instead of leaking the proposals to two political journalists? Why was "football" not consulted about this new proposal? Why is it that this week 60 sports have learnt that their grants are to be cut, when there has been no consultation whatever with them or the Central Council of Physical Recreation, as is required by the royal charter for sport? Is it not clear that we no longer have a Ministry for sport, but instead have a dictatorship for sport, headed by the absurd figure of this Minister?

Mr. Moynihan: I never behave selectively and anonymously. The right hon. Gentleman's allegations are complete nonsense. I spent Saturday in my constituency and Sunday enjoying a relaxing day with my family.

Estate Action

10. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the level of Estate Action funding for the years 1987-88 and 1988-89, respectively.

Mr. Trippier: The funding was £75 million in 1987-88 and £140 million in 1988-89.

My right hon. Friend announced yesterday a further substantial increase for next year of 36 per cent. That brings the total to £190 million.

Mr. Patnick: I thank my hon. Friend for that response and, on behalf of Sheffield, for the £7 million that it received. This year we shall receive £6·8 million and, as an Oliver Twist, may I ask whether there will be any more please for next year? If so, how much?

Mr. Trippier: I cannot answer the last question, because it is too early to say how the money will be allocated. My hon. Friend pointed out that Sheffield received 17 per cent. of the total regional allocation for Yorkshire and Humberside. From the increase announced by my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Chancellor of the Exchequer it is clear that there will be increased allocations on a regional basis. We shall consider carefully the application that Sheffield submits.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the Minister confirm that £190 million spread across the country is hardly a significant amount compared with the massive cuts in local authority housing investment programmes? Is not Estate Action funding a palliative? Small sums are given to local authorities to patch up poor estates which really need major surgery. They are palliatives that the Government have introduced to conceal the fact that they are not allowing local authorities to build new council houses.

Mr. Trippier: The gross provision for capital expenditure on housing in 1989-90 will be £441 million, which is a 12 per cent. increase on what was previously planned. Why is it that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends never take account of capital receipts and behave as if they did not exist? They choose to ignore capital receipts simply because they are not keen on the right-to-buy policy that draws in those receipts. The receipts are estimated to be about £3 billion, which is an impressive figure. Estate Action money is over and above that sum.

Angell and Loughborough Estates, London

11. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* letters have been sent and *(b)* visits have been made, by his officials, to tenants and residents of the Angell and Loughborough estates, London SW9.

Mr. Ridley: A total of 4,326 copies of two letters have been sent to occupiers of Angeltown and Loughborough estates. I met council and tenant representatives on 27 July, and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) has visited the estates. In addition, there have been three meetings attended by my officials.

Mr. Fraser: Does that not involve political expenditure in advance of a decision by Parliament, and is the Secretary of State not paying a substantial fee to Peat, Marwick, McLintock to find out whether there is support for housing action trusts among the tenants? In the interests of saving public expenditure, will the Secretary of State take it from me that the tenants are opposed to HATs? If he does not believe me, will he accept the decision of the other place to have a ballot of tenants?

Mr. Ridley: I remember the meeting which the hon. Gentleman attended with the tenants. I am sure that he will sympathise with me on how difficult it is to discuss and explain these matters to people if they walk out before the meeting starts. I find it difficult to discover whether they are in favour or against HATs when they do not stay to talk to me.

Mr. Soley: Will the Secretary of State explain why he cannot tell the tenants what housing action trusts are about? He told us earlier that they were about getting extra money, but Peat, Marwick, McLintock clearly says in its document, which I have here in full, that "the goal" is "successful transfer to the private sector."

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member should not quote.

Mr. Soley: As that is the intention of Peat, Marwick, McLintock, has it misled, or have the tenants been misled?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman, as he knows, has obtained another stolen document—only this time it was stolen by the tenants. I express no dismay, because he does not quite know what it means. The private sector, of course, includes housing associations and tenants' co-operatives that are classified as being in the private sector.

Housing Associations (London)

14. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives of housing associations in London; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Ridley: I recently met the chairman of the Housing Corporation and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) will hold a meeting of representatives of the London Housing Associations Council next week.

Mr. Bowis: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many thousands of former council tenants have lost their right to buy by being transferred to housing association tenancies? Is he aware that in London the transfer discount scheme is not a realistic option because of house prices? Will he and his hon. Friend ensure that discussions take place with housing associations in London to ensure that possibly 20 to 30 per cent. of such properties are in share purchase schemes?

Mr. Ridley: As my hon. Friend knows, the Government had always hoped that they could persuade another place to agree that charitable housing associations should be subject to the right to buy. They have not so far succeeded in that objective, and that has been the root cause of the trouble that my hon. Friend quite rightly mentioned. It denies rights to buy to some people which are granted to others who happen to be tenants of non-charitable housing associations. I agree that the home ownership for tenants of charitable associations scheme—HOTCHA—is hardly likely to fill its place as it is at present. I could not agree more strongly that the answer is that there should be more shared ownership schemes brought forward by such charitable housing associations. We cannot compel them to do so, because housing associations are voluntary bodies, but we can encourage them. I have already asked the Housing Corporation to allocate sufficient funds for this purpose if the housing associations will take them up.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Secretary of State—
[Interruption.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is unfair to those who follow.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Secretary of State accept that there is increasing difficulty for housing associations in London in seeking to acquire any land or build any houses because of the extremely high cost of the land? Will the Secretary of State ensure in future that they are given the resources through the Housing Corporation to have a 100 per cent. grant, so that they can continue to meet the need that they were established to meet, which is low cost housing for rent for those in need?

Mr. Ridley: I read that SERPLAN believes that some 260,000 houses can be accommodated in London up to the end of this century. Therefore, I believe that there is still land available to build more houses in London. The vastly increased programme of funding for the Housing Corporation that my right hon. Friend and I announced yesterday in the public spending review should help to provide housing associations with the funds to build more.

There are still large numbers of empty houses and large numbers of council houses that are being abused. For instance, Brent council has now discovered that a large number of its council houses have the keys traded in Nigeria for £500 a go. If those houses were available, it would help the hon. Gentleman's constituents and other London homeless people. It is another example of the gross inefficiency of Labour authorities in the centre of London.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: This question is about London.

Mr. Winterton: Indeed, Mr. Speaker. I am well aware of that.

Does my right hon. Friend accept that some specialist housing charities provide much-needed specialist accommodation in areas where housing costs are very high, so there could be a danger in introducing legislation to give people the right to buy because that could remove such accommodation from certain areas, thus depriving many deserving people of the opportunity of living there?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is quite right. That was the reason why the other place did not wish to grant the right to buy to tenants of charitable housing associations. However, it is a difficult decision, because at the same time large numbers of people, such as the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), are denied the right to buy where the objections that my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) rightly mentions do not apply. Therefore, I hope that charitable housing associations will adapt their policy on the ground according to whether they are in the category of my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield or that of my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Secretary of State aware that an undertaking given by the Government at the time of the abolition of the GLC in respect of seaside and country homes has been reneged on by the Government? Old people were told that when their homes went over to housing associations the rent levels would remain broadly what they were at that time. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that since the London Residuary Body has sold on those homes to housing associations those old people are now having to pay staggeringly high rents? Is the Minister not ashamed of what he has done?

Mr. Ridley: I have some of those houses in my constituency. Those rents are not fixed unless the rent officer agrees any change. But it must be right that rents should rise to the general level of rents in the area concerned. I am still waiting to hear from the hon. Gentleman whether he will withdraw the word "scandal" that he used on Monday [HON. MEMBERS: "No."]

Bradford City Council

15. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account he took, in fixing the rate support grant for Bradford city council for 1988-89, of information provided by the council on projected staffing levels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: An authority's entitlement to block grant depends on the rate support grant settlement and on its total expenditure. My right hon. Friend took no account of individual local authority projected staffing levels in determining the RSG settlement for 1988-89.

Mr. McKay: It is regrettable that the Government took no notice of staffing levels. If they had, they would have noted that those levels were aimed at looking after the most needy in Bradford, the elderly, the young and the unemployed. Is it not a fact that Bradford Tory council, in making 9,000 people redundant over the next five years, in addition to the 25,000 already unemployed, will undermine the local economy and efforts to solve the inner urban problems of the area?

Mr. Gummer: It would be much better if the hon. Gentleman accepted the verdict of the electorate and allowed the council that they elected to make local decisions for itself, instead of constantly misinterpreting what the council is doing in a way that is wholly wrong and unacceptable.

Mr. Batiste: Does my right hon. Friend agree that ratepayers elsewhere can only benefit if their councils follow the excellent lead of the Conservatives in Bradford in cutting out waste and political appointments when making staffing decisions?

Mr. Gummer: Of course, it is up to Bradford council to make its own decisions, but the House will probably feel that, for example, the money that will now not be spent on a ludicrous nuclear-free zone will be better spent in other ways.

Mr. O'Brien: The Minister cannot deny that through the casting vote of the Conservative lord mayor of Bradford 9,000 men and women will lose their jobs, and the ripple effect wil mean further job losses in a city where 23,000 people are already looking for work. When will the Minister take action against the Right-wing Tory group which has taken over Bradford and is causing devastation in the area? Is it not time that he took action against that group rather than condemning Labour party members in other parts of the country?

Mr. Gummer: I can deny it, because the hon. Gentleman is wholly untruthful in what he has said—*[Interruption.]* I withdraw that comment. The hon. Gentleman is wholly mistaken in what he has said. He is confusng that with the fact that a number of jobs will go to private enterprise, others will be redeployed and in the end others will not be filled. The result will actually be

more jobs in Bradford because there will no longer be such a weight on the ratepayers, and that money can be used elsewhere. The hon. Gentleman must not ask this Government to interfere in the democratic process. We believe in local government and we do not believe in directing it from the centre.

Mr. Waller: Will my hon. Friend congratulate Bradford council on recognising that the local authority exists to provide services, not to increase its empire? Is he aware that those who pay the rate bills in Bradford in many cases are the same people who have had to reduce the number of their own employees so as to pay for the local government manpower that has greatly increased in Bradford in the past few years?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is right. The people of Bradford have clearly decided that they would like their city to be run by politicians, not by the local unions. That is why the argument has taken place. It will be for the Bradford group to make its own decisions about how to run its own show. It seems to me likely, however, that if one cuts the costs of local government and spends the savings on those who are most needy, while ensuring value for money, one can also ensure that there are more jobs in the private sector so that unemployment in Bradford will fall and more and more people will vote Conservative as a result.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take points of order after the presentation of the Bill.

BILL PRESENTED

National Cervical Cancer Foundation (Establishment)

Mr. Frank Cook presented a Bill to establish a National Cervical Cancer Foundation responsible for a comprehensive programme of cervical screening and the recruitment and training of medical laboratory officers for such a programme: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 222.]

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order arising out of questions, Mr. Speaker. There is an obligation on Ministers——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not arising out of questions. It is a point of order.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order following questions, Mr. Speaker. As you know, there is an obligation on Ministers to provide information to Parliament. That is a convention of the constitution. It is misleading the House to suggest that the Conservatives in Bradford presented information to the electors——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As I feared, that is a continuation of Question Time. I am sorry that I was unable to call the hon. Gentleman, but one of his colleagues from Bradford made a rather long intervention and I cannot get every Member in.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have noticed for some time now that you tend to take points of order after other business. May I ask why?

Mr. Speaker: That has been a long-established practice.

Mr. Heffer: No, it has not.

Mr. Speaker: It certainly has.

Mr. Heffer: It has not.

Mr. Speaker: The moment when points of order are taken is immediately after statements or applications under Standing Order No. 20.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am not prepared to have a continuation of Question Time. If it is a different point of order, I will hear it.

Mr. Cryer: It is a different point of order, Mr. Speaker. The implication of your statement is that if one of a number of Members being considered for calling at Question Time takes what you regard as a long time over a question, other Members from the area will be penalised. That is something that no Speaker has ever announced in the House before. Surely we are all elected to the House and all have the right to be called at your discretion, irrespective of the comments made by any other Member.

Mr. Speaker: That is absolutely correct, but I think the hon. Gentleman will accept that if an area has four Members and every one of those Members is called on every question relating to it, that would be unfair to Members representing other areas.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East) *rose*——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that I had better call Mr. Faulds.

Mr. Tony Banks: He has only just got here.

Mr. Faulds: I have been here for 22 years.

Hon. Members: Resign.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that that is too long.

Mr. Faulds: I appreciate your appreciation, Sir. May I make a point that is relevant to this important point of order, without these discrepancies of youngsters trying to intervene and interfere? With due respect to you, Sir, I have been in the House longer than you.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Mr. Speaker has been here for two years longer than my hon. Friend.

Mr. Faulds: In that case, I apologise, Sir. You have done two years' more service than I have, but perhaps my memory is somewhat better than yours. In the old days, points of order were invariably accepted by the Chair the moment they arose. There has been a change in practice, which unfortunately started in the time of your lamentable predecessor.

Mr. Speaker: There has been no change of practice.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. With regard to your earlier point on Bradford, you will recall that in the days of the blessed Bruinvels you regularly took questions from all three Members from Leicester——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House must allow the Speaker to make the decision on this matter. I am not prepared to debate who I call at Question Time or at any other time.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No.

Mr. Cryer: May I make a further point of order, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. The hon. Member may not raise a point of order.

Unleaded Petrol (Engine Adjustment)

3.36 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for the compulsory tuning of motor car engines at the time of manufacture for running on unleaded petrol.

Although I am certain that it will not have escaped the notice of many hon. Members, I point out that this is National Unleaded Petrol Week. This week and my Bill are intended to encourage the take-up of unleaded petrol by the motoring public.

The emphasis on publicising unleaded petrol has been by oil companies. There are 2,300 filling stations out of a total of 20,000 or more with pumps that serve unleaded petrol. Unfortunately, the take-up rate by the travelling public is not great. The take-up rate from unleaded pumps is only 20 per cent. of that from four-star pumps. The rate could be speeded up in terms of the number of pumps available, but my Bill does something slightly different. It seeks to concentrate attention on motor manufacturers and car owners, rather than on oil companies, in order to increase the use of unleaded petrol.

The first part of my Bill aims to make it compulsory for motor manufacturers to tune new car engines to run on unleaded petrol where that can be done with a minimum of inconvenience. Fifty per cent. of new car registrations in this new car registration year beginning in August were of motor cars that could run on unleaded petrol but were tuned to run only on the leaded variety.

The second part of my Bill addresses the problem of cars already on the road. There are now 13 million motor cars on our roads that could run on unleaded petrol, but only 2 million are tuned to do so.

For new cars, my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for roads has made it clear to car manufacturers that he is prepared to issue a waiver so that, if they wish to tune their cars to run on unleaded petrol, they may do so without falling foul of the type approval regulations. For used cars, my Bill would seek to make it a condition of the issue or reissue of an MOT certificate that cars that can be converted to run on unleaded petrol are converted before the certificate is issued.

The cost of retuning is small, varying between £5 and £20, depending on model type. As unleaded petrol is 6p cheaper than four-star petrol since the change announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Budget, it is clear that if a customer completes the average mileage of about 10,000 miles, the cost of that conversion could be recouped within a year.

One motor manufacturer has gone further than that. The Vauxhall company has agreed that cars that were made after 1985 will be retuned free of charge to run on unleaded petrol, and the new Cavalier will be so retuned by the dealer before the customer takes delivery. It is worth pointing out that if cars are converted to run on unleaded petrol, that does not mean that they cannot use the leaded variety when the unleaded variety is not available.

The slow take-up of unleaded petrol is largely the result of the ignorance of car owners and the motor trade generally about it. I hope that my Bill, combined with National Unleaded Petrol Week, will improve the level of knowledge and encourage car owners to make the change to unleaded petrol. I hope that my hon. Friends and other hon. Members will take a lead and, if they are able to do so, have their cars converted to run on unleaded petrol as soon as possible.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Keith Mans, Mr. James Paice, Mr. Irvine Patnick and Mr. Julian Brazier.

Unleaded Petrol (Engine Adjustment)

Mr. Keith Mans accordingly presented a Bill to provide for the compulsory tuning of motor car engines at the time of manufacture for running on unleaded petrol: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 223.]

Firearms (Amendment) Bill [Money] (No. 3)

3.42 pm

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I beg to move,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Firearms (Amendment) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of sums required by the Secretary of State for making payments in respect of expenses incurred in the performance of their duties by members of the consultative committee established by that Act.

I want so speak about the money resolution, not least because I see that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is in his place. In the past he has made some comments about money resolutions, and no doubt has had a considerable degree of pleasure from them.

The House will recall that this is the third money resolution relating to the Firearms (Amendment) Bill. The first money resolution, which was debated in January this year, provided for the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any administrative expenses incurred by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State as a consequence of the Bill, and also for the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any sums of money received under the Bill by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

The House will recall that a number of hon. Members —notably the hon. Member for Bradford, South—made the point that the scope of the money resolution being accepted by the House was not wide enough to cover the buy-in policy if it were to be adopted. As the House knows, it was adopted and, as a result, a second money resolution was brought forward and debated in the House at the beginning of March. The second money resolution provided for the making of payments in relation to the buy-in scheme for weapons prohibited under the Bill.

During the progress of the Bill, and particularly on Report, the Government accepted the need to make provision in the Bill for the establishment of a firearms consultative committee, which would be made up of representatives of those involved in the administration and enforcement of firearms legislation and of various shooting interests. The purpose of the committee will be to keep the legislation under review and to advise my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on firearms matters.

Clearly, it is right that the Government should meet the costs incurred by members of the committee in the performance of their duties. The posts are not salaried. I am talking of travelling, subsistence costs and so on. The Government therefore introduced an amendment in the other place to provide for the payment of expenses. As the existing money resolutions do not cover such provision, it is now necessary to pass this third money resolution to cover the cost, which we estimate will not exceed £10,000 a year.

It was not possible to lay a money resolution to meet such expenditure before, because until the Bill reached its Report stage the Government had not intended to provide for a statutory—as opposed to a non-statutory—consultative committee. The House will recall, however, that members of the Committee took a different view and that the Government were beaten on that issue.

3.45 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I suppose that this could be regarded as a case of "third time lucky" for the Minister. He makes the background to the money resolution sound as though it had involved a comfortable natural process of evolution—far from it. As he said, this is the third money resolution that the Government have tabled. It was only after the Second Reading debate that we discovered that the money resolution did not allow the Committee to debate a possible compensation scheme for the owners of weapons that the Bill will make illegal.

The Minister will recall our exchanges across the Floor of the House and in Committee. The Government tried to gag and stifle debate on this important matter. I remind the Minister that, despite the cosy way in which he described the process, he managed to get his sittings motion passed in Committee only by giving an undertaking to undo that attempt at cheating and to table a second money resolution to enable the Committee to discuss the principle of a possible compensation scheme.

We now come to the third money resolution. To be fair to the Minister, he reminded the House that it was at the insistence of members of the Committee, including my hon. Friends and myself, that we amended the terms of reference of the consultative committee to ensure that it was set up on a statutory basis. Nevertheless, the provision was not perfect, because it meant that the members of the Committee—some of us suspected that it was simply the old home affairs arms consultative committee dusted down and given a new title—could speak only when spoken to by the Home Secretary. That was a wholly wrong approach to such an important matter, and I am glad that it was put right in another place.

Why has this third money resolution come before us so late? If the Minister and the Government had allowed proper and adequate debate on Report and Third Reading we could have disposed of the matter at that stage, but Ministers came to the House with a gagging motion—a guillotine—which meant that that part of the Bill was not discussed. Indeed, the bulk of the Bill was never discussed on the Floor of the House. That was no accident. It was done in a remarkable way. It was not a Government response to the Opposition messing about and filibustering —far from it. I have no need to remind the Minister that he relied heavily in Committee on the general support of the Opposition for the Bill's aims, although, like some Conservative Members, we disagreed with its detail.

Why was this not allowed to be dealt with on Report or Third Reading? I am not complaining about reimbursing the proper expenses of members of the consultative committee; I am complaining because of the underhand and outrageous manner in which the Government have dealt with the Bill. It has been an affront to the House. That is not a party political point—I make it on behalf of all hon. Members. Now, the Government are in an even worse mess. It is right that the committee members should be paid, but I strongly resent having to return now and spend time on this resolution because of the trouble into which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary and his colleagues dug themselves earlier this year.

3.51 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I agree with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) that the Minister's benign statement covered a great deal of

unhappiness with sweetness and light. The Bill is small, but its repercussions will be serious, and it is incredible that we are now discussing a third money resolution.

The first, as the hon. Member for Erdington said, dealt with manpower, which was grossly underestimated. The second covered compensation, without whose acceptance the Standing Committee would never have begun to sit. The third has to do with the consultative committee. These grudging extensions to the original money resolution were squeezed out of the Government until the pips began to squeak.

New clause 14, which originally instituted the consultative committee, was an important part of the wishes of both sides of the Committee. It was voted in because we won the argument and we won the vote. We planned to have a committee of five and not more than eight members. The Minister's committee is more expensive, which is why we want to know a little more about the money resolution.

We wanted experts in the use of firearms, in security, in weapon technology—the Home Office was lamentably short of experience in that—in sport, recreation and competition and in the police and enforcement. At the Olympic games, two of our great triumphs came in winning the gold and silver medals in rifle shooting, which showed that our discussions were held against a background of responsible competitors.

The purpose of the committee that we set up was to advise the Government on security, the proper use of firearms and any other matters that the Secretary of State decided upon. It was voted in with cross-party support, and we were given every sign and assurance that it would be kept in the Bill as it was. But things did not turn out that way.

At the eleventh hour, on the day before Report, the Government tabled amendments that made substantial changes to the committee, perhaps improving it in the Minister's opinion, but the majority of the Committee's Members did not agree with the changes. We could not discuss them in the debate on the guillotine motion on Report. I am glad that Lord Swansea and his team continued the attack in another place in an attempt to get the consultative committee right, and the Government had to agree to include representatives expert in sport and recreation in the committee's membership. The Government have increased that membership to at least 12. Under the terms of the money resolution, we are entitled to know who the extra members of the committee will represent.

The Minister spoke about £10,000. We need proper advice on weapons technology, especially for the future, and we cannot have that without some laboratory and range facilities. If the committee is to do its job properly, £10,000 is fairly minimal, because the committee might need to have a full-time technical officer. A sum of £10,000 far underestimates the value and importance of the work that the committee will do for the Home Office. I hope that the Minister will go into some detail about how he reckons £10,000 can possibly do the job, when the Home Office, as was demonstrated throughout the passage of the Bill, is so short of expertise.

The Bill says that personnel would amount to about 80, which is an insignificant manpower requirement. However, we hear from police authorities that Cambridge has already taken on 13 people and that Dorset has taken on six. On such figures, it will be seen that the personnel required for England and Wales would be 450, additional staff who would be required to monitor the Bill. That would cost £5 million or £6 million, and I should like to hear from the Minister about that.

The Minister seeks authority under the three money resolutions for significant expenditure. Throughout the passage of the Bill he has failed to say what the legislation will cost or how much the fee will be for firearms and shotgun certificates. He has left us in the dark—which is probably his intention.

3.57 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I can recall the debate on the first of the money resolutions. That debate developed when the money resolution was about to go through, largely on the nod. I thought that we should have an explanation, and it became clear that the first money resolution after Second Reading did not meet the scope of the assurances that the Minister had given. I thought that I was doing the job of scrutinising the work of Ministers, even though I know that some of us who speak a great deal in the Chamber sometimes incur some criticism. We should not be criticised and penalised by, for example, a totting up of the speeches that we make, because they are by way of scrutiny.

This debate is an example of the way in which the scrutiny of Ministers has worked. In order to comply with the pressure from the House, the Minister had to bring forward a second money resolution, which, as he said on Second Reading, was to pay compensation for old firearms. It was rather surprising to find that the money resolution was so narrowly drawn that it did not make provision for any other consequences of the legislation, especially as this is controversial legislation. That controversy is fuelled by hon. Members in all parts of the House, and especially by Conservative Members. It might have been prudent for the Government to realise that there might be changes. The establishment of a statutory review committee is a useful development. Therefore, it should be financed, and we are discussing a money resolution for that statutory committee.

I endorse the comments of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). The Government are cheering the Tory-controlled Bradford council for sacking people who provided services for the old, the young, very young children, education and sports services and a huge range of other local authority services. Bradford council is proposing to sack 9,000 people, yet the Government are apparently providing a system that will, not entirely by way of Government finance, but through other finance provided by various authorities, involve the employment of 450 people. That is, I would have thought, extending bureaucracy somewhat unnecessarily, but then some critics of the Bill thought that that was explicit in the original legislation anyhow.

The extent and scope of the money resolution should be more closely defined by the Minister. After all, they are supposed to be the Government who are critical of expenditure and who want to see bureaucracy cut. That is why they praise the lunatic endeavours of the tiny extreme Right-wing Tory clique that is manoeuvring cuts by Bradford city council.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Is not the difference between Bradford city council and the point that the hon. Gentleman is trying to make that, under its previous

[Mr. Nicholas Soames]

administration, Bradford city council was grossly overstaffed, whereas police forces are grossly understaffed? Therefore, his comparison is invalid.

Mr. Cryer: I do not want to go too far down that road, because I always try to follow Standing Orders, and sometimes get penalised for so doing. The hon. Gentleman's point is not based on experience or accuracy. Bradford city council tried to use an absolute minimum number of staff to provide the best possible service, bearing in mind that the rate support grant had been savagely cut by the Conservative Government, who are now preparing——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us bear in mind the Standing Orders.

Mr. Cryer: I was just coming to the motion before you interrupted me, Mr. Speaker, as you interrupted my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) during Question Time, and extended the speech, you may recall,——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman, who is an old hand here, knows that we must stick to the motion before the House.

Mr. Cryer: That is so, Mr. Speaker. I was about to say that, with this money resolution, the Government are proposing further expenditure when it is open to question whether that expenditure is justified. Therefore, I look forward to hearing the Minister's explanation of the precise extent and nature of the money resolution, and whether he is satisfied that it covers all the changes made to the Bill by the two Houses of Parliament.

4.2 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to clarify one or two points. By way of prefacing that, I would say that it is ironic that this Government, of all Governments, who are doing their best to improve efficiency, get better value for money and, above all else, to use police resources more effectively, are embarking on legislation that will greatly increase the pressure on those scarce police resources. It is ironic because there was not adequate consultation on the Bill, which was rushed through far too quickly.

The Bill will break the trust and confidence between the shooting community and the police, which is one of the sine qua nons of workable firearms legislation. I fear that that will be breached and then destroyed. I have had worrying reports from my local police force, the Norfolk constabulary. It is worried about the extra pressure that the Bill will place on its scarce resources to cope with bureaucracy and provide the extra manpower.

My hon. Friend the Minister has to tell us exactly what he thinks the financial consequences will be, because the Bill is couched in extremely general terms. It says:

"some increases . . . will initially be required".

Can my hon. Friend tell us why the increases will be required only "initially"? We are bringing in a panoply of new controls and structures, which will need a continuing commitment of police resources. To use the word "initially" is unrealistic.

Will my hon. Friend let us have more details about the amount of money that we are talking about in compensation? I welcome the moves made by the Government on compensation. When the Bill was first published, many of us were appalled and outraged that the Government were taking away people's weapons without giving compensation. It probably ill-behoves people like myself, who pressed so hard for compensation, to say now that it is not adequate. It could be improved on, but, in the circumstances, we got the best that we could have expected. However, I should like my hon. Friend to tell us exactly what sums of money we are talking about. He should know by now the number of weapons involved and the sums of money available to be paid out. I should like some more details on that.

I should also like my hon. Friend to give us some idea of what the consultative committee will cost. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) pointed out that when we first put this animal into the Bill in Committee it was an excellent body, and the Government then attempted, in an underhand and squalid way, to dismember it. I am pleased that some of its teeth have been returned to it by the other place, although one thing concerns me, and it may be appropriate for my hon. Friend to cover this. I am concerned that it has been established to last for only five years. It would be helpful if my hon. Friend could tell us what he feels the Committee has to do, or what criteria of competence and effectiveness it has to work to, to secure its position beyond five years. Will my hon. Friend tell us something about that, and about what the cost of the committee will be?

4.6 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): My hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) and I recently met Lord Ferrers to discuss the resources for the Greater Manchester police force, and in our discussions the issue of the administrative resources and the disagreement about the level of funding of those resources was paramount. Therefore, I look to the Minister for some clarification of what he said about resources, start-up money, and the way in which the Greater Manchester police force will be involved in the consequences of this legislation. To what extent are the Minister and Lord Ferrers to provide additional resources, in real terms, to Greater Manchester police force to cover this provision?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have some difficulty in relating that to the firearms legislation.

Mr. McCartney: I respect your ruling, Mr. Speaker. Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), I am somewhat new to these procedural matters. I am trying to relate what I am saying to what the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) said about the police force in his constituency. I ask the Minister to clarify what the effects of the legislation will be on the administrative responsibilities of the Greater Manchester police force and the resources available to it.

4.8 pm

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): I was a member of the Committee that considered this legislation, and I know that at no time in the Committee's proceedings was it the Government's intention to pay compensation. They came along with an ill-prepared Bill that had not been properly

thought out and conceived without any rational judgment about the various interests involved.

I am opposed to anybody, with the exception of the armed forces and the police, having guns. My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) raised the point about Greater Manchester police force resources. I share the view of the chief constable of Manchester. He is much criticised and much attacked for his views, but he is a first-class policeman. Politically he is a disaster, and in public relations and the other sectors into which he strays from time to time he is wrong in his opinions.

At the end of the day, regardless of personal beliefs, there was a degree of tolerance and democracy in the Committee for other interests. It was rather ironic that a minority Labour representation on the Committee consistently bailed out a Conservative Minister and provided him with a majority. The Bill would never have got off the ground if it had been left to Conservative Back-Benchers, who for obvious reasons were promoting a campaign to safeguard various shooting societies throughout the country.

I accept that that is fair play and that they did it extremely well, but I take umbrage at certain applications for gun clubs that are sprouting up throughout the country. There was a recent application for a shooting club in my constituency, in Greater Manchester, to be set up in a wildlife area in a green belt. That would be an environmental intrusion. All the money in the world could not compensate for such an environmental intrusion into that area.

The Government were hell-bent on pushing through the legislation although it was ill-prepared and badly thought out. We could have taken a more rational and sensible approach, which would have saved the embarrassment of my party having to bail out Government Ministers in order to make progress on the Bill.

4.11 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I shall be very brief. I have been here throughout the debate, and I must say that there are some honourable fools in the Chamber. From time to time we have to listen to them.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us agree that they are hon. Members.

Mr. Haynes: They are hon. Members, but they are fools.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that that might be considered unparliamentary.

Mr. Haynes: In that case, I withdraw it, but I hope that they will be reasonable while we are here.

First, in regard to the money resolution, the Minister cocked it up right from the beginning. I was here when my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) had a go at the Minister at the Dispatch Box.

I share some of the concern among hon. Members that the Government are finding money for this purpose. Normally when we ask for money for services in our constituencies we are refused, as we were for rate support grant, yet the Government are able to find money today.

I think that this is the thin end of the wedge. I hope that the Minister will put us straight and tell us where he thinks the legislation is going. What will happen in future? Will there be more and more bodies providing this kind of service? If so, even more money will have to be found. Will larger and larger accommodation have to be provided for those people? I can visualise what is happening in the Minister's mind over the provision of money for this type of work.

I share the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South, who spoke about the way in which the Government treat local authorities, particularly those in his area—I am glad that he is listening now—when he mentioned that Bradford city council is now Tory controlled. I shall not say any more about that, but I know what happens when Conservatives take control of local authorities. We experience it here in the mother of Parliaments. There is a by-election tomorrow in the city of Nottingham. The Tories are in control at the moment, but if we win that seat we will be in control. I am sure that people will be listening to what is being said today about money being provided for this kind of thing, but not for necessary and important services that people need.

I hope that the Minister and the Government do not have it in mind, when they get this measure off the ground, to find more and more money at the expense of services that people need. After all, we represent those people and we are speaking on their behalf.

4.15 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have had a surprisingly wide-ranging debate, given how narrowly the money resolution is drawn. The money resolution is drawn exclusively to meet the payment of out-of-pocket expenses of members of the consultative committee. It goes no further than that. Therefore, the broader issues that have been raised do not arise directly out of the money resolution; and I propose to keep my remarks fairly narrowly focused.

The money resolution is designed to give financial effect to the power of the Secretary of State to meet the out-of-pocket expenses of the consultative committee, if that is the will of the House. I shall be commending to the House a Lords amendment to that effect. Quite plainly we cannot put a precise figure on that, but it is bound to be extremely modest, because we are talking about the out-of-pocket expenses of a relatively small number of people.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) criticised the Government, and particularly me, for increasing the number of members of the consultative committee. I wonder whether he is wholly fair in that respect. The definition of those eligible to serve on the consultative committee includes quite a number of people —those with expertise in possession, use, keeping, transactions, technology, enforcement and administration. My hon. Friend wished to add to that sport and recreation, and I agree with him. If one representative for each of those interests served on the committee, it would consist of nine people. If we wanted to have one or two more, say two from one interest group, we would get to 12 very quickly. Simply to meet my hon. Friend's natural desires, it was necessary to extend the number.

My answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is that I get cross sometimes, but I never

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

criticise hon. Members who talk about money resolutions. When I was sitting below the Gangway I used to do so frequently. I thought that it was good sport, and occasionally it was useful.

I admit that the hon. Member for Bradford, South made a good point when he spoke about the first money resolution. He was right in saying that the money resolution then before the House was not drawn sufficiently widely to cover a buy-in scheme. The reason for that was quite plain and was nothing covert. We did not intend to have a buy-in scheme. There was no pretence about that, there was no intent to cheat, deceive or fetter the ability of the committee. We did not intend to have a buy-in scheme, and that is why the money resolution as originally formulated did not provide for one.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South was a little unfair when he criticised me, and certainly the Government, for not ensuring that the second money resolution covered the requirement now before the House. As he will recall, when we were debating the second money resolution we did not have in mind a statutory consultative committee, and therefore we assumed that the issue would not arise.

As the hon. Member for Bradford, South is joining the Conservative party in his anxiety to safeguard and husband public money, I am sure that he will not ask for money resolutions that are at large, which is what he would have to argue for if he were to sustain his proposition that the money resolution now before the House should in some way have been encompassed within the second money resolution. On reflection, I think the hon. Gentleman will feel that he scored one good point, but also made one rather less good point. I commend the money resolution to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 232, Noes 161.

Division No. [55] **[4.19 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*

Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Begg, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Ilsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Alun Michael.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Firearms (Amendment) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of sums required by the Secretary of State for making payments in respect of expenses incurred in the performance of their duties by members of the consultative committee established by that Act.

Firearms (Amendment) Bill (Allocation of Time)

4.32 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I beg to move,

That the Order of the House [25th May] be supplemented as follows:—

Lords Amendments

1.—(1) The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion three hours after the commencement of the proceedings on the Motion for this Order.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to those proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(4) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration), a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.

(5) If the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before the expiry of the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion, no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment to the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment, or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or, as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr. Speaker which have not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendments; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3. The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

4. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and has not yet been decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of the remaining items designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their said Proposals; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

5.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of the Message or, as the case may be, for the appointment and quorum of the Committee.

(3) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

(4) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(5) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(6) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.

The effect of the timetable motion is to bring to an end the House's consideration of Lords amendments three hours after the start of the present debate. It is right to mention that this debate cannot last more than one hour. The timetable motion thus provides for the termination of debate and for voting on various questions.

Without seeking to curtail the debate, it might be helpful to remind hon. Members that the sooner we finish the debate on the timetable motion, the sooner we shall get on to the substantial consideration of Lords amendments.

I know quite well that the House views timetable motions with some hostility. Indeed, I have sometimes expressed such hostility. On occasion, timetable motions are justified, and I hope that the House will agree that this is such an occasion.

The Government's policy for reforming firearms legislation and for the Bill has been the subject of extensive debate and scrutiny. The House will recall that, in December 1987, we discussed the White Paper on the firearms proposals. The House gave a Second Reading to the Bill and it went into an extended and interesting Committee. The Bill spent a total of 28 hours in Committee. That was a substantial period, when one remembers that the Bill then contained only 19 clauses. I

make no complaint about it being debated so fully, because, as a result of remarks made by hon. Members, substantial and useful changes were made.

The Report stage of the Bill was a wonderfully interesting occasion. It lasted 16 hours, which is a trifle unusual for a Bill of this length, and there were 67 Divisions. My recollection is that most of them were fairly unusual. For about five hours, hon. Members rose every two and a half minutes to express their views.

The Bill has had many curious aspects, and we have seen one recently. The House will recall that the Opposition urged us to set up a statutory consultative committee: we were reminded of that this afternoon by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). He said that it was good that we had set up a statutory consultative committee, so we moved the money resolution to pay the out-of-pocket expenses of the committee, which was set up to meet the wishes of the House. What happened? The Labour party caused a Division and voted against the proposition that we should pay the expenses of the members of the committee, which the Labour party urged us to set up. The hon. Member for Erdington, who is an Opposition spokesman, and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) entered the Opposition Lobby to vote against the payment of out-of-pocket expenses to those whose establishment they urged on us. As I said, this has been a remarkable Bill.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Does my hon. Friend agree that, when the debate about the consultative committee began in Committee, there was broad agreement between those who tabled the amendment and the Opposition? The animal that we created was different from that on which we voted today in connection with the expenses of its members.

Mr. Hogg: No, I do not. The consultative committee that is encapsulated in the Bill is a more powerful and effective institution than that for which my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) and some of his supporters voted in Committee.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The Minister resisted it.

Mr. Hogg: I resisted it because at that stage I thought it was an unsustainable proposition. In deference to the House, we accepted it and improved it by giving it more force and efficacy. Those who suggest to the contrary do not understand the legislation.

From time to time, the House is entitled to protect itself against an undue prolongation of procedure. I am not one to criticise hon. Members who use parliamentary rules. I have done so myself on many occasions, and should I be deprived of my comfortable seat on the Front Bench I shall do so again. I recognise that there is a converse to that proposition, which is that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or the House collectively, are entitled to take proper action to prevent an undue prolongation of procedure. What happened on the money resolution was a good example of the practices that the House, on the whole, deems undesirable.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I am grateful to the Minister for allowing me to pose a question. Is he seriously suggesting that parliamentary procedures have been abused during the passage of this legislation? If he is, I demand that he puts evidence for that before the House. Conservative Members know clearly that that is not so and never has been.

Mr. Hogg: The House will have heard my reference to 67 Divisions and my view that that was somewhat unusual. I did not say that it was an abuse; I said that I never criticised hon. Members for using parliamentary procedure, if only because I had done it myself. However, on occasions it is right and proper to give the House an opportunity to protect itself against the undue prolongation of proceedings so that it can focus on the issues that really matter. The Opposition's behaviour on the money resolution shows the good sense of the timetable motion.

4.40 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): When the Minister and others read *Hansard* tomorrow, they will see one of the most remarkable attempts to justify an outrage that has ever been made from the Dispatch Box. I do not object to the odd history lesson, but I and, I think, many others object to the entirely one-sided and selective nature of the Minister's recollection of earlier events on the Bill. It should be understood—if the Minister needs reminding, I am happy to remind him—that those 67 Divisions following Report and Third Reading arose solely because of the outrageous way in which the Minister and his colleagues slapped a guillotine on those proceedings, despite the most amicable series of Committee sittings——

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): The Government would not have had a sittings motion without us.

Mr. Corbett: As my hon. Friend says, and not to put too fine a point on it, if it had not been for the good will and co-operation of the Opposition, the Minister would not have had his sittings motion, let alone his Bill. It is a fine way to say thank you.

It is traditional, and perhaps part of the ritual of this place, for Oppositions to protest against a guillotine motion. I wish to make it immediately clear that I do not do so on that basis today. I oppose the motion because it is needless and vindictive. It is the second time this Session that this arrogant Government have imposed a guillotine on debate of the Bill—not because of obstruction by the Opposition, but because a number of the Government's supporters tried to insist, with our support, on proper debate and to persuade the Government to see better sense on some of the provisions of this unhappy Bill.

As has been made clear throughout the proceedings, well before Hungerford and well before the Bill was presented, the Opposition demanded a tightening of the gun laws to protect public safety. Initially, the Home Secretary said that there was no need for that. He said so to a number of my hon. Friends who represent London constituencies and who were rightly alarmed about the shocking rise in violent crime on the streets of our capital —something that is being echoed in Birmingham and other parts of the country.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): The hon. Gentleman is aware that the Bill was prepared in 1973 and then shelved. It sat on a shelf during the entire time that the Labour party governed the country. Why did it not bring it in then?

Mr. Corbett: I do not accept that. My point, which is incontrovertible—as the Minister and his colleagues can

[Mr. Corbett]

confirm—is that when a deputation of my hon. Friends from London constituencies went to see the Home Secretary in June 1986 to argue the case for some tightening of the gun control laws on the ground of public safety, they were sent away with a flea in their ear.

We gave a general welcome to the Bill and both promised and delivered co-operation—while, of course, exercising our right to seek changes in what was proposed. The Minister will remember that, at the Committee's first sitting, he could not obtain a sittings motion without our assistance because of a shabby attempt to deny the Committee the right to discuss the issue and the detail of compensation for weapons made illegal under the Bill. The fact is—and remains so as we reach the final stages of the Bill—that the details and scope of compensation have never been discussed on the Floor of the House, despite the fact that on Second Reading all but one of the Government's Back Benchers, including a distinguished former Prime Minister, insisted—in the face of Government opposition—that there should be some compensation.

No proper details were made available during the Committee stage. We were promised—and, to be fair to the Minister, received—details of what was proposed before Report and Third Reading. That is where the cheat and the affront came in. Between the end of the Bill's Committee stage and its Report stage, the Minister hid from members of the Committee, and indeed the whole House, the fact that a guillotine would be placed upon Report and Third Reading in a way that made it impossible for compensation to be debated in the time allowed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The hon. Gentleman will recall that the guillotine was tabled only after the Bill had already been discussed for six hours on Report, without a guillotine, during which time remarkably little progress had been made.

Mr. Corbett: Had the Minister and his hon. Friends not been so bone-headed, but had taken more time to consult the quite legitimate range of interests involved in the legislation, some of that time could have been saved. Even if what the Minister says is true——

Mr. Hogg: Which it is.

Mr. Corbett: I accept that. However, that is no good reason for the Government to use their mailed fist to prevent proper discussion on the Floor of the House of important acres of the Bill. It is a shabby and a shoddy way to shovel legislation on to the statute book. That was to treat the House with contempt because, apart from its effect on us, it denied the voice to those who shoot for leisure or for competitive purposes. That is what is happening again today.

The background is important because, as I have said, it would have been more understandable that the Government should seek the motion had there been adequate debate at earlier stages of the Bill. That was not the case. I shall offer the Minister and the House an illustration of what this needless gag has done. Dealers and their proper actions and the control of them are a vital part of achieving better public safety, but that has never been discussed on the Floor of the House. Certain actions have been taken on, for example, photographs on certificates, but the Bill contains no provision for section 5 dealers' certificates to carry a photograph of the holder. I am told that those certificates can be, and indeed are being, simply photostated and sent with an order as part of trading arrangements between dealers.

Even worse, there is no provision to check the character or the bona fides of those whom the dealers employ. I ask the House to think of the risk of illicit trade in weapons not just for criminal use, but possibly for terrorist use. There is a gaping hole in the Bill, yet the Minister is trying to persuade us that we have had adequate time to debate that issue.

The Opposition and other hon. Members have been prevented from discussing that important matter, and the same is to happen again today. The Minister has not yet told us why there is such a rush about the Bill and why the Government refused properly to consult and respond. The Minister will know that, for more than 12 months, the International Sports Shooters Liaison Committee has been begging for a meeting with him.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I find it difficult to make the hon. Gentleman's remarks compatible—he is asking why we were in such a rush—with those of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who, apart from anything else, invited us to take the Bill on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Corbett: The choice of how the Bill was dealt with belonged to the Government and not to the Opposition. It is as simple as that. Perhaps the Under-Secretary of State will wish to come back to me on that point. It is a fact, is it not, that large parts of the Bill have never been discussed on the Floor of the House? Yes or no?

Mr. Hogg: Will the hon. Gentleman kindly answer the question that I put to him? How does he reconcile his present observations, which are blaming us for discussion, with those of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, who urged us to get on with the Bill without any delay at all?

Mr. Corbett: The Minister is being unusually confusing about the matter. A suggestion that the Bill might be taken on the Floor of the House does not mean that discussion would be curtailed or rushed. It depended upon adequate time being provided. The Government chose not to take up that suggestion. The House and others will note that the Under-Secretary of State is unable to dispute my point that large parts of the Bill have never been discussed on the Floor of the House. That remains the position.

I was saying that, for more than a year, the International Sports Shooters Liaison Committee, by letter and even by fax during the dispute involving letters and parcels, asked for a meeting with the Under-Secretary of State or the Home Secretary. That committee is not a gang of head bangers who want to shoot around the clock willy-nilly, but a group of responsible people who are experienced in the use of weapons. They want more effective controls on the possession and use of weapons. As recently as 14 October the Under-Secretary of State's private secretary had to tell Mr. Desmond Hughes

"I am afraid that"—

"that" is misspelt, but never mind—

"Mr. Hogg's schedule of engagements would not permit a meeting with you in the short time available before the Bill completes its Parliamentary passage."

The letter goes on to state that there could be a meeting at official level. I understand that view, in a letter dated 14 October, but it was not the first request that was made by that body: it was the umpteenth request. That illustrates the unwillingness of the Under-Secretary of State and his colleagues to consult those who have legitimate interests in the matter and a right to be heard.

In case he has inadvertently given a wrong impression, I inform the Under-Secretary of State that, as far as I am aware, not a single voice in the House wants to weaken the control of weapons. Nobody is calling for the indiscriminate right of any individual in this country to possess and use firearms. In fact, opinion goes the other way. The House as a whole wants more effective control of the possession, use and storage of firearms. The argument has been about ways in which that control might be achieved.

As it stands, the Bill has a small chance of achieving what we all want to achieve in terms of public safety. It will not, and, as has been acknowledged, cannot, prevent another Hungerford. At best, it has laid more work on a hard-pressed police force and might mean an additional 300 to 400 officers to ensure that it is carried out. If I might be allowed to say in parenthesis, this is at a time when the Under-Secretary of State and the Home Secretary—and the Prime Minister, no less—have told me that there is not 181,000 quid in the kitty to convert a building in my constituency into a police office. Yet, suddenly, extra officers can be found out of nowhere to police the extra powers that the Bill lays upon them.

The Bill is silent on better measures to detect and control the illegally held weapons that are used in crime. It is one of the ironies of this legislation that, compared with 1986, the number of firearms offences known to the police —that is, when weapons are fired, used as a threat, or used to cause injury—actually fell last year by 4 per cent. That total was 8 per cent. less than that in 1985. What problems are the Government trying to deal with?

We know that, last year, under this so-called law and order Government, there was a 12 per cent. rise in violent crime on the streets of our towns and cities. Last night the Birmingham *Evening Mail* was able to report that in the inner-city suburb of Handsworth

> "Robberies and assaults with intent to rob . . . had rocketed by 51 per cent. this year.
>
> And thefts from the person—mostly purse and jewellery snatches from women and girls—had soared by an alarming 31 per cent."

That is the problem for the West Midlands police force, which the Home Secretary has said cannot have the 1,000 extra officers that it says it needs over the next three years to deliver the kind of service that it wants to deliver to the public of Birmingham and the rest of the west midlands. Yet apparently we can find 300 or 400 spare officers knocking around to deal with the consequences of this Bill.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): It is not a case of the Government trying to find extra officers. Surely it is a case of diverting existing officers from the duties in which they are presently engaged.

Mr. Corbett: The hon. Gentleman's point is well made. He put it far more accurately than I could. That is what will happen. From what the Home Office said on the back of the Autumn Statement earlier this week, we know that there will be a small increase in total police numbers. The hon. Gentleman is exactly right. If he is not exactly right, I should be more than pleased to stand at the Dispatch Box and withdraw my allegation.

Because of the contempt with which once again the Government are treating the House, my right hon. and hon. Friends will vote against this heavy-handed guillotine. I hope that some Conservative Members will join us to reinforce last night's message. On behalf of our constituents, we are here, irrespective of party, primarily to hold the Government to account. The guillotine denies us that right, and that is why it is an offence and offensive.

4.57 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I rather hope that I address the House for the last time on this infamous Bill. My hon. Friend the Minister highlighted the number of Divisions on Report. It had nothing to do with many of us who were interested in discussing the Bill, and we felt that it was quite the wrong action to take. If there was any blame at all, it lay with those who drew up the timetable motion. They should have ensured that so many Divisions did not take place, as so frequently happens with other guillotine timetable motions. My hon. Friend considered also that we took undue time in Committee. He really should do an apprenticeship on the Scottish Standing Committee. He would then know what serving time was like.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My hon. Friend will remember that I said that I had no criticism of the time that we took. It was used beneficially for everybody. I merely outlined the length of time; I made no criticism of it.

Sir Hector Monro: I am glad. We had an excellent Committee stage which, compared with many Committees on which I have sat, was of a reasonable length, bearing in mind the controversial nature of the legislation.

I have no personal interest to declare. What weapons I own will not be affected one way or another by the Bill. I have been involved because of my interest in shooting sports and because I feel that the Bill is manifestly unfair to many people. I have served on a police committee for 15 years and, indeed, was chairman of it, so I am wholly on the side of the police and support law and order 100 per cent. But I am afraid that of the many measures in the Bill only a few will reduce crime involving the use of rifles. We could have a far greater impact on armed crime by bringing back the death penalty, but Home Office Ministers seem to object to that most strongly.

Obviously, the Government had to act after Hungerford, if only to ensure that police procedures were implemented. All hon. Members who served on the Committee were behind my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson), who produced so many constructive ideas. We appreciated how he felt about the importance of strict control of firearms, but we would all agree that we should not go too far and that we must be fair.

The Government's major failure was their failure to consult responsible shooting bodies, despite requests to do so, before the Home Secretary made his announcement in Torquay at the end of September 1987. If he had consulted, much of the antagonism to the Bill would have been removed and the Bill would be much more effective. I pay warm tribute to the chairman of the British Shooting

[Sir Hector Monro]

Sports Council, Lord Swansea, who did a tremendous job throughout the Bill's passage, particularly while leading his team in another place.

Many aspects have not been thoroughly discussed on the Floor of this Chamber, particularly those relating to the consultative committee and compensation. Yet today we are again on a timetable motion and the procedures of the House prevent us from discussing such subjects because they are not included in the Lords amendments. For that reason, the timetable motion is somewhat hypothetical because it provides time only for what we are allowed to discuss, which is of minimal importance.

We welcome the amendments because they are favourable to shooting interests. Throughout the Bill's passage, shooting interests have achieved notable victories, mostly against a stubborn Government who are determined to avoid any amendment, even when they have made major mistakes, such as they did on the sporting rifle. We argued at length on that in Committee and lost, but second thoughts in another place have produced a worthwhile Lords amendment.

It is particularly sad that there has been such an attack on genuine shooting sports interests. It is sad that a Conservative Government, who should be so knowledgeable about competitive shooting and country sports, have been involved in that. I am sad that, while we carried amendments in Committee on an all-party basis, many were reversed in this Chamber on Report. I am sad, too, that so much of the implementation of the Bill is left to police rules or Home Office guidance. We hear on all sides that chief officers of police are already interpreting the Bill as if it were law.

Some attitudes of the Minister have been difficult to follow. I have already mentioned the sporting rifle. One of the most depressing episodes involved the Government's attitude to the disabled. We welcome back those from the paraplegic games in the far east, but at the same time from now on we shall stop the disabled using three or four-shot self-loading rifles and enjoying the sport in which they may have participated for years, on a wrong premise. The Minister says that the fire power of a three or four-shot self-loading rifle——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I have allowed the hon. Gentleman a great deal of latitude. He should now relate his remarks more closely to the motion.

Sir Hector Monro: I am trying to show that we have not had time to discuss these matters on the Floor as I should have liked, and that our last chance to do so seems to be disappearing rapidly. I am worried that we cannot debate in depth either how the Bill affects the disablod or the consultative committee. We may discuss neither in detail today.

Most important, we have not had a chance to discuss compensation. The Minister did not introduce the scheme while we were in Committee. He gave an assurance that we could discuss it on the Floor, but the Report stage was timetabled, and we had no time to discuss it. This House, which is elected to represent people throughout the United Kingdom, could not discuss the compensation scheme with the Minister. To introduce a scheme offering £150 or 50 per cent. of the alleged value of a weapon is unfair for the higher value weapons. Many a rifle costs more than £1,000 and the owner, who will have owned that weapon legitimately, will lose substantially. But we could not and cannot discuss the scheme because of the timetable motion, which is why the Minister is being unfair with us today.

An M14 carbine, which many people have bought for the enjoyment of their sport, costs about £500, and with a new barrel its value will be £1,000. The owner will be lucky to see £500 for it and there is no appeal. Compensation is a serious issue, which we have not been able to discuss. Today, I received a parliamentary answer and I thank the Minister for it, but evidence from one auction house and the trade papers is not a sufficient basis for compensation terms.

I have a heavy heart. I am an elected official of the National Rifle Association, the National Small-Bore Rifle Association, the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association, the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, and the British Field Sports Society. It is sad that those responsible bodies, which have done their best to lobby Ministers in every possible way, have not had a fair response. I am gravely concerned about the cost of the legislation, police manpower and firearm and shotgun certificates, but the Minister has not answered our questions on those matters. He owes us much more information today.

The Bill should not have been controversial. It should have been one on which the Committee could unite to support stricter and fairer controls in the interests of those with legitimate weapons. Whatever happens, I know that the Government will have their way. More important, the few Lords amendments which we may discuss are of small importance compared with the subjects which we may not discuss, but such is life in this House.

5.8 pm

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): I support my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). The time has come when debate on the Bill should end and it should be implemented, but I am left with the impression—I am heartened by what my hon. Friend has said—that the vast majority of those involved in shooting regard it as an inconvenience, an irritation and, alas, a measure which in the end will have little result. Law-abiding shooting organisations are sad and bewildered. Only this afternoon I took two such bodies to the Ministry of Defence in an attempt to save a rifle range in the Warwick area. They are all thoroughly good individual citizens who have conducted themselves very well over the years in their sport. The Bill has been a bad experience because of the troubles with the votes and the Lords amendments to which my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries has referred.

I feel that, with the best of intentions, the Government overreacted following the terrible events of Hungerford. There should have been some reaction, but in this respect it was overkill, and it will not bring about the ideas that were predicted at the time. Of course I hope that it will, because no one wants to see anything like Hungerford happen again.

In those circumstances, it is more in sorrow than in anger that I make known my views, which I know are shared by many hon. Members who are not necessarily in the Chamber this afternoon.

5.10 pm

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): I agree with everything that my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) has said. I am deeply sorry to hear that the Ministry of Defence is contemplating closing a range in his constituency where I have spent many happy hours. I would like to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who has effectively led the opposition to the Bill from this side of the House with the greatest of patience, competence and hard work. I am sure that that is something with which all my hon. Friends will agree.

Normally, I would be in favour of all guillotines. The time that we have wasted in the House in debating Bills without a timetable has been a farce. I will not trouble the House with the reasons this afternoon, but there is a very good case for timetabling all Bills. However, until such a practice comes in, and bearing in mind that the Select Committee on Procedure did take its first light step down that road in the last Session but one, the Government must be cautious before proposing a timetable motion. I believe that they panicked on the last occasion. We had overcome the burden of the Bill in the middle of the night, and we would have made good progress with it. I know that this has been mentioned before, but I think that it is worth repeating.

On the following day the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) and I and my hon. Friends who were opposed to the Bill agreed that we would have only one vote and then we would allow the Government to have the Bill, providing they allowed us to have the consultative committee that we requested. As the Government refused even that amazingly modest concession, Opposition Members were enraged, and I believe rightly so. I took no part in those further proceedings, but I believe that what happened should be on the record.

It is clear that the Government have no intention of allowing the Bill to go back to the other place, for reasons that I understand, but they are all modest improvements to the Bill—all of which I welcome—and I see no purpose in debating the amendments further. I cannot understand the neurosis that has struck the Government's business managers in proposing this timetable motion.

5.12 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I agree entirely with what my hon. Friends the Members for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) and for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) have said. There is no doubt that there is some good in the Bill, but there is also a great deal of bad. We have, at times with the co-operation and help of the Minister, improved the Bill, and I would pay some tribute to the Under-Secretary for his good humour and patience in Standing Committee, because there were undoubtedly occasions when he did—*[Laughter]*—sit down and talk to us about certain matters. There were times, too, when he changed his mind after due consideration of the argument.

Having paid that tribute, I must say that the shambles that took place in the House when the guillotine was imposed caused a tremendous amount of ill feeling. The Minister's implication that there was time-wasting and filibustering is complete rubbish. Yes, we did discuss for about six hours on Report various matters in the earlier clauses of the Bill, but at no time did anyone in this place try to filibuster. There was an extremely long list of amendments, as well as many Government amendments, and not to allow us to continue discussing them has added a great deal of insult to the injuries already caused.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington mentioned compensation and the statutory expert committee, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). Those are crucial matters that were not discussed on the Floor of the House. Many of us made fairly general and wide-ranging speeches on Second Reading and we discussed three or four clauses on Report, but many other crucial matters were not discussed at all.

What about the process of sleeving shotguns? What about some of the exemptions from controls for self-loading rifles and shotguns deactivated to a standard approved by the proof houses? What about the creation of the conterminous shotgun and firearm certificate? There has been some movement by the Government on some of those matters in the other place and we have had some results, but a number of crucial matters for our constituents—such as the visitors' permits and the dealers' certificates—were not discussed in the House because of the shoddy, shameful tactic of applying the guillotine.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare that there are times when it is necessary to apply the guillotine—for example, on Report if we are dealing with a Bill that has only a small number of amendments, when perhaps the debate is prolonged unnecessarily—but on this occasion we had a huge amount of material to get through. To use bully-boy tactics in those circumstances was wrong. I must say to the Under-Secretary and to my right hon. Friend that many people in East Anglia supported some improvement and tightening up of firearms controls, but what they find hard to accept is that debate in this place was curtailed. Many people are having their weapons taken away, and many other people fear that the new panoply of controls and structures will prevent them from enjoying their sport. I hope that that will not happen.

For example, some of my constituents enjoy rough shooting and wild fowling, but may not be used to dealing with the police when it comes to filling in forms and so forth. They may not be very knowledgeable when it comes to asking solicitors or friends how to apply for a certificate. Those people fear that the new structures will militate against them. Those of us who have been talking in this debate and have an interest in shooting have no problems in carrying on our sport, but there is a concern in rural areas that people who enjoy rough shooting and clay pigeon shooting will find it difficult in some circumstances to comprehend that good reason. I hope that they will not have any difficulties, but it is a pity that we could not have discussed this at greater length.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): All that my hon. Friend says about the difficulties that will be experienced by people in rural areas is even more true in the urban areas, especially the suburbs of London—one of which I represent—where a number of people especially enjoy clay pigeon shooting. There is no doubt that they have a real fear that they will find it difficult to get a licence from the Metropolitan police if the latter can find an excuse.

Mr. Bellingham: My hon. Friend is right. I received a letter recently from someone who lives in a council bedsit

[Mr. Bellingham]

in an urban area. He has had a run-in with the police before. He fears that, if the wrong sort of policeman was dealing with his shotgun certificate, he could suffer because of that officer's prejudice. I hope that that will not happen. My hon. Friend is absolutely right—there may be difficulties in urban areas.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My hon. Friend has just told us about his constituent and friend. Is that the gentleman who keeps the shotgun under his bed, about which we were told last time we discussed the matter?

Mr. Bellingham: The Minister is wrong. I have had another letter from someone outside my constituency. I do not represent an urban area. However, the Minister is right that in Committee we discussed a constituent of mine who kept a gun under his bed, in a flat.

If some good comes out of the Bill—I am not saying that it is all bad—it will be the inculcation in many sporting and shooting people of the understanding that they must take more care of their weapons. There will be greater emphasis on security and on the care of weapons during transportation, for example, from a shooting ground back home. Within the shooting community, there is greater realisation of the responsibilities. In that respect, the Bill is to be welcomed.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary knows that I am concerned about practical shooting for the disabled. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries made his feelings clear. We are trying to encourage disabled people to participate in sport, to find their feet, as it were. We are trying to give confidence and pride back to them. Therefore, it is appalling to stop them taking part in target shooting, stalking or other forms of rifle shooting. The Minister knows that we have had this argument time and again, but it is sad that, as we put the Bill to bed, disabled people have not had——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I cannot see anything in any of the Lords amendments relating to the argument that the hon. Gentleman is putting before the House. He should address his remarks to the motion.

Mr. Bellingham: I was about to refer to practical shooting, which was discussed at length in the other place. It is important to mention that the sport of practical shooting may soon become an Olympic sport. As a result of the Bill, we in this country will be prevented from taking part in that sport, which is sad. It is also sad that, for the first time ever, our citizens——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I fail to see what the hon. Gentleman's speech has to do with the motion before the House. He should address his remarks to that.

Mr. Bellingham: I certainly will. It is unfortunate that, when the previous guillotine fell, we were prevented from discussing many of those points.

We welcome the guillotine now. We bitterly regret the fact that the Bill was not properly discussed on the Floor of the House. The Minister must be left in no doubt about the fact that there was widespread support in the shooting community for a measure to improve firearms legislation and to improve the working relationship and co-operation between the sporting community and the police. The Minister could have won the confidence and support of the shooting community.

It is sad that the Government felt minded to rush into the Bill and that the necessary consultation did not take place. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said that Mr. Des Hughes wrote to the Minister asking for a meeting on 14 October. I was sent a copy of that correspondence. Much criticism was levelled against the Under-Secretary and the Home Secretary for not consulting widely enough. They said at the time that they were consulting and that their doors were open. To keep the door shut during the final stages of the Bill is most unfortunate.

Mr. Wiggin: Does my hon. Friend agree that much of the difficulty that was created in regard to consultation arose from the fact that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) gave my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary the green light from the Opposition Benches? One of the lessons of the House that one should have thought had been learnt 100 times over is that, when both Front Benches are in agreement, the Bill before the House is rotten.

Mr. Bellingham: My hon. Friend makes his point effectively, but that does not detract from the fact that Ministers said that their doors were open and that they wanted to have discussions and consultations with the shooting community. I know that some efforts were made. The Home Secretary and the Under-Secretary have indeed had many discussions and meetings, but it is sad that, in the final stages of the Bill, when a meeting was requested, an excuse was found not to have it.

Mr. Corbett: Although there was a green light from the Opposition, the hon. Gentleman should know that it was also on amber.

Mr. Bellingham: We appreciate that.

I do not believe that there is a single colleague who represents shooting intrests in the House who has not been lobbied furiously on the Bill. I think that every colleague is in agreement that there is grave disquiet and concern about the effects of the Bill on reducing crime, on tying down the police and, above all, on the excellent series of relationships between the shooting community and the police.

We cannot gaze into a crystal ball. I wish the Bill well, but I am pessimistic. We shall have to come back in about a year or two, because only then will we know its effects.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 252, Noes 175.

Division No. 486] **[5.25 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Batiste, Spencer
Alexander, Richard	Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Bellingham, Henry
Amos, Alan	Bendall, Vivian
Arbuthnot, James	Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Benyon, W.
Ashby, David	Bevan, David Gilroy
Ashdown, Paddy	Biffen, Rt Hon John
Aspinwall, Jack	Blackburn, Dr John G.
Atkinson, David	Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Boscawen, Hon Robert
Baldry, Tony	Boswell, Tim
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Bottomley, Peter
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Bottomley, Mrs Virginia

Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted

Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Frank Haynes

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Order of the House [25th May] be supplemented as follows:—

Lords Amendments

1.—(1) The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion three hours after the commencement of the proceedings on the Motion for this Order.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to those proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(4) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration), a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.

(5) If the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before the expiry of the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion, no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment to the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment, or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or, as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to the Amendments designated by Mr. Speaker which have not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said Amendments; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3. The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

4. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and has not yet been decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of the remaining items designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their said Proposals; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

5.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of the Message or, as the case may be, for the appointment and quorum of the Committee.

(3) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

(4) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(5) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(6) If the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on the Motion shall be added to the period at the end of which the proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion.

Orders of the Day

Firearms (Amendment) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

PROHIBITED WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, line 11, leave out from "to" to end of line 15 and insert—

"(a) any firearm (not being an air weapon) which is not for the time being specified in subsection (1) of section 5, was not lawfully on sale in Great Britain in substantial numbers at any time before 1988 and appears to him to be—

(i) specially dangerous; or

(ii) wholly or partly composed of material making it not readily detectable by apparatus used for detecting metal objects; or

(b) any ammunition which is not for the time being specified in that subsection but appears to him to be specially dangerous,"

5.38 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The purpose of the amendment is to deal with a problem that probably has not yet arisen but it may do so. The problem is the possible manufacture of plastic guns or guns made with non-metallic substances and capable of avoiding detection by detecting machines, especially at airports. I say that it is probable that such guns do not at present exist, but one cannot be wholly certain. There are guns whose metal components can be dismantled and arranged in a suitcase or briefcase in such a way as to make detection very much less likely.

The purpose of the amendment is to enable us, where appropriate, to bring into the prohibited class guns of the description that I have given. It is right to say that that power is subject to two saving provisions designed to prevent its being used oppressively. First, the order will be subject to the affirmative procedure. Secondly, the power will not be applied to those weapons lawfully on sale in Great Britain in substantial numbers at any time before 1988.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 3

GRANT AND RENEWAL OF SHOTGUN CERTIFICATES

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 3, line 22, leave out "number and"

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The purpose of the amendment is to clarify what was always the Government's intention. At no stage did we intend that chief constables should be able to use their powers, either under the Bill or under the principal Act, to limit the number of shotguns that a shotgun certificate holder could have. A number of my hon. Friends, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), but also my hon. Friends the Members for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and for

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin), were concerned that the Bill did not make that plain. That concern was expressed again in another place when the amendment was moved. The amendment has the effect of saying that the chief constable has no power to impose a limitation on the numbers of guns held by a shotgun certificate holder. That meets what the Government always had in mind, and we are glad to give it statutory expression.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Although it is obviously far too late in the day to think about dividing the House on any of these amendments, I must admit to some unease that the other place has felt it right to introduce this one. Inevitably, it reopens the argument, which I have heard from chief constables and others, that the Bill treats shotguns as somehow different in lethality from other firearms and that in tightening the gun laws —perhaps because of the Hungerford massacre—authorities have concentrated too much on semi-automatic weapons when other weapons are perhaps still too easily available.

We know that there is little difference between the number of offences committed with shotguns—either the long-barrelled or sawn-off varieties—and the number committed using a pistol or a rifle. I am obliged to draw the attention of the House to the fact that criminals do not seem to care particularly which weapon they use and are as happy to use a shotgun as they are to use a rifle or pistol, whichever is the easiest to obtain. Generally, shotguns are the easiest to obtain.

The debate in the other place focused on shotguns in their traditional role, for shooting game in the countryside, and only a little emphasis was placed on the issue of numbers, and then purely in terms of safe storage. What of the views of the chief constables? We often say in the House that we must strengthen the powers of the police to meet the crimes of violence that are so rife in our society, yet the amendment effectively denies them the power to impose any limit on the number of guns owned by an individual—a change included in the original Bill, which I welcomed. The amendment suggests that no justification need be shown for owning 10 guns or any number of shotguns.

Any ideas that the police might have formed as this legislation proceeded through Parliament, that they were to have a new ability to restrict the number of weapons held by an individual or to impose stricter conditions on the ownership of weapons over a given number, have gone by the board. As Earl Ferrers said in the other place:

> "In order to make it clear we are saying that the chief constable cannot impose arbitrary limits and we shall say so in the memorandum of guidance."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 19 October 1988; Vol. 500, c. 1160.]

Why not? The public are worried about the armouries of weapons held by some people and, so far as I know, public opinion has never expressed itself to be more concerned about rifles, pistols and semi-automatics than it is about shotguns. The public are worried about weapons that kill and injure people.

5.45 pm

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): I am interested to hear my hon. Friend's views, especially in view of his extensive knowledge of the subject after the unhappy occurrences in his constituency. Does he agree that, by and large, apart from some specialists, there is no need for anyone to own more than a few weapons for the pursuit of legitimate sport? Does he agree also that, when a person has a whole arsenal, it predicates the thought that there may be undesirable consequences? As my hon. Friend said, the weapon that is the most popular and most used in robberies—alas, crime is growing not only in this country but throughout the world—is a sawn-off shotgun. Unless one is embarking upon a wave of terrorism, the automatic machine gun or rifle is not used as much as the shotgun. It is the shotgun that is the danger.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because he makes my point for me. It is a fact that, although Michael Ryan used a semi-automatic, he was in possession of shotguns and, as was said in Standing Committee, had he chosen to use them, he probably would have killed roughly the same number of people as he killed with his semi-automatic weapon.

The public and the police are worried about the use of these weapons. How does the amendment reassure them? I admit that the issue of the security of weapons was considered in the other place in the debate on this amendment and was seen as the circumstance that might be used by chief constables to limit the number of weapons. That presupposes a police check on who has weapons and where they are kept, and we know that such checks will be rare.

Lastly, and I draw some hope from my understanding of the paragraph as now drafted, if a shotgun certificate specifies the description of the shotguns to which it relates, what exactly will that mean? Will it mean an individual description of each weapon, or something more general? If it is the former, does that not add up to numbering the weapons held? Perhaps my hon. Friend will tell me whether the memorandum of guidance will offer any guidance to chief constables about their attitude to weapons and whether they should consider being a little tougher about those who wish to have more than a pair of guns in their possession.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I was not proposing to intervene. In fact, I was about to rise to ask my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) whether he would give way again. As my hon. Friend has already sat down, I shall comment briefly.

It would have been extremely damaging to legitimate shooting interests if the words "number and" had been left in the Bill. Contrary to what my hon. Friend said, many people can legitimately wish to keep more than just "a pair of guns"—to use his words—bearing in mind, among other things, the number of children in their families who may want to shoot when they get a little older.

I need a weapon for my young son who is learning how to shoot. When he grows up, I hope to keep it for my younger son when he grows a little older and learns how to shoot. In addition to my guns, I have my father-in-law's gun, so that he can shoot when he visits my farm. The Government are therefore right to delete "number and".

A further point is that the police will need an adequate description of shotguns kept by the certificate holder—although I do not know precisely what description will be required—and that meets the case that was put by my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury. The police will glean enough information from the certificate to judge whether

somebody has an armoury, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury fears, or whether the shotguns that are kept are legitimate. The shooting lobby feared the words "number and" because, despite the assurances given in the House, it seemed that some chief constables proposed to limit the number of shotguns to an unacceptably low number.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: By leave of the House, I shall speak again. I am pleased to say that I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor). I understand the argument advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson), but for reasons similar to those given by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster I do not favour a limitation on the number of shotguns held by a shotgun certificate holder.

A number of steps have been taken in the Bill which will certainly improve security. There is, for example, the requirement to keep the gun in a safe place. I have in mind that guns should be locked away. In addition, a chief constable will be able to refuse an application for a shotgun certificate if he is satisfied that there is not a good reason for the applicant to possess a shotgun. The House will remember that we have defined "good reason" to include sporting competitions and the shooting of vermin. We have also provided for the notification of transfers and specified the information that should appear on the certificate. All those substantial measures are designed to tighten the control of shotguns, but we do not seek to impose a positive obligation on the applicant to prove "good reason" or to give a chief constable the power to limit numbers.

I shall make one further point about arsenals. If it were found that an individual was stockpiling guns on a large scale—of course, that would be clear from the description of each gun that the applicant had to give on the certificate—the chief constable would want to be satisfied that the safekeeping of the guns was adequate.

I shall not ask my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster how many guns he has in his house, but I imagine that there are half a dozen or so. He can easily keep them in a steel cabinet. A chief constable would, I am sure, be satisfied with that. If, however, someone had a stockpile of 20, 30 or 40 guns, the chief constable would be anxious to determine the level of safekeeping and security. That is a real means of control, and I hope that it commends itself not only to my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster but to my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury, whose anxieties, which he ventilated so lucidly in Committee and again today, I understand.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4

TRANSFERS OF SHOT GUNS

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 3, line 27, leave out "forty-eight" and insert "seventy-two".

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

I think that it was my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) who paid tribute earlier to the work of the noble Lord Swansea. It is right that I should say that the amendment is a reflection of the work done by Lord Swansea in the other place. The object of the provision is to extend the period of loan in respect of which the borrower need not notify the chief constable of the loan.

Clause 4 is designed to ensure that the short-term borrowing of a shotgun does not have to be notified to the police but that long-term borrowing does. We had in mind an occasion, such as a shooting party, where a gun was broken or, conceivably, lost and one of the guests borrowed a gun from his host or a fellow guest. It would be nonsense to require the borrower or anybody else to notify the police of the transfer. The 48-hour proposal was an attempt to impose a realistic threshold, but in another place Lord Swansea suggested 72 hours. I cannot say that that is wrong. It seems reasonable, and on that basis I commend it to the House.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): The amendment is most welcome. The Minister will recall that when we discussed the matter in Committee he gave the example of someone turning up for a weekend shooting party without his gun. The original proposal was ridiculous because it meant that that person would be breaking the law. The threshold of 72 hours is much more sensible. I thank the Minister for supporting the Lords amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 6

SHORTENING OF BARREL

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 4, line 24, leave out "a self-loading, pump-action or revolver smooth-bore gun" and insert

"any smooth-bore gun to which section 1 of the principal Act applies other than one which has a barrel with a bore exceeding 2 inches in diameter".

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is a technical amendment of wonderful complexity. The House will recall that we amended the definition of "shotgun" to that which now appears in clause 2(2). We ought at the same time to have amended clause 6(1). We did not do so. The purpose of the amendment is to correct that defect.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 7

CONVERSION NOT TO AFFECT CLASSIFICATION

Lords amendment: No. 5, in page 4, line 35, after "which" insert "(a)"

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this we may take Lords amendments Nos. 6, 7 and 8.

Mr. Hogg: The amendments are designed to meet anxieties expressed by the gun trade and by hon. Members about the operation of the Bill. Some of the amendments to which I shall draw specific attention meet the point about sleeving made by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) during our debate on the timetable motion.

Let me explain amendments Nos. 5 and 6. Some self-loading and pump-action shotguns have interchangeable barrels some of which are less than 24 in. long.

[Mr. Hogg]

Without the amendments, if a previous owner of such a shotgun had at some stage—unknown to the present owner—screwed on a short barrel, that weapon would always be a prohibited weapon, even if the barrel had subsequently been unscrewed and destroyed.

Sir Dudley Smith: That is interesting. Is the case that the Minister cites hypothetical, or does the Home Office know of particular instances?

Mr. Hogg: It is not hypothetical, in the sense that it can clearly happen, although I am not aware of its having happened. My hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) will appreciate that in America, for example, self-loading or pump-action shotguns are sold with a range of barrels, some of which may be less than 24 in. long. Suppose that a previous owner in the United States had screwed on a short barrel. Even if that short barrel had subsequently been removed, or even destroyed, the present owner would still hold a prohibited weapon. That is nonsense, and the amendments are designed to eliminate it.

Amendments Nos. 7 and 8 are also designed to assist the gun trade and they are entirely reasonable. We are concerned here with two circumstances. The first is the repair of shotguns by re-sleeving. I understand that sometimes a shotgun barrel will be cut down to a small size and another barrel will be grafted on to it as part of the repair process. In the absence of these amendments, such a gun would at one time have a short barrel and could thus be treated as a prohibited—and certainly as a section 1—weapon. The amendment is designed to cover that problem.

6 pm

The other circumstance is similar, but not quite the same. The process of converting some rifles to shotguns can involve cutting down the barrel into a stump and grafting a shotgun barrel on to what was a rifle. Under the Bill's original wording, such a gun would remain in its former category and not be treated as a shotgun, which was not the original intention. I hope that the House will accept that the amendments are a positive improvement.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 6 to 8 agreed to.

Clause 9

PHOTOGRAPHS ON CERTIFICATES

Lords amendment: No. 9, in page 5, line 23, leave out "two" and insert "up to four".

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is a Londonderry, East triumph. The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) will remember how in Committee, on Second Reading and no doubt on Report he urged on the Government the need to increase the number of photographs. He will further recall that I steadfastly refused to accept that eminently sensible suggestion. Now, overcome with shame and grief, I have decided that the least I can do is to accept this amendment.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): I am pleased to have moved the Minister in one small respect. My only regret is that the rest of the eminently sensible suggestions from Londonderry, East were not accepted, too.

I want to pursue with the Minister the point raised by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) about photographs on dealers' licences. Has the Minister had time to consider that? If so, what conclusions has he reached about photographs for proper identification on such permits?

Question put and agreed to.

New Clause

REVOCATION OF CERTIFICATES

Lords amendment: No. 10, after clause 11 insert the following new clause—

" .—(1) Where a certificate is revoked by the chief officer of police under section 30(1)(a) or (2) of the principal Act he may by notice in writing require the holder of the certificate to surrender forthwith the certificate and any firearms and ammunition which are in the holder's possession by virtue of the certificate.

(2) It is an offence to fail to comply with a notice under subsection (1) above; and that offence shall be punishable on summary conviction with imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale or both.

(3) Where a firearm or ammunition is surrendered in pursuance of a notice under subsection (1) above, then—

(a) if such an appeal against the revocation of the certificate succeeds, the firearm or ammunition shall be returned;

(b) if such an appeal is dismissed, the court may make such order for the disposal of the firearm or ammunition as it thinks fit;

(c) if no such appeal is brought or such an appeal is abandoned, the firearm or ammunition shall be disposed of—

(i) in such manner as the chief officer of police and the owner may agree; or

(ii) in default of agreement, in such manner as the chief officer may decide;

but, subject, in a case within sub-paragraph (ii), to the provisions of subsection (4) below.

(4) The chief officer of police shall give the owner notice in writing of any decision under subsection (3)(c)(ii) above, the owner may appeal against that decision in accordance with section 44 of the principal Act and on such an appeal the court may either dismiss the appeal or make such order as to the disposal of the firearm or ammunition as it thinks fit.

(5) Subsection (4) of section 30 of the principal Act (surrender of revoked certificate within twenty-one days with extension in cases of appeal) shall not apply where the revocation is under subsection (1)(a) or (2) of that section and a notice is served under subsection (1) above; and paragraph 1 of Part I and paragraphs 1 to 5 of Part II of Schedule 5 to that Act (appeal jurisdiction and procedure) shall apply to an appeal under subsection (4) above as they apply to an appeal against the revocation of a certificate."

Mr. Douglas Hogg: First, on a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I regret to say that there is a printing error in the amendment. I refer hon. Members to subsection (3)(b), the first line of which includes the words "if such an appeal". The word "such" is an error; it should not appear.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Resign.

Mr. Hogg: That was a nasty suggestion.

Mr. Speaker: It is not for me to correct the Minister, but I understand that the mistake is in paragraph (a), not (b).

Mr. Hogg: It sounds as though we are approaching resigning territory. I do not see the word "such" in subsection (3)(a). It is not in my copy.

Mr. Speaker: It is in mine.

Mr. Hogg: Your view, Mr. Speaker, is likely to be authoritative. I am looking desperately for help with this.

Mr. Corbett: I had better make a confession. My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) will give me hell when he notices this. He used to go through Bills and spot errors before Ministers did. The copy that I, and, it appears, you, Mr. Speaker, have contains the word "such" before the words "an appeal" in subsections (3)(a), (b) and (c). At least that is consistent. Is the Minister happier with that, or shall I ask him another question? I am not a lawyer, but I should have thought that, on grounds of consistency and clarity, this would be an improvement. It cannot do any great harm either way.

Mr. Hogg: This is the first time in a debate that I have had to say that I am excessively grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I think that we can settle happily on subsection (3)(a). That is where the error is to be found. If we could deal with subsection (3)(a), I should be uncommonly obliged to you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The House accepts that.

Mr. Hogg: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This amendment represents quite an important change in the provisions in the Bill, and I commend it to the House. In section 30 of the Firearms Act 1968 the chief constable has power to revoke a firearms certificate. That power of revocation is subject to appeal. But what happens to a gun pending the hearing of an appeal? At present, the police have a limited right to require the surrender of the gun. For example, in section 46 of the 1968 Act they have power to search under warrant and the right of seizure when they have reasonable grounds to suppose that an offence has been or is about to be committed. But they do not have power to require the delivering up of the gun after revocation of the certificate on the general public safety grounds referred to in the new clause, whose purpose is to give them that power.

If an appeal against a revocation is successful, the gun and its ammunition, if any, will be returned. If it is not successful, or is not pursued, the new clause provides for the disposal of the gun. In the first instance, that should be done by agreement; in default of an agreement, it should be done on the adjudication of the court.

I hope that the House will consider it right to improve the circumstances in which a chief constable can require the surrender of a gun pending an appeal, and agree that we have got the balance about right.

Sir Dudley Smith: I broadly agree with my hon. Friend's support for the Lords amendment. However, throughout the proceedings on the Bill there has been an undercurrent of anxiety about chief constables responding too vigorously to the measure. Chief constables vary throughout the kingdom, and we want to keep a reasonable check on any actions they may take as a result of the legislation.

There is a large degree of discretion in refusing a gun licence to someone. If there are good and adequate reasons why one should not be given, I am sure that the whole community would support chief constables and the police in withdrawing a weapon. If the subject is debated, and if the police propose that a weapon should be taken away under the provisions of the Bill, the owner of the weapon will have the right of appeal.

I hope that as we proceed with the implementation of the legislation the Home Office will keep a careful check on the weapons that are withdrawn or confiscated as a result of the new provisions. Situations can vary, and I say hypothetically that one thing could happen in Sussex and another in Worcestershire. Subsection 3(c) of the new clause says:

"if no such appeal is brought . . . (i) in such manner as the chief officer of police and the owner may agree".

If a person does not appeal, or if he appeals and the appeal fails and he is not entitled to have a shotgun certificate or to own a weapon, will the police confiscate that weapon? Provided that he is not a criminal, will he be able to sell the weapon so that he does not suffer a penalty on the spot?

Mr. Hogg: I should like to reply to the question put to me by my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith). The situation is comprehensively described in subsection (3) of the new clause. Perhaps I could take my hon. Friend through it, because this rather complicated procedure is dealt with in detail. Subsection (a) provides that if the appeal against revocation succeeds the gun or the ammunition shall be returned. If the gun holder appeals against revocation and wins, he returns to the status quo.

The second alternative is where the gun holder appeals, the appeal fails and the court holds that the chief constable was correct. In that case it will be for the court to decide how the gun and the ammunition are to be disposed of. The parties to the appeal will almost certainly make representations to the court about a fair manner of disposal. I envisage a sale, depending on the nature of the gun, to an authorised dealer, with the proceeds of sale being made available to the shotgun owner whose appeal has failed.

The third situation is where a revocation notice is served and an appeal is entered but not proceeded with. In other words, the shotgun or the firearms certificate holder does not go to court. In that case the subsections apply in the ways that are set out in the Bill. First, they will apply in such manner as the chief officer of police and the owner may agree. If there is such an agreement the gun will be dealt with in accordance with it. If there is no agreement the chief officer of police has a power to impose one. He may say, "We have not agreed, but I suggest that the weapon be sold and you receive the proceeds of the sale." If the gun owner is dissatisfied with the scheme put forward by the chief constable, he has the right of appeal to the court. Ultimately, the court will decide the situation that we have been discussing.

I hope my hon. Friend will feel that, although this is a slightly elaborate approach, at least the interests of the shotgun or firearm certificate holder have been preserved.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: We now come to Lords amendment No. 11, to which there are the following amendments: (a), in line 2, leave out 'of or over the age of seventeen'.

(b), in line 2, leave out 'seventeen' and insert 'fourteen'.

(c), in line 7, leave out 'and'.

(d), in line 9, at end insert

[Mr. Speaker]

'and

(c) if the borrower is under the age of seventeen the occupier or servant in whose presence the rifle is to be used is aged twenty-one or over.'.

(e), in line 10, after 'person', insert

'of or over the age of seventeen'.

(f), in line 21 at end insert—

'(3) In sections 22(2) and 24(2)(b) of the principal Act (exemption for minors in cases to which section 11(3) applies) after the words "of this Act" there shall be inserted the words "or section (Borrowed rifles on private premises) of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988".'.

New Clause

BORROWED RIFLES ON PRIVATE PREMISES

Lords amendment: No. 11, after clause 14 insert the following new clause:

".—(1) A person of or over the age of seventeen may, without holding a firearm certificate, borrow a rifle from the occupier of private premises and use it on those premises in the presence either of the occupier or of a servant of the occupier if—

(a) the occupier or servant in whose presence it is used holds a firearm certificate in respect of that rifle; and

(b) the borrower's possession and use of it complies with any conditions as to those matters specified in the certificate.

(2) A person who by virtue of subsection (1) above is entitled without holding a firearm certificate to borrow and use a rifle in another person's presence may also, without holding such a certificate, purchase or acquire ammunition for use in the rifle and have it in his possession during the period for which the rifle is borrowed if—

(a) the firearm certificate held by that other person authorises the holder to have in his possession at that time ammunition for the rifle of a quantity not less than that purchased or acquired by, and in the possession of, the borrower; and

(b) the borrower's possession and use of the ammunition complies with any conditions as to those matters specified in the certificate."

Read a Second time.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I notice that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary did not rise to his feet. That is why I have risen. It would probably be better if he spoke to the Lords amendment first.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the amendments first.

6.15 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I share my hon. Friend's enthusiasm for the fact that I was able to support him wholeheartedly on the second amendment that we discussed. It would make me much happier if he were able to support my amendment. For the life of me I can see no good reason why he should not do so. I forbore from commenting while we were on the timetable motion, but I agree with my hon. Friends who said that the Bill gives the overall impression to those of us in the legitimate shooting lobby, and especially to those in the British Field Sports Society, which I have the honour to chair, that the Government do not care for the interests of the legitimate shooting lobby. To a large degree, the Bill tramples upon those interests, with no great malice, but with unfortunate results. One of the ways in which that impression could have been put right was by the Government using the opportunity of the Bill to remedy a clear anachronism in the law.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said that he welcomed the history lesson. Perhaps he will not mind my taking him back to the distant times in which I was growing up and learning to shoot. Unfortunately, my children refer to those times as the times when the dinosaurs roamed the earth. It was not as far back as that, but it was before the Firearms Act 1968. In those happy days we had a Prime Minister who was a keen sporting shot. He used to appear quite regularly in the national newspapers sporting a pair of plus fours and was seen on the grouse moor on 12 August. I do not know whether he was also a keen stalker, but certainly many shooters who enjoy shooting grouse and other wild birds also enjoy the very old and skilled art of stalking.

In order to be proficient at stalking, it is important at an early age to learn to handle a rifle properly, under proper supervision. I had the good fortune to go to Scotland when I was a boy in my early teens to learn how to stalk, being supervised either by my father or by a professional member of the shooting forest in which I was learning. I also learnt how to shoot stags safely and without danger to others.

In 1968, under a Government of a different political persuasion from ours, the right of a boy of 14 to 17 to shoot under such supervision was unfortunately removed. I do not think that many people realise that it had been removed. I certainly did not realise it, and I have a more than sneaking suspicion that the Minister did not realise it. I do not think that the Home Secretary realised it either. I am certain that my many friends in Scotland, who have perhaps been allowing young people to shoot under supervision on their estates, did not realise it. Looking at the rather complex provisions of the 1968 Act in the early hours of this morning, accompanied by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, I noticed that there appears to be no doubt that in that Act boys and girls —I must not be accused of being sexist in these matters —who wish to go out stalking or to go after a rabbit with a ·22 are banned from doing so.

Their Lordships have introduced a provision in clause 11 so that an estate rifle can now be borrowed by somebody over the age of 17 and may be legitimately used. It is a matter of some astonishment to me that the Bill got as far as the House of Lords before that point was made and it was noticed that, otherwise, an estate rifle could not be used by anybody other than the firearm certificate owner. I understand that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary is about to commend that amendment to the House. This would have been a marvellous opportunity to bring the Bill into line with sections 22, 23 and 24 of the principal Act of 1968 by making a sharp differential between what is allowed at 17 and what is allowed at 14.

Unfortunately, in that principal Act, the effect of that differential would not allow 14 to 17-year-olds to shoot, although I have a strong suspicion that that was what was intended, and an even greater suspicion that that is what most people thought it actually did. Here we have an opportunity to show those in the shooting fraternity that the Government support them, wish to be as helpful as possible and wish to encourage the training of young people in the safe and accurate use of rifles for sporting purposes. Sadly, that opportunity is being missed, and my hon. Friend the Minister has been kind enough to tell me that there can be no question of the Government supporting my amendments. I ask him to tell the House

what benefit he thinks there is to the general public, what extra safeguard is contained in the provision as it now stands that my amendments would remove, and why it is that the Government are not prepared to accept the amendments.

This missed opportunity is a great pity. Young people of that age can acquire substantial skills, so denying them that opportunity makes this a thoroughly bad law. I hope that if my hon. Friend will not accept my amendments today he will, at some other opportune moment, reconsider the position and give our youths the chance that those of us who are older enjoyed in our youth—to learn a skill that they will enjoy fully as adults.

It would be a great pity if I and others who own farms cannot take out young people with a ·22 rifle to teach them how to shoot rabbits, or even at targets, in the way that we, as young people, were taught. My wife has some godchildren whom I know she would like me to take out on my farm—my hon. Friend the Minister will know what I am talking about. I am sad that the Government's attitude will prevent my doing so.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) did not rise initially, but his amendment comes first, so I shall call him before I put the Question on the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor).

Mr. Bellingham: I beg to move amendment (a), in line 2, leave out

'of or over the age of seventeen'.

The amendment is obviously similar to some of the amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor). However, it is slightly more simple.

I know that some among the sporting fraternity have suggested that perhaps we should not delve into this part of the law because of the illegal acts that have taken place in the past involving young people using stalking rifles. Many in the other place took the view that perhaps it was best not to discuss the subject, but just pass over it. However, I feel that we should discuss this in detail and get my hon. Friend the Minister to tell us exactly what the position is. I support what my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster has said. We want to encourage young people. A young person of 14, 15 or 16 can go shotgun shooting or clay pigeon shooting under supervision. However, what about the young person who wants to try shooting with a small bore, when stalking in a deer forest, or even to kill vermin and rabbits? Surely it is better for him to put his toe in the water so that he can decide whether he likes the sport.

There is another problem. Let us take two lads at school, who are both in their officer training corps or combined cadet force and shoot with .303s, or shoot on the school range with .22s. Let us say that those two lads decide to take their holidays with their parents in Scotland and both want to try their hand at stalking. One lad happens to live in the country and the other in a large city. The former applies for a firearms certificate and gets one, but the other lad applies and does not get it. I do not agree with Lord Ferrers that anybody in the 14 to 17 age group can apply for and obtain a firearms certificate. Anybody in that age group who applies for a firearms certificate for a stalking rifle in London or Manchester would not have a cat's chance in hell of getting it. As a result of the two lads going on holiday, one would be able to pursue his sport and the other would not. That is ridiculous.

The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster about encouraging youngsters is important. I did not have the opportunity to go stalking until I was well into my 20s, but I know that many people had the chance to go stalking in their teens. Anyone who has a feel for, or a love of, the countryside and for these pursuits will know that it is important to encourage youngsters at an early age, and that it would be wrong to restrict their taking part in the sport. In every other pursuit—not just country sports—youngsters in that crucial teenage category can play a part, under supervision in many cases, but in other cases without restrictions.

To say that young people in this category must go to the chief constable to get a certificate is most unreasonable. My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster is right to say that it will put an unnecessary dampener on the enthusiasm of many young people and prevent them from finding out about a sport by putting their toe in the water to decide whether they like it. To tell them that they must wait until they are 17 is ridiculous.

What happens if one of the sons of my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster wants to try out a .22 at home? He can use that gun on the range at school, under supervision from a master, or he can use it at a club. What happens when he wants to use it at home, in a completely safe and secure environment and to take a practice shot? If he is under 17, he cannot do so. It is laughable and ludicrous that my hon. Friend cannot go on to a safe area of his farm where he has a range set up and on which he is shooting, and encourage his son to do the same, because if he is caught doing so he will be breaking the law. My hon. Friend the Minister must explain what the Government are doing about this.

I welcome Lords amendment No. 11, and I must give credit where credit is due. There was a lengthy debate in the other place about the so-called estate rifle. A number of their Lordships went on at great length about the absurd situation whereby people on an estate in Scotland or Northern Ireland who go out on a stalk cannot use a gun without a certificate, even under strict supervision. We welcome Lords amendment No. 11, but the opportunity to clarify the position of young people should be grasped. We must encourage youngsters, and we must make the law workable, sensible and credible. My hon. Friend the Minister knows as well as I do that if this part of the Bill is passed many people will break the law inadvertently. I ask him to use this opportunity to make a clear statement on exactly where we are going and to give us some idea of how we get over this unfortunate hurdle.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): I support my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor). Some of the debate has been a little esoteric. Not all of us are children of successful practitioners at the Bar with vast estates in Scotland, or have godfathers who are similarly equipped. However, what about the person who potters around the farm with a .22 to shoot rats, rabbits or starlings? I hope to bring my son up learning the safe handling of a comparatively cheap but accurate enough weapon so as to equip him later in life for more serious endeavours. The suggestion that one's son, under supervision, cannot go around one's haybarn with a .22 looking for a rat is the difference between the amendments tabled by my hon.

[Sir Hal Miller]

Friends the Members for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) and for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), as the amendments moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster provide an element of supervision which is necessary at that age, although I was free from that encumbrance.

6.30 pm

Sir Dudley Smith: I have some sympathy with the case made by my hon. Friends the Members for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) and for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor). However, some difficulties arise. Without trying to anticipate what my hon. Friend the Minister will say, surely the whole thing comes down to supervision and there is a far greater chance of proper supervision if the young person is older rather than younger.

We have all heard of tragedies. I know two families who have been involved in tragedies through the wrong use of rifles. Guns are dangerous things, which have to be treated with respect whether one is 14, 65 or 70. Provided that respect is inculcated at an early age, and the child is made to realise that a gun is a weapon of destruction, perhaps everything will be all right. However, supervision varies enormously. My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster looks dubious. I am sure that he provides the very best supervision, but I am certain that in some other cases supervision would be cursory and therefore quite dangerous.

I should have thought that the amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster would have met the point. While I understand the anxieties of my two hon. Friends, I feel that we need to be fairly cautious about reducing the age, because young people in an urban environment would never get the opportunity to use a sporting rifle—that is probably just as well—whereas for somebody brought up on a country estate or a farm it would become second nature.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Does my hon. Friend accept that a young person of 14 is likely to be much more amenable to supervision than a 17 or 18-year-old? The supervision of a 17 or 18-year-old is likely to be very much more cursory than the supervision given to a 14-year-old. Therefore, is there not a great deal of good sense in the amendments tabled by my two hon. Friends, who know a great deal about shooting and sport?

Sir Dudley Smith: I accept that argument, and I consider it reasonably compelling. In contradiction to that, we know that the younger people are, the more irresponsible they can be, and although they accept the tuition that they receive, they can play fast and loose. Difficulties can arise and tragedies happen in a moment. There are no second chances.

Although I accept there is quite a good case for my hon. Friends' proposals, they still fall short of what should be in the legislation. Therefore, I do not support their amendments.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) for the support that he has given to the Government's case on this matter, and I shall adopt the greater part of his argument.

It might be helpful if I were to outline the Government's position on new clause 11, and then turn to the amendments that have been tabled by my two hon. Friends. In regard to new clause 11, I respectfully suggest that the House should agree to the Lords amendment. This amendment concerns estate rifles and it received considerable support in the other place when it was moved by Lord Kimball. It meets the established practice on many estates in Scotland and elsewhere of allowing guests to borrow an estate rifle while under supervision and to use it for stalking purposes. Hitherto, that has been an unlawful practice, and we wish to put it on a regular statutory basis.

The safeguards appear on the face of the new clause —the borrower is over 17, the loan is limited to a rifle and not to any section 1 weapon, the use must be confined to the occupier's land and of course, must be with the occupier's consent and must comply with any conditions on the certificate. Most important, the use must be supervised by a certificate holder, though the certificate holder may be an agent of the lender who is the occupier.

Mr. William Ross: Will the Minister confirm that the present practice of illegally borrowing and using an estate rifle is quite a serious offence which can carry not only a substantial fine but a term of imprisonment? Are we to believe that many people have been breaking the law with impunity for many years?

Mr. Hogg: The answer to the latter question is yes. The use of estate rifles in the way that we have been discussing has been widespread. The great majority of borrowers did not realise that they were acting unlawfully. We are trying to put the practice, which is wholly respectable, on a proper statutory basis, and I am inviting the House to do just that.

I shall turn to the question of age, because I recognise that it is a matter of considerable importance. The amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) seek to introduce an age threshold of 14, whereas my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham)—I do not think that I parody his views, and I apologise if I do—seeks to do away with any age threshold.

Mr. Bellingham *indicated assent.*

Mr. Hogg: I see that he acknowledges that fact.

I do not wish to be unfair, but if he got his way we would be talking about the use of guns by young persons of any age—they could be 11, or 12 or six or seven—depending on the supervision or the supervisor's choice. We need to be clear what we are talking about. We are not talking about any old gun; we are talking about section 1 rifles, some of which are extremely powerful.

The law at the moment is clear. The general proposition is that, without a section 1 certificate, one may not possess a section 1 firearm. That is subject to a number of provisos, most notably those contained in clause 11 of the principal Act. A person over the age of 14 may possess a firearms certificate. The ordinary procedure applies: the applicant applies to the chief constable. The application will have to be supported, or at least endorsed, by his parent or guardian. That is certainly the case for a shotgun application by a 15-year-old and I believe that it applies to an application for a section 1 certificate. The chief

constable then has to determine whether to grant it, and, in the event of the chief constable refusing a certificate, there is a right of appeal to the court.

The argument that has been put forward is essentially twofold. First, there is the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster to the effect that it is a proper method of providing instruction. The slightly different argument, which has also been touched on, is the desirability of allowing the occasional guest to use a ·22 for the purpose of shooting the odd rabbit in a field. I shall deal with the two arguments separately, because they are distinct.

The concept of training and instruction by a father on an estate implies at least reasonable continuity; otherwise, we are not really talking about training and instruction. If my hon. Friend is proposing to take his son out for training on a fairly regular basis, the proper thing to do is to apply for a firearms certificate. He may say, "I will never get one." I hope that he will forgive me if I say that if he does not obtain a certificate, it is because the chief constable and, ultimately, the courts, think that it is inappropriate to give him one. I am sceptical about the proposition that a young man who cannot obtain a certificate under the ordinary tests should be allowed, on a continuous basis, to use a section 1 gun because of the proviso we are contemplating introducing in new clause 11. That seems to be a serious lacuna in my hon. Friend's argument.

My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster is a highly responsible man and would most certainly provide close supervision over the activities of his son or, with more difficulty, over his godson. However, the amendment he has in mind does not provide for that high level of supervision. It provides for any old supervision, which might not necessarily be direct and precise supervision. The amendment to which my hon. Friend is addressing his remarks is designed to provide cover for continuous use in circumstances which may not be well controlled. We are dealing with section 1 guns, many of which are highly dangerous.

Mr. Bellingham: My hon. Friend is being a little unrealistic. We are talking not necessarily about continuous use but about lads who go on holiday to Scotland. The son of my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) will almost certainly receive his firearms certificate at the age of 15, but what about the punter who lives in a flat in a town? What chance does he have of obtaining a certificate?

Mr. Hogg: We have to look at the consequences. The new clause, as amended by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster, provides for continuing use. It may not always be continuing, but often it will be. My hon. Friend must ask whether that is what he is seeking to justify. As my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West said, no doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster's son will obtain a certificate. However, he asked about people living in a town. If the chief constable refuses to issue a certificate because, in his view, the grounds are not met, and if that decision is supported by the court, we should not try to disturb the position in which an applicant fails on the primary grounds.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I should like to follow up the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham). My hon. Friend the Minister is wrong when he talks about continuous use in the context of the stag. I am talking about people who go to Scotland for their summer holiday, not about year-round training. It is wrong to say that, because training is not continuous, it is not useful. I ask my hon. Friend to consider that point.

Mr. Hogg: That is not the case. We have to look at what can happen. My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster is suggesting that he should be able to provide training for his son. I understand that. Instruction implies a continuing process. It may happen over a number of years or over an extended period in one year. If that is what my hon. Friend is anxious to do—it is a respectable thing to do—he should apply for a firearms certificate on behalf of his son. His son can have a certificate as long as he is not under the age of 14.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Another great distinction between what my hon. Friend is saying should happen and what I am asking for is that I am asking for boys of 14 to 17 to have the right to borrow a rifle, not to possess it. There are plenty of occasions when it would be proper for a boy to borrow a gun, but I would be reluctant for that same child to have the right to possess one.

Mr. Hogg: I was about to come to that. I am concerned about the ad hoc use. We are talking about a powerful weapon. The provisions which govern the ad hoc use of shotguns are contained in section 11(5) of the Firearms Act 1968 and they are limited. I shrink from the idea of enabling a boy, on an ad hoc basis, to use a high-powered rifle. It may be that the supervision provided by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster would be wholly adequate—I am not trying to argue to the contrary—but he has to contemplate the possibility of many people doing the same thing under supervision which is much less precise.

We must look at consequences. We are dealing with high-powered rifles. For that reason, I cannot commend to the House an acceptance of the amendments, although they were moved with great skill and lucidity.

Amendment (a) to the Lords amendment negatived.

Lords amendment No. 11 agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 12 to 27 agreed to, some with special entry.

Broadcasting and Terrorism

Mr. Speaker: I have to tell the House that I have selected the amendment on the Order Paper.

6.47 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move.

That this House approves the Home Secretary's action in giving directions to the BBC and IBA to restrict the broadcasting of statements by Northern Ireland terrorist organisations and their apologists.

On 19 October I told the House that I had issued directions to the BBC and the IBA requiring them to refrain from broadcasting statements by Northern Ireland terrorist organisations and their apologists. The imposition of any restrictions on broadcasting, however well justified, is a serious step. This step was taken only after long and careful consideration by the Government. It is because of the seriousness of the matter that I emphasised, when I made my statement, that the House should be given an early opportunity to debate, and I hope endorse, the action that we have taken.

Those who live by the bomb and the gun and those who support them cannot in all circumstances be accorded the same rights as the rest of the population. This is a principle that the House has accepted many times when passing legislation to give the police and the courts certain carefully limited but exceptional powers for the prevention of terrorism. The principle is contested by the Opposition, but I believe that it is accepted by the majority of our constituents. It is common sense. We shall soon be putting to Parliament new and stronger proposals that will bear particularly on the funds of terrorist organisations.

Those who practise and support terrorism and violence should not be allowed direct access to our radios and television screens. In a nutshell, that is what the Government's action is all about. The same conclusion was reached long ago by the Republic of Ireland, which imposed similiar restrictions.

One essential point about the effect of the notices that I issued deserves repeating. The notices do not restrict the secondhand reporting of events. Comparisons with the extensive reporting restrictions in countries such as South Africa are misleading, especially when they are made by members of the South African Government. The notices restrict only the direct access of members of these organisations and their supporters to the air waves. Their activities and the words they utter can still be reported, as they are, in the press, but we are denying them the ability to appear on television and thereby obtain a spurious authority and respectability. In the words of last week's *Irish Independent*,

"Sinn Fein are not being silenced . . . merely put in their place."

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I fail to understand why it is all right for someone's words to be reported by another individual but not for them to speak for themselves, unless the Government are frightened that Sinn Fein or Ulster Defence Association persons speaking for themselves would be more appealing and attractive than the Government want them to be. I cannot understand the logic of allowing the words to be reported but not allowing the originator of the words to use them in public.

Mr. Hurd: In that case, the hon. Lady will not agree with the notice, because it is based on the distinction between the reporting of events and words and the direct access of members of proscribed organisations, or those uttering words in support of them, to people's television screens in their living rooms. There is a clear distinction in reality, and I shall return to that point before I conclude.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): In view of my right hon. Friend's understandable comments about South Africa, and in the light of reports that other countries are queueing up at the doors of Her Majesty's Government to remove from our television screens people whom they regard as terrorists, would it not be appropriate at some stage for the Government to separate terrorist groups such as the IRA and ETA—which have access to the ballot, the freedom to live where they want in their own land and to stand for election—from legitimate freedom fighters who oppose state terrorism, such as the Palestine Liberation Organisation or the African National Congress, which have offices in London?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is trying to draw me on to ground on which I do not intend to tread today, although it is very interesting. These notices are and will remain confined to Northern Ireland organisations.

As the House knows, the notices that I have issued contain two exemptions—one for parliamentary proceedings and the other for statements made during an election. We were concerned not to take measures that might trench on parliamentary privilege. We must remember the position of broadcasters in relation to parliamentary matters. Under the licence and agreement, the BBC is charged with providing an impartial account, day by day, of proceedings in both Houses. It might be difficult for the corporation to carry out this requirement—especially with regard to debates on Northern Ireland—if restrictions were to apply to our proceedings.

A similar point applies to elections. Under the Broadcasting Act 1981, the IBA has a statutory duty to treat impartially matters of political or industrial controversy or current public policy. In the annex to its licence and agreement, the BBC has undertaken to fulfil a similar responsibility. We believe that it will be possible to carry out this requirement fully in everyday circumstances as the notices will not prevent the broadcasters from reporting indirectly the activities of the organisations concerned.

An election period is different. The ability of candidates and their supporters to make a personal appearance on radio or television is crucial to balancing the interests of political parties in obtaining access to the electorate. That, after all, is the basis of the broadcasting requirements under the Representation of the People Act 1983. The application of the restrictions during an election period would face the broadcasters with an insurmountable conflict between their legal duty to implement the notice and the legal requirements of impartial treatment of political controversy. Such a position would raise significant legal difficulties.

For those reasons, we decided that a candidate representing one of the organisations concerned and his supporters should be free to make personal appearances on radio and television during election time, provided—this is important—that their statements are made in support of the candidate and his constituency contest.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I listen with amazement to what my right hon. Friend is saying. It is perfectly obvious that one tries to gain the support of a community for election to office over many weeks and months, not over a three-week election period. Does it not instantly put one party at a disadvantage to another, and is that a fair system?

Mr. Hurd: I do not agree with my hon. Friend. There are, as the law provides, special circumstances surrounding an election period. We are trying to prevent the broadcasting authorities being put in a position where they cannot carry out their responsibilities, as defined, during that period. In everyday circumstances—between elections—the notices will not prevent them from carrying out their duties.

In statements made soon after my announcement, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) seemed to beckon to Sinn Fein to take advantage of the exemption, which I have just mentioned, to make its case to the British people at the forthcoming Govan by-election. Indeed, he talked in the House about the near certainty of its doing so. In the event, it decided to ignore the right hon. Gentleman's invitation.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hurd: The words "near certainty" were used.

Mr. Hattersley: The word to which I take exception is "invitation", not "near certainty". The idea that I was inviting Sinn Fein to do that is no doubt how the Home Secretary will conduct this debate—an alternative to argument being abuse.

Mr. Hurd: There is no abuse. The right hon. Gentleman dangled the prospect before Sinn Fein. That is precisely what he did, and his reaction following my announcement was to talk about "near certainty." It was widely reported in the press. If the right hon. Gentleman does not like the word "invitation," I shall substitute that he dangled the prospect before it, which is precisely what he did.

Sinn Fein decided to ignore that prospect. If press reports are right, it thought hard about it and decided against. Perhaps it was wise to do so. The same legal requirements that ensure an even-handed treatment of candidates by broadcasters at election time could not have given Sinn Fein the great publicity bonanza that the right hon. Gentleman might have envisaged. The same rules that make necessary the exemption would prevent it from gaining much advantage.

The right hon. Gentleman's prediction was not the only one that has so far proved false.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Does the Secretary of State agree that the battle with those who espouse terrorism in the north of Ireland must be fought not in Govan, in this country or in the Republic of Ireland, but on the streets of Belfast and on the roads of places such as south Armagh, where I live? We can judge the restriction that the right hon. Gentleman has introduced only by the effect that it will have there, not by the effect that it will have anywhere else. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that this restriction is furthering, rather than restricting, the propaganda weapon that is used?

Mr. Hurd: I am coming to the hon. Gentleman's point, which is the core of the argument. Before doing that I was trying to deal with the points that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, rightly or wrongly, raised when he commented on my announcement.

All sorts of predictions have been made, not only the one made by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. We read on good authority that the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Mr. Adams) would be taking his seat, as if there were no requirement of an oath of affirmation or allegiance. We read that the "Any Questions" programme, on which the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) appeared in Antrim last week, would be disrupted, but she will confirm that that did not happen either.

To be fair, it is natural that there should be some anxiety and controversy at the start of such an arrangement—as there is, from time to time, in the Republic. There are some who, for reasons of their own, prefer to remain permanently confused about the scope of the notices. However, I believe that my announcement and the terms of the notices were as clear as we could make them.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I am worried about the way in which the right hon. Gentleman is presenting his argument. The point that he is missing, which is the core of the argument and forms the basis of our accusations against him, is that he is allowing the paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland to set the political agenda. Every discussion and every headline during the past few weeks has been about the paramilitaries. It is not a question of Govan or of Mr. Adams taking his seat. The point is that the right hon. Gentleman has allowed the paramilitaries to set the political agenda. That is why they have made the headlines, day in, day out, for the past two weeks.

Mr. Hurd: I agree that that is part of the core of the argument. I am trying to clear away points that have been raised and predictions that have been made—which, incidentally, have turned out to be quite false—before I deal with the core of the argument. I am trying to deal with detailed matters, and I shall then return to the principal concern, on which I feel just as strongly as the hon. Gentleman.

There will, of course, be occasions when the broadcasters, as now, have to use their judgment in deciding whether to include particular material in a programme. One such issue concerns the question whether a person is representing a named organisation at the time he appears on a programme. It is true that a member of an organisation cannot be held to represent it in all his daily activities. The key to the issue is the word "represent." When a councillor is speaking in Northern Ireland, it is not the subject about which he is talking that will decide whether his speech can be broadcast directly, but whether he is talking on behalf of one of the named organisations. *—[Interruption.]* I am trying to clarify a point that I think is now clear to all, other than to those who wish to remain permanently confused.

As the director of Radio 4 made clear this morning—although he did not like it—a Sinn Fein councillor speaking about council matters on behalf of his group will not be allowed direct access. There will be borderline cases where that distinction will require careful judgment, just as the broadcasters had to exercise careful judgment under

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the previous arrangement. However, in practice I do not believe that the decision will be too difficult in the vast majority of cases.

In the reactions during the days——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The Home Secretary, in his statement on 19 October, said that he had no criticism as such of the broadcasting authorities. If he does not believe that they have gone out of their way to interview spokesmen for those who argue for and justify terrorism, why does he not leave these matters to their editorial judgment?

Mr. Hurd: We did, of course, consider that, but we thought it more sensible and honest for the Government to bring forward and to take responsibility for this measure. That is what we have done. I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman. If we had simply said to the broadcasters, "We want you to exercise your judgment, albeit very difficult" and had not brought the matter before the House, would that have been a better way to achieve the objective? It would not. The way in which we are handling the matter —including this debate, during which various views will be expressed, and not all of them in support of the Government—is a much more straightforward way of setting about matters.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I apologise for not being in the Chamber for the first few minutes of the right hon. Gentleman's speech. He mentioned borderline cases and how comparatively easy it would be to solve them. Did the Government consider introducing a change in the law to deal with these matters? The passing of this motion will have no effect on the law in Ireland or anywhere else. The Government have sought to deal with these matters by Home Secretary edict, backed by a motion that will have no binding effect in the courts. Did the Government not think that the appropriate method would be to change the law of the land to deal with such a departure from free rights and free speech?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is contradicting his hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), who suggested that we should have handled the matter in a roundabout way and relied on the broadcasters to use their judgement to achieve the same effect. I carefully read what Lord Scarman said, as, no doubt, did the right hon. Gentleman. I do not believe that there is a serious question about the legal basis of the notices. That being so, it would have been deeply quixotic to have proceeded in any other way. There is precedent and there is the law.

Mr. Mallon *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I have already given way once to the hon. Gentleman. I should like to continue my speech.

In the reactions during the days following my announcement, there were some who felt, as the Opposition do, that the Government had gone too far, and there were others who felt that we had not gone far enough. Opposition Members continue to claim that this is a major incursion upon the right of freedom of expression. As I have made clear tonight, that cannot be so because broadcasters remain free to report the activities of those organisations and the actual words used by their representatives. Some of my hon. Friends and Members on the Unionist Benches have argued that the right even to report statements by those organisations should be restricted. That would be going too far. There is the obvious case of the aftermath of a terrorist outrage when it is essential, as a matter of public information, that any admission of responsibility by a terrorist group be fully reported.

Some of my hon. Friends and Unionist Members would like the Government to proscribe Sinn Fein. As they know, we believe that proscription is a fitting measure only for organisations that are actively and primarily involved in terrorism. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has frequently pointed out, the status of Sinn Fein and the UDA is kept carefully under review by the Government. There has been criticism, and it will continue, from those two extremes—one saying that we have gone too far and the other that we have not gone far enough. I believe that, both inside and outside the House, the balance that we have struck will achieve wide general support.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): My right hon. Friend is obviously aware that his announcement received a very bad press in America. Does he agree that it is imperative to stress that the Republic of Ireland has had such restrictions since 1960?

Mr. Hurd: I was about to make that point.

I wish to pick up something that I heard the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) say before I made my announcement, but following press reports of what it was thought I would say. He put the greatest stress on the need for even-handedness. He criticised our proposal mainly because he thought that it did not include the UDA and the UVF. I cannot say that we took his advice because it had always been absolutely clear to us that the proposal would have to be even-handed. It is, and I hope that when he replies to the debate he will be fair enough to temper his views accordingly.

Always on these occasions—as has happened with interruptions this evening—the argument is that by depriving the IRA of one weapon we are actually giving it another and bigger one——

Mr. Winnick: Precisely.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman confirms that point. It is argued that we are giving the IRA a propaganda advantage across the world that will outweigh the disadvantage of being shut out of our own television screens. That argument deserves rather closer dissection than it usually gets. An Irish-American or an Irish-Australian who is already sympathetic to the IRA will not have his opinions changed, one way or the other, by this proposal. An Irish-American or an Irish-Australian, who is naturally, temperamentally and intellectually sympathetic to the Fianna Fail or Fine Gael parties in the Republic, will not go through some great anti-British convulsion because we are practising what the Governments of both those parties have practised in the Republic for many years past. I suggest that he is more likely simply to be surprised to learn that we have not, for years past, been doing the same as the Dublin Government.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): What will the Irish-American citizen say when he reads that the British Government are abandoning the first amendment to the American constitution?

Mr. Hurd: I have never supposed that we were subject to the first amendment to the American constitution. The hon. Gentleman has not begun to answer my point, which was a clear answer to many of the criticisms that have been made.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I shall conclude my remarks soon, but I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Alton: I welcome what the right hon. Gentleman has said this evening. It is proper that we should bring our law into line with that of the Irish Republic. Does he agree that security and justice run hand in hand? While we are right to bring our security laws into line with those of the Irish Republic, our laws concerning justice and the way in which we administer it in Northern Ireland through the Diplock courts should also be brought into line with the law of the Irish Republic by replacing those courts with three sitting judges.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has constantly kept the matter under review, as, of course, I did, but from time to time he has given his decisions and beliefs on that point. I had hoped that the hon. Gentleman would say what he did say in the first part of his intervention, and I am grateful for the support from the Opposition parties that it conveyed.

I refer now to what I regard as the core of the matter. Particularly since the outrage at Enniskillen a year ago and the renewed intensity of the terrorist campaign, I have several times thought how difficult it is for us in this House to understand not the facts, which are clear enough, but the emotions produced by such events in that part of our country. Right hon. and hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland do what they can from their different viewpoints to enlighten us, but they would be the first to admit that there is a barrier to overcome. The words they use, the way they put things, and their occasional intense preoccupation with ancient rivalries may sometimes lead us on this side of the water to forget how real and intense are the anxieties that they are seeking to convey to us. But we must not allow ourselves that luxury of forgetfulness.

It seems to me that, in recent months, two such anxieties have come to the fore with a new intensity. The first is the anxiety that so many guilty terrorists escape conviction or, if convicted, spend too little time in prison. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is, of course, fully aware of these concerns. His proposal to allow courts to draw certain inferences from an accused who insists on remaining silent makes clear his understanding of that point. I do not want to go further into that matter, because it is his business, not mine.

The second anxiety is the one that we are discussing today. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) will recognise this point from his time in the Army. When there is a terrorist attack and television screens carry to mourning people pictures of tears and bloodshed, it is hard for us on this side of the water to understand the outrage that is felt when, soon afterwards, there can appear on the same screens, particularly in Northern Ireland, people who, just keeping on the right side of the law, justify and glory in what has been done and threaten more of it. That is the difference between direct access and the report. It is not surprising that a member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, a member of the UDR, or any law-abiding citizen of the Province finds it hard to understand how we can be wholly serious in our efforts against terrorism if that kind of triumphalism is acceptable.

But there is more to it than that. It is not simply that people are affronted—we can live with affront—by the direct access of men of violence and supporters of violence to television and radio. That direct access gives those who use it an air and appearance of authority which spreads further outwards the ripple of fear that terrorist acts create in the community. The terrorist act creates the fear and the direct broadcast spreads it. The men of violence and their supporters have used this access with skill. They hope not to persuade—this is where we get into the cosy luxury of discussion which is unreal—but to frighten. So far from being outlaws hunted by the forces of law and order and pursued by the courts, they calmly appear on the screen and, thus, in the homes of their victims and the friends and neighbours of their victims. We are dealing not just with statements that are offensive, but with the use of the media to deliver indirect threats. We owe the people of Northern Ireland the effort of imagination that enables us to understand what that experience is like and to understand how the fight against terrorism is hindered by it.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Does the right hon. Gentleman's argument not presuppose that the case of the IRA is so powerful, that people's attachment to democracy is so weak and that our abhorrence of violence is so inadequate that such an argument being put forward on television can bring us all to our knees? If that is the case, why did the right hon. Gentleman not do something about it over these last 10 years?

Mr. Hurd: There speaks the English broadcaster. There speaks the person who thinks that broadcasting and television are just a matter of whether or not one persuades. We are not talking about that; we are talking about fear and the creation of fear. The hon. Gentleman may disagree with the argument, but he clearly was not listening to it. His intervention was unreal.

All those who know Northern Ireland, whatever their opinions, respect the integrity and wisdom—as I learnt to do—of Dr. Robin Eames, Archbishop and Primate of the Church of Ireland. On the evening of my announcement, Dr. Eames said:

> "Sinn Fein have made no secret of the fact that they are in favour of the armed struggle. I have to represent at times those who are the objects of that armed struggle and I know what they've suffered. We know where they—the terrorists—stand. Is any good going to come from people who've suffered so much being subjected to more of their propaganda?"

I hope that no one in this House will scorn or neglect that expression of feeling.

Of course, this decision will not by itself solve the problem or defeat the terrorist. If that is a criticism, it is something that we accept. As my right hon. Friend has constantly made clear, no single measure is going to defeat the Provisional IRA or, indeed, the Protestant paramilitaries. We are deliberately not announcing a package of measures, but reaching and implementing decisions one by one, as we review the whole range of issues and

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possibilities that can further help protect a free democratic society from the evil of terrorism and its associates. This is a serious decision, and we shall keep its operation under careful review, but I am satisfied that it is needed, and I have no hesitation in commending the motion to the House.

7.17 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'reaffirming its determination to defeat terrorism in Northern Ireland, refuses to support the Government's restrictions on broadcasting and broadcasters, believing those restrictions to be incompatible with a free society and likely to assist rather than frustrate the terrorists by providing them with the opportunity to argue that the Government will not allow the wide expression of opinion which is essential to democratic debate and peaceful change.'.

I am not in the least surprised that the Home Secretary should have made the accusation about the Opposition in general and about me in particular encouraging Sinn Fein to participate in English by-elections. Such allegations are an alternative to thought and argument and an option that is far easier than defending what the Government propose on its dubious merits. That sort of allegation is typical also of the Government's dangerous arrogance. One of the Government's least attractive characteristics is their belief that, in all matters affecting security, anyone who disagrees with their judgment or criticises their record is acting against the national interest.

Let me make it clear at the beginning of the debate that I and my right hon. and hon. Friends do not propose to take any lessons in standing out against terrorism from the Government who gave free passage out of this country to the murderers of WPC Fletcher, rather than risk a row with Libya; nor do we propose to take lectures on defeating terrorism on the premise that what the Home Secretary now proposes will make the smallest contribution to the destruction of terrorism and the defeat of terrorists in Northern Ireland.

The argument is not about whether something that will help in a mutually accepted cause will work and whether it should be applied, but about the merits of it, even on the basis of what the Home Secretary said.

Anyone who for a moment believed that the IRA might even be inconvenienced by the broadcasting ban which the Home Secretary now proposes must have been absolutely disillusioned by the demonstration of the results of that ban on "The Media Programme" on Channel 4 on Sunday. I remind the Home Secretary what happened. A Sinn Fein councillor was interviewed on the effects of the ban. There was some understandable disagreement among lawyers whether the interview could be legally broadcast since the proscription is so imprecise that the Government cannot define its boundaries. In the end, the IBA advised against the interview being broadcast and the programme makers, perfectly legally, showed pictures of the interview without the original sound and dubbed the Sinn Fein councillor's voice with the voice of a commentator or actress. To the casual viewer, the interview was in no way different from one where the actual voice was employed. Anyone turning on the broadcast two seconds after it had begun would have assumed that he was seeing the literal interview. I cannot see what damage is done to terrorism and terrorists in Northern Ireland by the Government making themselves look ridiculous by imposing that sort of meaningless and pointless restriction on broadcasters.

Apologists for this restriction attempt to justify it with two assertions which originally appeared in the Home Secretary's statement and which I shall quote exactly as he made them. First, broadcasts by representatives and supporters of terrorist organisations cause

"widespread offence to listeners and viewers."

Secondly, terrorists

"draw support and sustenance from access to radio and television."—[*Official Report*, 19 October 1988; Vol. 138, c. 885.]

Those two distinct arguments are not incompatible, but they are separate claims and must be justified separately. Too often—the Home Secretary did it again today—the allegations that the IRA and UDA will be helped rather than harmed by the ban is countered with arguments about causing public offence. Concern about banning broadcasts because they cause offence is greeted with claims that at least it will defeat the IRA. I propose to examine individually the two distinct reasons given for limiting broadcasters' freedom—public offence and the defeat of terrorism.

I do not doubt for a moment that the sight of a supporter of the IRA justifying a bomb outrage is offensive to most British people. It is offensive to me. The bogus apologies and hypocritical statements of regret are more offensive still. But the question we must answer is not whether that causes offence—undoubtedly it does—but whether in a free society causing gross and justifiable offence is sufficient reason for limiting the broadcasters' right to broadcast.

If the Home Secretary has any doubts about how steep and slippery is the slope at the top of which he stands, he has only to ask the BBC for transcripts of the phone-in programmes of the past 10 days about his restrictions. His many supporters were virtually unanimous on one point: they found IRA spokesmen offensive and did not wish to see or hear them. But that was only the beginning. They went on to list other individuals and organisations which they found equally offensive and which they believed should also be proscribed and prohibited. If the Home Secretary has not been given the information about these supporters of his, for who, I suspect, he has little time, and who no doubt cause him a great deal of embarrassment, he has only to consider the question asked by the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley). I do not know whether his question, which received no answer, was asking for an extension or pointing to the logic of the Home Secretary's position, but either way he was saying that, once such a ban is started, there is no way of knowing how far it will go or where it will lead.

The criterion of causing widespread offence to viewers and listeners is dangerously subjective. It is only necessary to ask some questions which follow from its application to see how great a contagion it can cause. Is anything which causes widespread offence to be banned? If not, who decides within that category what widespread offence should be banned and what should not be banned? How is widespread offence to be measured? Widespread offence is a meaningless concept. It is one of those catch-all omnibus, all-embracing criteria which suit the convenience of authoritarian Governments. It is the sort of criterion which should not be used in a free society. I have no doubt that in Eastern Europe and South America there are all

sorts of prohibitions on broadcasters, broadcasts and newspapers because widespread offence would be caused. Widespread offence, although I feel it in this particular, is not an adequate excuse for censorship in a free society.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will the right hon. Gentleman be good enough to explain why, early in 1977, the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, at a dinner in Stormont, called for a ban on terrorist interviews and went so far as to say that the BBC's treatment of Northern Ireland news was sometimes ill advised to the point of disloyalty? How does he square his comments with those of that Labour Secretary of State for Northern Ireland?

Mr. Hattersley: In two ways. First, in that particular, my right hon. and noble Friend to whom the hon. Gentleman referred was simply wrong. More important, he was so wrong that he did not put it to the Cabinet, of which he, some hon. Friends and I were members. If he had, he would have received the same sort of reaction from the overwhelming majority that I am trying to describe this evening—that banning the expression of a view because it causes widespread offence should not be acceptable in a free society, no matter how genuine the offence or how much offence is caused.

In a free society, limitations should be imposed on broadcasts and broadcasters when, and only when—*[Interruption.]* I see that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is congratulating his hon. Friend on making that point. He said, "Well done." *[Interruption.]* He was just having a little chat. Perhaps he would like to consider the next point.

In a free society, limitations should be imposed on broadcasts and broadcasters when, and only when, it can be conclusively demonstrated that real and desperate damage would be done to members of that society if the restriction were not imposed. We can all think of occasions when prohibitions might be necessary. Usually in such circumstances—a recent kidnapping case is an example—broadcasters apply self-restraint. But a ban should be imposed only when damage to society is substantial and certain and can be demonstrated. Certainly no such case can be made for what the Government now intend. The evidence suggests that the ban will help rather than harm the terrorists' cause.

During the whole of this year, independent television has broadcast four minutes of interviews with supporters and associates of Sinn Fein. Some three minutes 59 seconds of those interviews were highly critical, in that the interviewer demanded to know of Sinn Fein how it could even attempt to justify the horrors and enormities for which the IRA was responsible. The total amount of interviewing time was less than four minutes. Some of the material might have been screened twice—on both the early news and ten o'clock news, but four minutes of new material was the total in a year. How much assistance does the Home Secretary think those four minutes gave the IRA? If he thinks that it might be significant, he will be appalled to learn that, thanks to the ban which he introduced two weeks ago, three or four times as much broadcasting time on Independent Television News has been devoted to discussing and describing the IRA and sometimes even defending it. That is a direct result of what the Home Secretary has introduced.

Naturally, that has been broadcast in reported speech. The Home Secretary seems to believe that there is something peculiarly attractive to potential IRA recruits in seeing the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Mr. Adams) speak straight into the camera. I find that impossible to believe. The overwhelming probability is that his restrictions will make Sinn Fein more attractive to the weak-minded viewers than it was two weeks ago. Its ghastly, fawning apologies and its craven justifications will not be broadcast directly, so television interviewers will not be able to challenge it. However, from time to time, when there is a bomb outrage, its hideous sentiments will be quoted in reported speech. I have no doubt that its opinions will be insinuated into broadcasts through surrogates, denying Sinn Fein membership but expressing the views of Sinn Fein.

The potential gain—even for those who accept the implication of the Prime Minister's cliché about the oxygen of publicity—is miniscule. The potential loss is enormous. I ask the Home Secretary this directly: does he believe that Noraid has missed the opportunity to tell Irish Americans that the president of NBC News said on British television and radio last week that Britain is now the only Western democracy with broadcasting censorship? Does he believe that broadcasting that opinion, right or wrong, in the United States will help or hinder Noraid?

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): What about Ireland?

Mr. Hattersley: If the hon. Gentleman wants to shout, "What about Ireland?", it is for him to answer the point, but he will struggle to understand it if I repeat it to him. The fact is that it is the president of NBC News who made that point.

I ask the Home Secretary again: does he not believe that Noraid is even now flooding Irish-American areas of America with the NBC president's judgment that we have introduced censorship? Does he believe that that has been enormously helpful to his cause?

I ask the Home Secretary a second question: does he not believe that the republican areas in Northern Ireland will be equally flooded with leaflets quoting Mr. P. W. Botha's endorsement of the Government's new controls over broadcasting, and emphasising the South African president's opinion that the Home Secretary's suppression of press freedom in Britain justifies the suppression of press freedom in South Africa? Does he think that Mr. Botha's views are being spread in republican areas, and, if so, is that helping our fight against the IRA or hindering it?

The important point is not the damage caused to Britain's international reputation, great though that is, or the harm that the Government's justification of the prohibition has done to our standing in the world, but the help that their action has provided to the terrorists, who are able to exploit in every possible way the pointless action that was taken two weeks ago. They have been presented with the opportunity to argue that the weapons of political debate and democratic success have been denied them; in consequence, they have been offered the opportunity to argue that what they choose to call the armed struggle is the only way in which they can advance their cause. The damage that the Government are doing to the fight against terrorism must not be obscured by the clear absurdity of their actions. All the analyses of how this

[Mr. Hattersley]

ban will work show that prohibition is a joke—but it is a bad and dangerous joke, and one which will damage the cause that the Home Secretary pretends to be pursuing.

The extent of the absurdity can be measured by the confusion about what can and cannot be broadcast. I remind the Home Secretary of the procedure used to notify the broadcasters of the true position. Quite properly, the BBC was told of the Home Secretary's proposals the night before he announced them to the House. I understand that they became effective at the moment of his announcement, and the BBC and the IBA had to prepare themselves for their instant application. The BBC was told the previous night, and it took legal advice. Two independent sources agreed on the areas which the proposals covered. In his statement, the Home Secretary interpreted his order far more liberally than the BBC's lawyers—one house lawyer and one independent lawyer—believed to be the case.

The BBC's lawyers were again consulted. They reminded the BBC that the law is not what the Home Secretary announced in the House of Commons, but what the courts decide. They had no doubt that the order was a great deal more repressive, shall I say, and comprehensive than the Home Secretary had made out. Meetings were held between the Home Office and the BBC. The BBC continued to argue that the Home Secretary's representation of the law was more liberal than the law allowed.

After a further meeting, the Government agreed to send out a further document, which amended the scope of the original words and ensured that the law would be applied in the way in which the Home Secretary had apparently believed was already embodied in the words. That document contains this paragraph:

"Whether at any particular instance he"—

in his letters and regulations, the Home Secretary does not consider the possibility that women may be involved in such matters—

"is representing the organisation concerned will depend upon the nature of the words spoken and the particular context. Where he is speaking in a personal capacity or purely in his capacity as a member of an organisation which does not fall under the Notice (for example, an elected Council), it follows, from that interpretation, that paragraph 1(a)"—

that is the prohibiting paragraph—

"will not apply."

As a result of that clarification, the BBC now believes that Sinn Fein councillors can broadcast as councillors, as distinct from being members of Sinn Fein. It is therefore possible for them to give interviews on exclusively local authority matters. In short, the fears of the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) are justified. Sinn Fein will be allowed to represent itself as the caring guardian of local interests, but it will not be cross-examined on its support for terrorism.

Notwithstanding that, and the helpful Home Office advice concerning Sinn Fein broadcasts about butterfly collecting, the IBA and the BBC still regard the order as so imprecise that they are not sure what can and cannot be broadcast over wide areas. As I understand it, they are known in the trade as grey areas. I have no doubt that, sooner or later, the BBC or IBA will be forced to test those grey areas in court.

Mr. Mallon: The right hon. Gentleman has done a service to the House by highlighting that anomaly. It is one of the confusions that the Secretaryof State has referred to. If, on a Tuesday, Sean Bloggs makes a statement as a member of Armagh council, that, in effect, in law can be covered by TV and radio. If on a Thursday, as a spokesman for Sinn Fein, Sean Bloggs makes the same statement, it cannot be broadcast. Is that not the essence of the confusion and ambiguity that exists?

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman's point is obviously, and dangerously, right.

I discussed with the BBC some of the possible ambiguities. It gave me an example yesterday of a great fire occurring in the centre of Belfast in which a number of people were killed. An eye witness to the fire was a councillor, who was also a Sinn Fein councillor. That eye witness account could be broadcast if the fire had not been caused by the IRA. It certainly could not be broadcast if it were caused by the IRA. The BBC does not know how it would proceed if no one knew how the fire had been caused. There is no way that one can describe this situation without realising the nonsense of the Home Secretary's position and the disrepute into which he brings the Government.

Mr. Hurd *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hattersley: Although the Home Secretary now shakes his head, the Government concede that the guidelines are confused and contradictory. I believe that they know that, sooner or later, they will be tested in court, because I had the pleasure of watching the Minister of State being asked on television last Sunday what broadcasters should do when they are confronted with those so-called grey areas.

Of course, the Minister of State's answer was fatuous, but it was also terrifyingly revealing about the Government's view of press and broadcasting in a free society. He said that, before broadcasting a programme on Northern Ireland, directors and producers should telephone the Home Office and ask, "Is this covered by your restriction, or not?" No free broadcaster in a free society, in preparing a broadcast, would or should want to phone the Ministry of the Interior and ask whether the item was acceptable for transmission to the general public. I am assured that broadcasters, from both independent television and the BBC, simply will not accept such a regime.

The idea that broadcasters should have to ask the Government's permission before they transmit news and current affairs programmes is unacceptable in a free society. It is what we always believed happened in countries that do not enjoy our traditional liberties. Broadcasters must make their own decisions about what is right under the law. Under such a Government as this, the Home Office cannot be trusted to interpret the law, especially since, on the evidence of its advice on classification and further reclassification, it has no idea how far the law extends and what it covers.

Any accurate account of what the Government propose —a restriction on free broadcasting, which is confused and ill defined, which cannot harm the terrorists and probably will help them, which enables Mr. P. W. Botha to compare his regime to our democracy and which would not be constitutionally acceptable in other democracies—leaves unanswered a crucial question: what are the Government's real motives in pursuing so indefensible a policy? Why do

they humiliate themselves and damage the interests of the country for no tangible gain? I believe that the folly has two causes.

The first cause is the Prime Minister's authoritarian instinct—the mindless reflex that automatically wishes to suppress and extinguish those views that she finds objectionable, whatever the real cost. We all recall the careful leaks that described the Prime Minister's outrage at a specific broadcast. Whether it was wise and right to retaliate is not the sort of consideration on which the Prime Minister spends much time. The IRA is assisted and our liberties are damaged because the Prime Minister was offended by the broadcasters' judgment over a single programme. On such an occasion as that, the Prime Minister is almost as contemptuous of our liberties as she is of her Cabinet colleagues.

The second reason why we are presented with this example of the authoritarian and the absurd combining in a single policy is the Government's hope to create the illusion of activity. Part of the tragedy of Northern Ireland is that there is no quick, easy or certain solution. One of the burdens borne by every Government, certainly by this Government, is the demand, especially from the less responsible newspapers, for them to take new initiatives. The call to do something is rarely accompanied by descriptions of what that something should be. That was the unthinking response by some newspapers to the horrors perpetrated in the summer. Of course, the Government responded with promises that something would be done when they were not sure what that something would be.

For a Government faced with the agonising responsibilities of Northern Ireland, which I in no way diminish, there are only two possibilities. One is capitulation, which is as unacceptable to the Opposition as it is to the Government. The other is holding fast and steering a steady course—defeating terrorism under the law, refusing absolutely to copy the conduct of the terrorists and carefully avoiding any risk of being represented as the enemy of the liberty that the Government aim to defend. That steady course must be built on a real determination to understand and rectify real grievances. It will not be helped by the suppression of free broadcasting, and it will not be helped by gimmicks.

The suppression of free broadcasing will not even placate the Government's mindless critics, the people who demand tough action without even considering its morality or its real effects. Meanwhile, the terrorists will see the Government thrashing about and will take pleasure and comfort from the absurdity of the Government's position.

We regret that the Government have behaved so foolishly. We shall not endorse their foolishness. We shall vote for our amendment.

7.44 pm

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) seriously misrepresented what the Government are seeking to do. He suggested that a form of censorship is to be imposed on the reporting of what the terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland do merely because they are to be denied the ability to appear on television or to have their words broadcast. I do not remember which way the right hon. Gentleman voted when we debated whether proceedings in the House should be televised——

Mr. Hattersley: For.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: That makes my point for me. One of the arguments that first persuaded us to let the broadcasters into the Chamber, and subsequently to make it possible in the near future to have the televisers, was the argument that simply to report the House of Commons was to deny it the place that it should have in the centre of our society, and that only by bringing the cameras into the Chamber could one give it an immediacy and impact on the country overall that would return to it that pride of place that all of us seem to believe it should have. If one holds that argument about this place, I do not see how it is possible to argue, as the right hon. Gentleman did, that to deny broadcasting and television to the terrorist will not inevitably reduce his ability to have an impact on the audience that he would wish to persuade.

I should like to jog back a few years, to an evening when, in one of the television rooms in the House, I was watching a programme about Northern Ireland, its politics and the terrorism that has beset it. Sitting beside me was Mr. Don Concannon, the former Member for Mansfield, who was a distinguished Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office. The programme started with a long shot over a derelict part of Belfast and, taken with the commentary, gave the impression that the dereliction had been the result of IRA bombing, so much so that Concannon exclaimed, "Why do they do it?" and I found myself in complete agreement with his sentiment.

The pictures that we had been watching and the commentary that we had been listening to gave the impression that that dereliction was the result of the IRA's activities, when in fact it was the result of the bulldozers clearing away some of the bad housing that has beset Belfast for so long to make way for new. But those who did not know Belfast as well as I do would not have been able to make that judgment. They would have concluded from that shot and that commentary that the dereliction showed the death and destruction on a gigantic scale that the IRA had been able to wreak in the capital of Northern Ireland.

Ms. Short: The hon. Gentleman's story is extremely worrying. He is talking not about a representative of the UDA of Sinn Fein speaking on television, but about what he claims was a misrepresentation of a scene of dereliction, as if that too should be banned. Is that his logic, and does he intend to control all programmes that are made about Northern Ireland?

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: With the greatest respect to the hon. Lady, I have just started my speech. I am sure that she would like me to encompass everything that I have to say in 30 seconds so that she can make her speech, but I am afraid that she must bear with me, as I want to develop the point that I am making.

I was referring to the reaction of a former Minister with responsibility for Northern Ireland and my own reaction as someone who has taken an interest in the affairs of that troubled Province. Our reaction was, "Why do they do it?" Why do the television people think that they can put on a programme of that kind and expect their audience to understand what had caused that dereliction? Or had they some other purpose? No doubt the companies concerned

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would say that they used the shot merely as a means of tracking in at the beginning of their film. But that shot, like so much else, raises yet again the question, "Why do they do it?" Why, in 1979, did the BBC make a film featuring a supposed IRA roadblock at Carrickmore? Fortunately, that film was never shown because its existence became known before it could be put out, but why did people at the BBC even think it worth creating such a film? Why did they think that their audience was longing to see the programme, "Real Lives—the Edge of the Union", which gave Martin McGuinness and the IRA such a good opportunity for television coverage? Having seen the programme, was anyone any clearer about the problems of Northern Ireland? Did it help our understanding in any way?

Ms. Short: Yes.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: I am glad that the hon. Lady can say that she gained something from that programme, because I certainly did not.

When the then Home Secretary suggested that the programme should not be shown because of its propaganda value to the IRA and the governors of the BBC agreed with that view, there was a walkout—presumably to prove that neither the Government's concern nor the wishes of the board of governors cut much ice with the news staff. Like my earlier examples, that again prompts the question, "Why do they do it?" If one believed in a conspiracy theory, one might suggest that there are those in the media who are politically prejudiced in favour of the goals that the IRA claims to have set for itself—a united, extreme Socialist Ireland by way of the bullet and the ballot box. But I acquit them of that charge —I do not think that that is the real reason.

I believe that the television and broadcasting people, like the media generally, have a blind belief in what is called the freedom of the press, and that ideal transcends any other consideration. It also colours the Opposition amendment today. To the media, the concept of the freedom of the press represents an absolute right to report or interview whomsoever they wish, regardless of the values that that person may hold and be known to hold. Because they allow that ideal to dominate their thoughts, they refuse to recognise the validity of any arguments that suggest that they should limit their reporting operations. Their defence is the argument that anything that prevents full media coverage is by definition a threat to democracy. As a former journalist, that is where I part company from them.

At the end of the day, a journalist, no more or less than any other citizen, enjoys his or her freedom to work because the Government of the day maintain the laws without which a free society cannot protect the rights of its people. If the media think that they can be equivocal about supporting parliamentary democracy and the rule of law, they deceive themselves, and probably their viewers and readers as well. The IRA has made no secret of its belief in the Armalite and the ballot box. It has placed itself outside the law with its campaign of murder, shootings, bombings and violence and its willingness to admit who the latest victim is. It uses every opportunity provided by an over-willing press to show off, whether it be the volley at the graveside, the funeral oration by the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Mr. Adams), or the flowers left to mark the place where members of the active service unit lost their lives in Gibraltar. The IRA has used the media with a flare for public relations that must make professional PR men green with envy.

Mr. Marlow: The media would have us believe that their concern is to give us as much information as possible, but what they are really about is providing entertainment, and when they use the concept of freedom of speech in pursuit of their activities they are really concerned about improving their ratings. Sadly, when they are chasing an audience they have no concern whatever for the propaganda benefits to the IRA and the suffering so callously caused to the victims and their relations. Is that not the root of the problem? The media say one thing, but the reality is totally different.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: The paradox of that list of opportunities that the IRA have exploited is the same media's coverage of the remembrance day explosion at Enniskillen or the death of the young light infantrymen in their bus. The media will be there to show us pictures of the latest victims of terrorism, their funerals, the sobbing widow and the mourners and to report the words of the minister or priest at the end of the service. They see nothing incongruous in their open-mindedness and their unwillingness to make any difference between those who openly flout the law and those who have lost their lives trying to uphold it.

Mr. Mallon: The hon. Gentleman mentioned Enniskillen. Apart from the statements of Gordon Wilson and the sentiments that he expressed, which none of us will ever forget, surely the most effective thing at that time was the way in which good journalism took apart the chairman of Fermanagh council, the spokesman for Sinn Fein, laying bare its whole philosophy and approach. That was the most destructive element for Sinn Fein, but it could not have happened if that man had not been allowed to present his views on television and subject himself to good television journalism, which can achieve more than a thousand words spoken here.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is right, but I do not remember that interview, although the words of Marie Wilson will remain in many of our minds for a long time to come.

Those who run the media argue that they are impartial observers reporting events in Northern Ireland as they happen, but can a free press in a parliamentary democracy be impartial as between the forces of law and order defending that democracy and the terrorists who have rejected the parliamentary process in favour of the gun to win support for their cause? Despite the proposed restrictions, if the hon. Member for Belfast, West chose to take his place in the Chamber today, he could take part in this debate and his words would be broadcast throughout the country, but he has turned his back on this the Mother of Parliaments, and on this democracy because he wishes to pull it down. It is no use arguing that what he stands for and what our parliamentary democracy stands for are the same thing. If the media claim to be impartial in the way that they believe they can, are they not in reality giving licence to the terrorist and a spurious respectability to the dreadful and lawless means that the terrorist has chosen to achieve his ends?

That is why I welcome the limitation, mild though it is, that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has imposed on interviews and live coverage of the IRA, the UDA and the UVF. It comes not a moment too soon and provokes the following thought. Instead of railing against it, should not those responsible for the BBC and IBA be asking themselves why they did not voluntarily impose some restraint along the same lines? I questioned the chairman of the BBC, Marmaduke Hussey, in a letter about the recent programme "Spotlight" dealing with the killings in Gibraltar before the inquest was held there and asked why it had been shown only in Northern Ireland. He replied on 3 June 1988 as follows:

"The BBC's motives in making the 'Spotlight' programme were straightforward. The aim was not to influence public opinion but to inform it."

He continued:

"And far from being insensitive to the audience in Northern Ireland, the showing of the 'Spotlight' programme was in fact a response to the considerable interest shown in the Province in the Gibraltar events."

I was sufficiently interested in his reply to write to the controller of the BBC in Northern Ireland about the response to the killings in Gibraltar. On 21 June, 18 days after the chairman's letter, Dr. Colin Morris wrote:

"We had 70 telephone calls before the programme protesting; the majority of which were hostile to the programme's intention. About 10 per cent. were in favour of the programme being shown. We had eight letters from viewers. Seven against the programme and one in its favour."

I have to conclude from those letters that Mr. Hussey was wrongly informed by whoever drafted his letter for him, but this underlines the BBC's blindness to anything but its judgment on these matters.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree that this saga goes way back—back even to the late 1960s? Does he agree also that the basis on which the letter was written probably has a great deal to do with the principles that were enunciated by Mr. Richard Francis, who had responsibility for current affairs before he left the BBC recently? Does my hon. Friend agree that the essential point that lies at the root of what my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has done, and what is right, is that we must ensure that the basis on which these matters are dealt with now is not the same as the basis on which the BBC has been running these things for the past 20 years?

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: I agree with my hon. Friend.

I wrote also to Lord Thomson of Monifieth, chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, about the programme "Death on the Rock" which inspired so much controversy about the killings in Gibraltar. I asked him why the programme had been broadcast before the inquest. In his reply on 25 May 1988, he wrote:

"The issues as we see them relate to free speech and free enquiry which underpin individual liberty and the rule of law in a democracy. The right of broadcasters and the press to examine events of major public concern is well established and should be preserved."

He continued:

"The Thames programme uncovered new evidence and potential witnesses who might otherwise have been unavailable to the inquest. This must surely be a contribution to the cause of justice and the rule of law."

We now know that "Death on the Rock", which cast doubt on the activities of the security forces and the SAS, raised questions about whether there was a "shoot to kill" policy and generally inflamed passions, was shot full of inaccuracies, so much so that the IBA has set up an inquiry into how the programme was made and how those statements were put out.

I am glad that an inquiry has been set up. The letters from Mr. Hussey, the controller of the BBC in Northern Ireland and Lord Thomson highlight the blunders which the BBC and IBA have made just this year. After all the violence in Northern Ireland, which has lasted for 20 years, it is time that they considered the way in which they cover events in the Province, whether they are informing the democracy about the true problems of Northern Ireland and the causes of dissension between its people, or whether, as has been suggested, they focus too much on the acts of violence, which catch the headlines, but deep down have not tried hard to persuade or to educate our population about the difficulties through which Ulster has gone.

One reason for that, I suggest, is that their concentration on every incident of violence seems to exclude anything else. But there is one other factor. Until my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary gave directions to the BBC and the IBA, and despite the small support enjoyed by Sinn Fein, with probably even less enjoyed by the IRA, people such as the hon. Member for Belfast, West were given the same coverage as those who represent law-abiding parliamentary parties in Northern Ireland. That was a monstrous over-representation, and I welcome these directions, which should redress the imbalance.

8.5 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Like the hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson), I speak on this subject not only as a Member of Parliament but as a journalist for a number of years. One aspect about which the House should be deeply concerned is how journalists are to be able to conduct their business, not only in Northern Ireland but in the rest of the United Kingdom, under the kind of edict which the Home Secretary issued a week or two ago.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) put the case in classic terms. Of course that is the right way for Opposition Members and other hon. Members to protect this country's liberties. My right hon. Friend's case was conclusive and those who examine it in the future will see how conclusive it was. The House should have been persuaded by it.

I will give some credit to the Home Secretary. Perhaps, some months ago, he would have been persuaded by my right hon. Friend's case. We all know the pressures which the Home Secretary must endure, both in the House and at Conservative party conferences. In some respects he stands up to them, and in others he does not. This question has come persistently from his right hon. Friends: why did he leave this decision for so long? I should like to pay the Home Secretary, and perhaps the Home Office, the compliment of thinking that they left this decision for so long because they knew that it was impossible to introduce such an edict without infringing the liberties of broadcasters and journalists.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): The right hon. Gentleman has asserted that it will be difficult, if not impossible, for journalists to ply their trade. If that is so, how do Radio Telefis Eireann, *The Irish Times* and *The Cork Examiner* carry out their functions under a more restrictive edict?

Mr. Foot: It is wonderful to see the whole Conservative party, without exception, Front and Back Benchers, taking shelter behind the laws of the Government of the Republic. I shall come to the hon. Gentleman's point. That is a diversion. It is extraordinary for anyone who has been a Member as long as I have to hear the whole Conservative party saying, "Please, we must follow the example of the Republic of Ireland. That is the way that we should approach our affairs."

I give credit to the Home Secretary. He was slow in reaching this decision, for good reasons. He wanted to be careful. He said, "I must be careful that there are no infringements." If that was the right hon. Gentleman's reason—it is the most creditable reason why he should have acted with such restraint over such a period—surely when he decided to go ahead he should have carefully considered the way in which he introduced the measure. He might even have looked at what is done in the Irish Republic. That Parliament introduced a law which changed the position. The Home Secretary's proposals are so far-reaching in interfering with the rights of free speech and free publication that he should have considered them more carefully. His advisers should have said, "This is such an important matter that we must go to the House of Commons with a change in the law."

The Home Secretary has taken a different course. In his statement a fortnight or so ago, he said that he would introduce some changes in the law to deal with IRA funds. That would be a very good measure. However, if that matter has to be dealt with by a change in the law of the land, I should have thought that these restrictions should have been dealt with in the same way. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook proved, the border territory is large, amorphous and indeterminate under the general edict from the Home Office, which we have instead of a change in the law. Until the matter is taken to the courts, nobody will know how the Home Secretary's edict is to operate.

The motion does not add anything to the power and majesty of the law and does not affect the law of the land. If hon. Members representing Northern Irish constituencies have any doubts about that, they should consult the former hon. Member for South Down. His views on such matters could not be challenged. As he said, one cannot and should not attempt to change the law by ministerial edict. If one tries, one will find that it does not work and that will happen in this case. Either the journalists will be so intimidated by the Home Secretary's edit that they will refrain from carrying out their proper responsibility to report what is happening or the matter will go to the courts and the courts will have to decide what it is permissible to report in Northern Ireland under these restrictions—which have been rushed in.

The matter will have to be settled in the courts. The Home Secretary should have considered introducing a law in which the issues were properly considered. If he had done that, he would have followed—at least in that respect—the example of the Government of the Irish Republic.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman has spoken for about 10 minutes and in every sentence he has given the impression that he believes that the notices affect reporting. They do not.

Mr. Foot: They affect the way in which events in Northern Ireland are put across to the general public. That is reporting. If that is not considered to be reporting, the Home Secretary is basing his case on the most ridiculous quibble that I have heard—even from this Government. Broadcasting is part of the reporting process and that is why the Government—or at least the Prime Minister—believe that they must interfere with the way in which it is done.

The Home Secretary should have given the House the chance to examine the proposal in detail. We should, of course, have opposed it, because it restricts freedom. However, at least the borders would have been defined in a way that the courts could interpret.

Mr. Hurd *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Foot: It is no good the Home Secretary shaking his head. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook has explained, there is already complete confusion in the BBC and IBA, as well as elsewhere, about what can and cannot be reported. If they ask how to resolve the confusion, the absurd answer is that they must apply to the Government.

Mr. Cash: The right hon. Gentleman has referred to his desire to see a change in the law. He surely accepts that, within the terms of the BBC's charter and the Broadcasting Act 1981 under which the directions are given, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is acting within the law. There is no question about that. I do not understand what the right hon. Gentleman is talking about.

Mr. Foot: If the hon. Member is unable to understand already, no surgical operation on my part will assist in making him understand in future.

Speeches from Labour and Conservative Members—and the reticence of the Home Secretary—have underlined the fact that they understand that the directions are a major departure from previous practice, whatever right to introduce them the Home Secretary may have. To introduce such measures by edict is a shocking way to proceed.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak) *rose*——

Mr. Foot: I shall not give way.

The Home Secretary should have gone about the matter differently. I prophesy that the Government will have to introduce a law that deals with the matter because of the appalling confusion that has been created. Proper reporting of events in Northern Ireland has been gravely injured by what the Government have done. As the confusion continues in the coming months, the Home Secretary will have to consider carefully why it has arisen.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foot: No. I have already given way twice.

The Home Secretary should have realised that the proper way of dealing with the problem was through the House. The Home Secretary should have used the House of Commons to deal with this major change in the way in which events in this country can be reported. Other speeches, in particular that of the hon. Member for Newbury, show how dangerous the Home Secretary's action is.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman promised that he would answer the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). That was about 10 minutes ago. We are still waiting. Can you do anything to help us, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I call Mr. Michael Foot.

Mr. Foot: It is strange that hon. Members who do not understand free speech in the House should pretend to understand it elsewhere.

The Government have introduced grave confusion into the way in which matters are reported. Far from making a contribution to solving the problem, the Home Secretary has created confusion. Those who believe in the right to free speech and in the power of free debate to solve problems will consider the measure an insult to the people of the United Kingdom, as well as the people of Northern Ireland, because it means that they cannot judge for themselves about the programmes that they see. If argument continues and the possibility of putting a case remains, we have the strongest benefit and safeguard for the country.

The Home Secretary is a little more reticent than some of his colleagues in these affairs. The right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), among others, sought to intimidate broadcasters by one means or another. It is to the credit of the BBC and others that they generally stood up to that intimidation, and I hope that they will stand up to this measure too.

We all know how deep and difficult the problems of Northern Ireland are. The solution to those problems will come only as a reward for the process of debate and not as a reward for enforced diktats from the Home Office, which may not believe in its own edicts.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A number of hon. Members wish to speak on the matter and some will be disappointed if we do not have short speeches. I appeal to hon. Members for brief speeches.

8.18 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): I have listened carefully to the arguments weighed by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in his opening address to the House. It was extraordinary that his compelling arguments for issuing the directives to the IBA and to the governors of the BBC were not weighed against the importance of free speech to our society. We in the House must hold dear our ability to express freely our views about matters that concern every one of our citizens. Without that ability, we do not have democracy. Bentham uttered the adage that, without publicity, no good can endure, and, with publicity, no evil can survive. Publicity is an essential ingredient in our ability to judge these important matters.

The Government's measure is inconsistent even with the arguments that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary advanced. Sinn Fein is a lawful and legitimate party, no matter what one may think of it. How can we restrict the access to free speech that a lawful and legitimate party has in the United Kingdom? I could understand it if the Government were saying that Sinn Fein was an unlawful, prohibited terrorist organisation, but they do not say that. They continue to allow Sinn Fein to present its views to the electorate during elections. They go so far as to say that, in the narrow window of the electoral process, supporters of Sinn Fein may be interviewed. If they speak in the House, their remarks may be reported direct on the air waves. If we regard this place as a crucible for the ideas of a free, open, confident democracy, how can we designate the remarks of a lawful political party and say that a spokesman for that party may not broadcast directly? That is my right hon. Friend's instruction to the directors of the BBC and the IBA. There is an enormous flaw in the argument.

Let us weigh the importance of free speech in a democracy. If evil cannot endure where there is publicity, the instruction will not be denying freedom to Sinn Fein as much as it denies freedom to our fellow citizens on the mainland of Britain. Surely in a democracy the presentation of arguments is the very first basis on which we judge the integrity or intentions of those who spout their beliefs.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary knows that I am a fervent Unionist. I believe passionately in the Union. I greatly regret the fact that many of the actions of the Government whom I support have contributed to undermining the integrity of that Union. I say that positively for one reason. I appeal to my right hon. and hon. Friends and to the Opposition that we do not put up political candidates to enjoin fellow members of the United Kingdom into the political comity that we all enjoy when arguing for the interests of our electorate. Education, welfare, health and infrastructure are all essential ingredients of the political dialogue for those who live in England or Scotland. In Northern Ireland, the one issue is the continuance of the Union. Confidence should enable us to assert that we can stand and make our case.

In weighing great issues, free speech is vital to us. I agreed with the observation of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) about the assertion by my hon. Friend the Minister of State on Sunday that the reference point should be the Home Office. That smacks of all the Ministers of the Interior of other societies and other generations which have felt that the advice of such Ministers on such matters was essential for the management of their community. We are a confident and strong democracy and we can face and outface evil with argument. We can win that way; not with measures such as this.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You gave the impression that the debate was time barred. As I understand it, the voice of the House must be heard until any hour. You gave the impression that any hon. Member who spoke for more than two minutes would be out of order. Is that the rule of the House, or is it your interpretation?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that the hon. Gentleman is putting an interpretation on my remarks. I do not think that hon. Members should have to stay here until the small hours of the morning to deliver speeches that they have been nursing all evening. I think that it would be for the convenience of the House and the appreciation of other hon. Members if speeches could be made at a reasonable hour.

8.24 pm

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): Whatever the rules of order may say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall endeavour to respond to your injunction.

The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) merits the admiration of the House because he has gone to the heart of the matter. I hope that he will forgive me if I defer taking up his argument until a little later in my speech.

I fear that the Government have once again made themselves ridiculous. I find no pleasure in recording that fact, partly because I respect the Home Secretary and I suspect that he may be defending a measure which is not his own proposal. Secondly, I do not believe that any hon. Member would like to see the paramilitaries succeed in their objectives or to hear of anything that would encourage support for them. Yet that is the effect of what the Government are doing. They have allowed themselves to be manoeuvred into what the paramilitaries and their supporters can represent as repression. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, the directive is bound to be reported in America and wherever the paramilitaries go for financial and other support, and the terrorists will be portrayed as freedom fighters resisting censorship and repression. The Government have left themselves with the worst of all worlds. They have incurred the opprobrium for which the paramilitaries have been hoping and praying and they have done so without achieving anything practical.

I am still not quite clear what the Home Secretary was trying to say. At first, he seemed to be saying that we needed to do something and that we were now doing something effective. Then he seemed to say that we did not have to worry because the measure would make no difference anyway. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook said, we have all witnessed the absurdity of an interview being carried up to the point at which it cannot lawfully be continued, and then a shot of the interviewee is accompanied by the announcer saying "This is what he or she is saying."

Mr. Barry Porter: Is not the problem that the Government have at last realised that it is proper to use a basically illiberal method to fight someone who is trying to destroy liberal democracy? Because they do not like to use that illiberal method they try to liberalise it. In doing so, I fear they have got the worst of both worlds.

Mr. Archer: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman and I start from the same point, but I am sure that we have reached the same conclusion: that the Government have been ineffectual in what they are trying to do, so all the fuss is pointless.

I am not even sure that the Government have not failed to find the correct form of words to achieve what they seek to achieve. They have placed an embargo on the supporters of Sinn Fein. Suppose that someone says, "I do not support Sinn Fein. I totally disagree with Sinn Fein because it is too moderate and compassionate." That would not come within the terms of the embargo.

The measure is a classic example of an unimaginative and leaden-footed Government being manoeuvred into looking silly. It is what I call the Austerlitz strategy. At Austerlitz, Napoleon was confronted with superior numbers. He asked himself, "What would I most like my opponents to do if they were totally to take leave of their senses?" Having answered that question, he set about getting the enemy to do it. That is what the paramilitaries have achieved. I do not propose to delay the House further with that theme.

I intervene to restate the simple case for toleration. That thesis is not that anyone is entitled to put a point of view, but that the public are entitled to hear any point of view which anyone seeks to propound and to hear it from its own advocates. The public are entitled to hear a view from those who advocate it and make up their own minds on the validity of that view.

Mr. Marlow: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has just said that he feels that anybody is entitled to propagate his point of view and that the public are entitled to hear it. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman believe that if somebody wants to propagate racial hatred, racial disharmony or racialism, he should be entitled to propagate that view? Does he feel that it is right to propagate the point of view of terrorism, murder, mayhem, mutilation and killing?

Mr. Archer: As the hon. Gentleman asks, I shall make my position clear. I have always thought that people are entitled to express views like that. If they do so in such a way as to undo the work of patient reconciliation in a community, that is a different matter. But I would not stop even the hon. Gentleman propounding his views. I want the public to judge their validity. I am not afraid of them; I would like them to be exposed to the light of day.

Of course, for security reasons, or for some of the other reasons given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook, the Government may have to prevent some information from being broadcast. That is not in question today. No one has suggested that security is a consideration in this embargo. The only justification that could be advanced is that the public may hear opinions which are unacceptable to the Government, to the public and to this House, and that those opinions are distasteful, wicked and offensive. I can well understand that. But that is the very test of a tolerant society. The test of tolerance does not come when we contemplate opinions that we share or when we hear points of view with which we agree. George Bernard Shaw pointed out that tolerance and freedom have no meaning except in relation to opinions that we consider damnable, pernicious and disgusting. We do not tolerate the opinions of our friends and of those who agree with us. Toleration arises only when we hear an opinion that we consider so wicked that we are tempted to say that the public should not be permitted to hear it. If we do not tolerate opinions such as that, the paramilitaries have achieved their objective of destroying free society.

I can understand Conservative Members saying that there must be a line somewhere—that some opinions are too deplorable to tolerate. That was the argument used by the Spanish Inquisition, by the Gestapo and by the KGB; it has been the argument used by repressors and torturers throughout the ages. It is based on a fundamental fallacy. Surely the more obviously wrong an opinion is, the more certainly truth will triumph in open debate.

I am aware of the distinctions which the Home Secretary mentioned between what is going on in South Africa and what is happening here. There is nothing to be gained from overstating the case. But I am sure that people in South Africa will say that they will not be lectured by the British, because we are doing the same as they are. It

would be a great tragedy if, in the international community, the voices of British people speaking out for human rights met that reaction.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I wonder what General Jaruzelski will say to the Prime Minister in Poland if the same point is raised with her.

Mr. Archer: Indeed. We may be able to draw distinctions between our country and others and say that they have not got it right, but this will mute the voice of those of us who are trying to speak out for human rights abroad.

This country has a long tradition of toleration for all opinions, right and wrong, good and wicked, because we believe that opinions should compete in a free market and that in the testing environment of daylight truth will flourish and falsehood will be exposed for what it is. That tradition takes longer to build than to destroy—but no gun can destroy it, no terrorist can destroy it: only the Government can destroy it. That is what this debate is about.

8.33 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I readily confess that I am worried about this motion and about the notice that the Home Secretary has issued to the chairmen of the BBC and IBA, so I welcome this opportunity to debate the subject again and to reconsider some of the points raised on 19 October.

At that time, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) declared the Labour party's unequivocal opposition to terrorism. I am prepared to accept that as a sincere statement on behalf of Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. I noted, however, that on the same day as his declaration the Labour-controlled council in Haringey lent its buildings to an exhibition of photography extolling the virtues of the IRA. So Opposition Members must know that, although I am prepared to accept their assurances, it seems that some of their camp followers do not put that declaration into practice.

The case for the action by the Secretary of State is stronger than has been acknowledged by Opposition Members. It is absolutely right in a free and democratic society that the Home Secretary should have at his disposal the powers that are given to him by clause 13(4) of the licence and agreement of the BBC and section 29(3) of the Broadcasting Act 1981. After all, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) used those powers when he was Paymaster General. It is right that they should exist.

One can argue that this action has shown the high priority that the Government give to combating terrorism, and that such a demonstration is right. We can go further and illustrate the weakness of Opposition Members' arguments by examining the Irish experience with section 31 of their Broadcasting Act. If, as I believe they do, the Government of the Irish Republic find that their section 31 is an effective way of minimising the growth of extremism, it is legitimate for us to examine their experience to see what we can learn from it on an experimental basis.

Mr. Mallon: This is the second time that the same point has been made in the debate. For 51 weeks of the year I am told in this Chamber that the Republic of Ireland is a haven for terrorism, that it is full of bombs and that it is the place from which the IRA operates, so I find it hard to understand why, for the convenience of this debate, the Irish Government's section 31 has helped cause all these problems to evaporate. Conservative Members cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Hunter: That is not an intervention: it is a speech. It is entirely irrelevant to the point that I am making. A serious attempt has been made in the Republic of Ireland with section 31, and it is worth seeing whether we can learn from it.

Another point that supports the Home Secretary's actions is the reaction from the people against whom the measure is directed. It is clear that they do not like it. From that we may reasonably argue that the measure will be effective and will disrupt those opponents' activities.

Again, we often use the line about terrorism thriving on publicity, calling it the lifeblood or oxygen of terrorism. This provision will limit the access of the opponents of democracy and freedom to the media, and it is worth giving it a try.

On the other hand, Opposition Members may now discover that our attitudes have something in common. I am profoundly worried by two aspects of this policy.

Ultimately, terrorism can be defeated only by the people's rejection of it. It must be seen to be an option that is not worth following. For that to happen, we want to incorporate the potential supporters of terrorist causes into the democratic process. We want to bring them into the full play and process of the democratic system. This measure nips all that in the bud. This is very worrying.

The second thing that worries me is the maxim that publicity is the lifeblood of terrorism. In some circumstances it is, but in others it is not. It is demonstrably provable that television coverage of acts of terrorism encourages other acts of terrorism. Pictures of the hijacking of an airliner or of stone-throwing by rioters in the streets encourage comparable actions. However, I do not think that the intellectual political argument or interview encourages terrorism.

My hon. Friend and near neighbour the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) complained on 19 October, when this matter was discussed, that a television company had suggested giving Gerry Adams two hours of viewing time. That would be incredibly boring, but I can think of nothing better than Gerry Adams being on television and those who try to defend violence being thus exposed. As I say, I fear that we may not be following the right course.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): In view of the hon. Gentleman's argument, I assume that he will join us in the Lobby. His only argument against this action is his worry about section 31 in the Republic of Ireland. If he talks to media people in the Republic, he will discover that they find the provision difficult to operate and that they have serious doubts about its viability.

Mr. Hunter: That is one point of view, but there is evidence to suggest that it is not the exclusive point of view. However, I note what the hon. Lady has said.

There is another dimension to my anxiety about the debate. Too often, in the aftermath of a horrific terrorist outrage, we express our genuine concern and talk about developing a strategy to deal with terrorism. However, the Government, who I greatly support in other respects, are

[Mr. Hunter]

open to the charge that if they had devoted as much energy to fighting terrorism as they did to defeating Galtieri and Scargill, we would not now be in this position.

At a speech to the police college at Bramshill in 1985 the Home Secretary said that "terrorism knows no frontiers". He spoke about the international dimension of terrorism. He said that if it is to be dealt with effectively there must be a greater degree of international co-operation. He would have us believe that the appearance of Gerry Adams on our television screens is against national interests. If he believes that terrorism knows no frontiers, is it not just as much against national interests that African National Congress executive member Ronnie Kasrils walks the streets of London recruiting terrorists, at least one of whom has come from the ranks of extreme Irish republicans? In his flat in Tufnell Park, Timothy Jenkins is using the expertise that he has obtained from the IRA partially to assemble bombs which are then sent to Lusaka and on to South Africa to maim and kill innocent people. From her flat in Golders Green, Ronnie Kasrils's wife Eleanor orchestrates terrorist activity in South Africa. If terrorism knows no frontiers, surely we must address ourselves to London being used in that way.

8.43 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I agree more with what the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) said in the earlier part of his speech than with what he said at the end of it. If he has evidence to support what he said, no doubt he will forward it to the proper quarters.

When he announced the measures that we are considering, the Home Secretary had the grace to say that they were extremely serious matters. It has taken 19 years of the Northern Ireland troubles to bring about this curtailment of freedom of expression. Some people have argued that it should have happened before, but other Home Secretaries and other Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland have not thought it appropriate.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right guaranteed by the European convention on human rights, and the House guards it with special vigilance. When it is abridged, Parliament wants to know the reasons why. Of course, it is not an absolute right and may be qualified by circumstances—including, for example, a perceived threat to national security which would entitle a Government to curtail it. The European convention acknowledges those circumstances. I do not quarrel with or question the Home Secretary's decision on legal grounds. I and my colleagues look for more compelling political justification than the Home Secretary has deployed in this debate or when he announced these measures.

Like others who have had experience of Northern Ireland, the Home Secretary will no doubt suffer from a sense of frustration that there is so little progress there towards normality. Like others before him, he no doubt feels the need not only constantly to review policy but from time to time to announce a new initiative. Unfortunately, these initiatives too often merely exacerbate the tensions and violence and fail to restore security and constitutional normality.

In announcing this new initiative, the Home Secretary rested his case for banning television appearances by terrorists and their supporters on two propositions. As the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has said, both those propositions need careful consideration. First, the Home Secretary claims that such appearances draw support for the terrorists from the public at large since the terrorists can address the public more directly through television than they can through the newspapers. Secondly, he says that these appearances cause grave offence, most grave in Northern Ireland.

There seems to be a certain inconsistency between the Home Secretary's two arguments. He is right to recognise that such broadcasts on television cause grave offence. It takes a strong stomach to observe people in human guise advancing their vile sophistries to justify their evil inhumanity. If the Home Secretary's gorge rises at the sight of a terrorist on television, I do not see why he should assume that the British public react any differently. If the people of Northern Ireland are even more angered by these appearances, terrorists will draw little sustenance from their direct access to the public. There is no evidence that 19 years of exposure on television has added a featherweight of support to the terrorist cause.

It should be remembered that, in the politics of Northern Ireland, myth is a very potent force. Myth is most powerfully debunked by seeing and hearing the evil banalities of the supporters of terrorism. The Home Secretary's judgment underrates the perceptiveness of the viewers and their ability to spot a moral cretin when they see one. Television powerfully exposes the character and motives of those upon whom it focuses.

The broadcasting authorities have had a difficult task in deciding, sometimes on the spur of the moment, what to transmit. On the whole, they have discharged their task with caution and responsibility. In this context, I agree with the hon. Member for Basingstoke: if Mr. Gerry Adams were to be subjected to even half an hour of questioning by, say, Mr. Brian Walden or Sir Robin Day, I doubt whether he would have many admirers left. These terrorists are not supermen. They are like rats in the sewers, out of the daylight, which would only expose their vulnerability.

The Home Secretary is right to say that self-justifying appearances give widespread offence, but he is wrong if he believes that such appearances succeed in their objectives. I doubt whether the Home Secretary really believes that, by turning off the sound when the terrorists speak, he will diminish the frightfulness of what is happening in Northern Ireland. However, sometimes it seems that it is Government policy to emphasise the ordinariness of Northern Ireland, in the hope that the image will become the reality. That will not do. The troubles in Northern Ireland are not nice. For 20 years, our fellow citizens there have borne the brunt of these horrors. Their relatives have had their joints smashed, their skins burnt and their brains blown out. These deeds are offensive and their perpetrators are offensive, but the British public are neither so squeamish nor so inured to these horrors that they require censorship to protect them from the sight and sound of terrorism.

One of the stranger assertions that the Home Secretary made, in the debate tonight and when he made his announcement, was that by issuing his direction to broadcasters he had simplified their job and that by the terms of the direction he had removed broadcasters' discretion to judge whether to transmit. The reality is that his hurriedly announced measure has given rise to a series

of subsequent attempts by the Home Office to give authoritive interpretation to the terms of his direction. It remains unclear what the legal validity of the clarifications is. I would submit that there is none. However, it is clear beyond doubt that the clarifications have not removed the doubts and difficulties of the broadcasters.

The question whether an individual represents a terrorist organisation and whether his words support such an organisation are not easily decided. Apparently, it is the conjunction of the words and image of the person that is banned. We can see the terrorist, his words can be repeated by someone else—either a reporter or an actor—unless the terrorist is standing for Parliament. The anomalies of the direction and its subsequent interpretation are legion. We shall be able to hear speeches from Sinn Fein candidates during an election, but not, apparently, their comments upon its result. It may be that their very presence will lead to the censoring of all live post-election comment.

One of the most sinister consequences of the direction has been the Home Office statement that there is no exemption from the terms of the notice for historical documentaries or for recordings of persons who are now dead. Thus, for example, an excellent historical programme commissioned by Mr. Jeremy Isaacs for Channel 4, which I understand it was intended to show again, would require excision of all appearances by the late Eamon de Valera, who for television purposes in Britain will become a non-person.

The international consequences of this ill-thought-out direction are beginning to emerge only now. How will the Home Secretary respond to representations from foreign Governments calling on Her Majesty's Government to prevent the World Service and other media from transmitting words by those whom those Governments deem to be terrorists? The moral position of the Government has been eroded by this action. Perhaps the Home Secretary will tell us how he proposes to prevent members of Sinn Fein from broadcasting direct to this country by satellite. Indeed, the effectiveness of this measure is bound to be called into question as technology develops.

This country has not lost the freedoms that the House cherishes by subversion, revolution or war. If we lose our freedoms, it will be by carelessness. In the Government's dealings with the broadcasting authorities, what looks like a pattern of carelessness is emerging. The Home Secretary should withdraw his direction, not to clarify its obscurities but because it is an unnecessary and repugnant curb on our freedom.

8.54 pm

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): While I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me to take part in the debate, I freely confess it is a debate to which I would rather not be contributing. I say that not because I think that the standard of the debate has been low. On the contrary, the debate has stirred up differences and given rise to strong feelings on both sides of the House. Together with my hon. Friends the Members for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) and for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter), I feel like one of those barnacled whales in a hole in the ice, with the ice closing in and with my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench not about to bring in an ice breaker to get me free.

When this proposal was first announced, and Conservative Members received little warning, my natural reaction was that it was a misguided measure which was the result of a desperate need to be seen to be doing something rather than a proposal that had been through the Whitehall machinery to have every "i" dotted and every "t" crossed. When I glance through the press cuttings of the follow-ups to the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, and learn of the growing number of muddles and disputes that have grown from the original statement, I can only say to myself that I was right to be sceptical in the first place.

Right hon. and hon. Members on both the Government and Opposition Front Benches have a tendency to exaggerate. I do not think that this measure is either as good as my right hon. and hon. Friends have said, or as bad in its damage to the individual liberties of our citizens as right hon. and hon. Gentlemen opposite suggest. My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) seemed to see it as part of the vendetta against the BBC—the Government's vengeance for being let down by the BBC. Clearly, it is nothing of the sort if one examines it in detail.

I am also aware that this is a popular measure, and that if I walked down the Broadway in Bexleyheath tonight 80 per cent. of my constituents would tell me that it is a marvellous idea, being tough on terrorists. However, hon. Members, particularly Conservative Members, have a duty to probe, to question, almost to have a committee debate to peer behind the curtain to examine what the Government have brought before the House of Commons this evening.

Yes, it is good in parts. I came into the House in 1974 and that year David O'Connell, the so-called chief of staff of the IRA, appeared on BBC television. I remember writing angry letters to the chairman of the BBC because I think that it is wrong for members of the IRA to appear on television. I would also think it wrong if a bank robber appeared on television or if a rapist appeared on television after a particularly sordid rape. There must be some discretion. A line should be drawn.

I welcome the measure because it is even-handed, and it would be deplorable if that were not so. I am a strong supporter of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, so there is a superficial attraction in Britain coming into line with the Irish Republic. But when I probed that further, I got the impression that the Irish Republic did not ask for that particular proposal. The phrase in the papers was that they did not actually object to what had emerged from the Home Office.

The comparisons between North and South are a little false. I am told that Sinn Fein represents about 1·9 per cent. of the total vote in the South, while in the North it represents some 30 per cent. of the nationalist vote. An editorial in *The Times* on 20 October, talking about southern Ireland, stated:

> "There are frequent and well-publicised rows about borderline cases. It remains unpopular with journalists. It probably contributed to the fall of the Fine Gael-Labour coalition which amended the Act in 1976."

I suggest that by any stretch of the imagination it has not been plain sailing in the South. Frankly, with due respect to Dublin, it is not a world centre of communications, as we have the privilege of being here in London.

I am only too well aware that broadcasting the views of Sinn Fein spokesmen gives enormous offence to my

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constituents. For the relations of those who have been killed or injured in Northern Ireland, of course there is a feeling of outrage. But we must ask ourselves this evening whether it is our duty as Members of Parliament to shield our constituents from that sense of outrage.

I bet that in the United States people were outraged by the broadcasts about Vietnam. They would rather have not seen what was happening in Vietnam. But who in the House could say how wrong it was that the citizens of the United States were outraged by what they saw in Vietnam? People had to face the facts, and certain political consequences flowed from that.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): My hon. Friend suggests that the measure which my right hon. Friend has brought to the House will restrict the reporting of events. There is no comparison between the measure brought forward by my right hon. Friend and the remarks that my hon. Friend is making about the Vietnam war.

Mr. Townsend: I was saying simply that the impact of the film coverage from Vietnam played a major part in the public discussion about the future of that war. If one considers Sinn Fein—and I totally deplore all that it stands for—one has to recognise that it is a force in the North. It has 59 locally elected councillors, it has a Member of Parliament and it has support from the public in Northern Ireland that we all wish it did not have. That is the reality. Had the Government of the day brought forward such a measure before Sinn Fein had gained that stronghold in Northern Ireland in electoral terms, it is possible that the position would be very different, but to attempt to ban the broadcasting of Sinn Fein now, when it is running a local council in Northern Ireland, seems extraordinarily confused and misguided.

I put it to my hon. Friends who totally disagree with what I am saying that, unlike the IRA, members of Sinn Fein have names and faces. They are prepared to stand up in public places and argue their cause, just like every hon. Member. They are not crouching in the studio in the dark with blankets over their heads. They are standing for election in our country. Therefore, I draw a distinction between a member of a political organisation which I totally deplore and a terrorist organisation such as the IRA, while of course understanding the links that exist between the two.

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): Does the hon. Gentleman not accept that members of Sinn Fein are subject to the IRA and that Sinn Fein is an extension of the IRA? In the words of a former hon. Member representing West Belfast, they are daylight politicians. Does he not accept that Sinn Fein is an extension of a terrorist movement and as a consequence its members should be treated as terrorists?

Mr. Townsend: The hon. Gentleman got up before I had sat down. I said that there were very clear links between the two, and I fully understand what he says.

If the Government were looking for firmer ground to stand on, of course the proscription of the organisation was a possibility. I have to say that if I was consulted as to whether that was a good idea, I think I would say that it was not. I know that this is very unpalatable to some of my hon. Friends, but in certain circumstances Sinn Fein can act as a safety valve and provides an option which is marginally different from direct support of terrorism; those who have far greater experience of Northern Ireland tell me that is so.

I raised with the Home Secretary the question of elections. I find the Government's position naive in the extreme. I was adopted as the Conservative candidate for Bexleyheath a good year before the election. It is common for a parliamentary candidate to be adopted several years before an election. That candidate or Member of Parliament works flat out to gain publicity, to get on local radio or television and improve his position in his constituency. For the Government to say solemnly that there is only the official three-week election period flies in the face of the evidence that is well known on both sides of the House.

Whatever the Government may gain in Belfast—I am uncertain about that gain—they will lose in Boston. They must face that fact. Like many other hon. Members, I talk to American students from time to time and the question of the IRA comes up. I say, "Look, members of the IRA have no grounds for taking the path of terrorism. They live in a democracy, they take part in elections and Sinn Fein is treated the same as any other political party." I cannot say that now.

I know that some of my hon. Friends think that it is marvellous that we are discriminating in that way. However, I hope that they will recognise that we are cold-bloodedly discriminating against a political party in part of our kingdom. What is to stop another Government being outraged by a speech from a spokesman for the National Front or some of my hon. Friends being outraged by some Left-wing organisation demanding the sacking of the monarchy, the removal of all the judges and the dismissal of all the admirals, generals or air marshals and feeling that the moment had come to ban that extreme group from taking part in a broadcast?

The Government had to draw a line if they were to bring forward a measure of this nature. They have drawn a wobbly line between broadcasters and journalists. In the real world, a broadcaster is frequently a journalist. I am open to correction if I am wrong but, as I understand it, a member of Sinn Fein can write an article in *The Daily Telegraph* in London tomorrow, he can have a letter in the column of *The Times* and can be interviewed in *The Independent;* yet he will not be able to be cross-examined on his local radio station in Ulster about what has been written and no one will be able to ask him about his views or what he is trying to achieve. I cannot go back to Bexleyheath tonight and say that that is a sensible proposal, the sort of proposal I expect from a Conservative Government.

There has already been reference to the precedent that we have created. Some of my hon. Friends may not mind the fact that we are being quoted in South Africa as the way forward. Suppose that, in six months, there is a particularly nasty episode in Transylvania, where the Romanian authorities are bulldozing villages of a thousand years' standing and, when the world's press tries to find out what is happening, the Romanian authorities quote what the Conservative Government have been doing in Northern Ireland. What happens then? What happens if there is further trouble in Latvia, Estonia or Lithuania, and once again we are told, "We are following the example of the United Kingdom"?

The way to proceed is to bring public pressure to bear on the broadcasting authorities. I do not think it is true that the BBC or the IBA instantly opens the studio door to any member of Sinn Fein who comes along. On the contrary, they understand that Sinn Fein is in favour of violence and they try to exercise their discretion. We are all entitled to say that they get it wrong, but the man in Whitehall also gets it wrong from time to time. The way to proceed is to try to influence the authorities—the Government appoint half the officials who control the authorities—rather than in this way.

I have reached the conclusion that this is a measure of censorship. It is an illiberal act from a Home Secretary who, when Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, completely opposed it. I have been an hon. Member since 1974 and when the topic of banning Sinn Fein from television has arisen, as it has regularly, I have been told by Ministers of both parties that it would not work and was not practical. I fear that the Government, in their haste, have come forward with a measure that will damage the Conservative party and our country. Therefore, I shall not be supporting them tonight.

9.10 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): In this part of the 20th century it is inevitable that any discussion about press censorship will contain many tensions. Circumstances have changed with the development of the electronic media, and tension is an inevitable part of life. That tension should, and must, be creative. It must be to the advantage of those in the media, and to the advantage of those of us who are involved in making laws and politics. For that reason, this is an important debate. That creative tension is not releasing itself into decisions, but paranoias are developing, which is dangerous, not only for these directions, but for the relationship between the Government, the people and the media that serve them.

This measure would not have been introduced but for the notion within the Government that somehow they must be protected from freedom of speech. We have seen that notion with Zircon, "Spycatcher" and on a number of other occasions, but we are now seeing it under a more self-righteous guise—a guise that is creating an umbrella that it does not merit. In many ways, the Government are unfairly taking this opportunity to do a Wapping on the press.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that in southern Ireland there are equivalent provisions under section 1 of the Broadcasting Authority Act 1960? How can he square the position that he is adopting in attacking the Government for restraining people from making speeches with saying that it is acceptable in southern Ireland?

Mr. Mallon: The hon. Gentleman makes an entirely wrong assumption. I have always opposed section 31 of the Broadcasting Authority Act, for the same reasons as I oppose this measure. I have done so publicly since it was introduced, and will continue to do so as long as it exists in the Republic of Ireland. I want it to be removed as quickly as I want this measure to be removed.

The debate is important because a free and vibrant press is essential to the life that we lead. It is essential in a peaceful, stable country such as this. It is essential in a country that has not been torn apart or invaded for centuries, and the stability and peace inherent within which is the envy of other nations. How much more important is a free press to the north of Ireland, which is torn apart by strife, where a political process is not operating and where everyone is living against a background of emergency legislation, a high security operation, substantial police powers and a substantial security service involvement, as we saw during the summer in various incidents, not least during those that took place in Gibraltar?

Against that backdrop, it is essential to have the protection of a free press to ensure the rights of the individual when, in effect, the Government are taking away the rights of the individual. We must have the protection of a free press when, in effect, the Government are lowering the legal and political standards that apply to the north of Ireland. For that reason, it is doubly important for us to have a free press. The Government are taking these measures in the misguided notion that somehow or other one can take the integrity of the law and the highest practices and diminish them to defeat terrorism. The law was never created to defeat terrorism, and that will certainly not be achieved by bending the law. It will simply add to the nature of the problem.

The motion gives us some idea of how the Government view the issue. The hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) referred to the United States of America. In 1941, as it was about to enter a world war and face enormous world pressure, Franklin Roosevelt said:

> "In the future days which we seek to make secure we look forward to a world founded on four essential human freedoms. The first is freedom of speech—and expression—everywhere in the world."

The others were freedom to worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear. He made those remarks in the face of a world war.

This Government, after so many years of experience, are making the most fundamental mistake that they have made for some considerable time. I read the Secretary of State's speech when he presented the measure to the House on 19 October. I looked closely, but I did not see one reason for introducing it, except when he said:

> "Such appearances have caused widespread offence to viewers and listeners throughout the United Kingdom, particularly just after a terrorist outrage."—[*Official Report*, 19 October 1988; Vol. 138, c. 885.]

I accept that. Any human being witnessing the bottomless pit of suffering in Northern Ireland would sympathise with that and understand it. We especially understand the feelings of the bereaved when they look at a television screen and see an apologist for those who carried out the murder speaking in the most sophisticated terms. It is an admirable sentiment, and one with which I have no doubt everyone would sympathise, but it is not a basis on which to make law and from which to take political decisions. It is a mixture of three things. First, it is a gesture towards people in this country who find it aesthetically unacceptable to look at people on television whom they quite simply do not like. That is one of the luxuries of living in a stable society. The measure is a gesture to that.

Secondly, in many ways it is a sop—and a rather offensive sop—to people in the north of Ireland who have rightly complained about the killing of their constituents and the way in which the murder campaign has continued. It is almost an insulting sop to them. Thirdly, it is a

[Mr. Mallon]

smokescreen for the Government, who are trying to give the impression that they are doing something. It is, in effect, confusing activity with action.

The measure will not achieve what the Government want. Indeed, it will be dangerously counter-productive. There is only one way in which it can be judged, only one criterion on which we can base our judgment: will it affect the standing, support and political effectiveness of the IRA, Sinn Fein and other organisations? That is the only question. Will the measure help to create peace? Will it help to end the violence? I suggest that it will not.

At a time when the IRA, despite what it would call its murder publicity stunts during the summer, is at a very low political ebb, the Government have given it a straight issue that will help it to garner votes in the European and district council elections. It will help the IRA in its propaganda in the United States. The IRA will turn it into propaganda in Boston, Chicago and New York. It will turn it into dollars. It will translate it into news in Northern Ireland, because it will exploit the confused mess that the Secretary of State has created.

How will it do that? I have here a copy of yesterday's edition of a newspaper from this side of the Channel. That is what the Provisional IRA got yesterday. The Secretary of State says that certain activities will taper off. They will not, because there will be election campaigns in May and June and there will be exploitation at a rate of knots by members of the IRA.

How will they do it? We have already put our finger on one inconsistency. As I said, a district council member may speak on a socio-economic issue as a member of a district council, but he cannot speak on behalf of the organisation to which he belongs. What will he do? He will become a member of a tenants' association, and then he may speak every day of the week. He will become a member of a parent-teachers' association, and he may pontificate on education matters to his heart's content on television and radio. He can present himself as a concerned person with a social conscience who is dealing with the problems of ordinary people in the north of Ireland. Instead, he should be presented as someone who schemes to murder his fellow countrymen. The place for him to defend his murderous actions is on the screen.

The most effective piece of television journalism that I have seen for a long time occurred after the Enniskillen massacre, when the chairman of Fermanagh council was stripped and torn apart by the journalist in such a way that it has changed the face of Fermanagh district council and, perhaps, in the long term will change the political posts in that troubled area.

The measure will not be successful for the additional important reason that it provides an escape hatch for those who do not want to appear on television. Because of the immediacy of the problem in Northern Ireland, it is almost a daily demand. How nice it is to have the Government deciding that, in circumstances in which it is difficult to defend a point of view, one cannot defend it. When the phone rings I should love to say, "Sorry, the Government have decided that I cannot take part in your interview."

Sinn Fein, the IRA and other organisations now have the luxury of an escape hatch which they could not invent for themselves. During their debates about going political, the hard men of such organisations did not want it. For what reason? It was because it would break their secrecy cover. Who is giving them back their secrecy cover, taking them out of the public limelight, and giving them anonymity in the community? The Secretary of State is doing so with this measure. I regret that. The measure will not be able to do what it suggests, and it will be counter-productive.

Let us consider the other anomaly. When all those who are involved in the electoral process need the oxygen of publicity most—that is during the run-up to an election—will this measure keep them off the airwaves? Not at all. It will provide the exception. They will be able to take part in programmes during the run-up to an election, when they most need the oxygen of publicity. They will be able to sit in studios, puff their pipes and pontificate like theologians about the political process. People will not be aware of the scars and the dead bodies lying outside.

There is another electoral luxury, and we have seen it many times. They know that, in certain circumstances, they cannot win their arguments, so they opt out of appearing. Under the representation of the people legislation, every other candidate's involvement is wiped out also. They call the tune, not only when they involve themselves, but when they eliminate themselves from embarrassing situations. This measure was misjudged when it was born. It was a silly misjudgment then, and it has developed into a stupid, counter-productive piece of confusion that suits the purposes of the people at whom it is aimed.

This will not take the IRA and Sinn Fein off the stage. To put it differently, this will take them off the stage and put them into the wings, but it will also take the spotlight off the stage and put it into the wings with them. In other words, it will transfer the context in which they get their publicity.

This must be judged from different perspectives. No doubt I shall say things in relation to section 31 of the broadcasting legislation of the Irish Republic which people will not want to hear. It is incredible that for 51 weeks of the year I am told that the Republic of Ireland is a haven for terrorism, where outrages are plotted, bombs are hidden and guns are held, and then all of a sudden, because it suits the argument, I am told that section 31 has been effective. I do not believe that. It has been a smokescreen in the Republic of Ireland, just as it will be in the north. Why? Because BBC Northern Ireland, BBC London, ITV, UTV, Channel 4 and Welsh Television, which I do not get, go to the Republic and broadcast everything from the north of Ireland and here. In other words, it is a smokescreen there as I believe it will be in the north.

There is a much more fundamental point, on which the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) touched. Two per cent. of the people in the Republic of Ireland support electorally some of these organisations. These organisations are not part of the political landscape in the Republic of Ireland, but are marginal to it because they have been rejected at the polls by the people and marginalised. In the north of Ireland, 35 per cent. of the Nationalist community support Sinn Fein electorally. That is not a margin or a fringe, but a substantial part of the community. Surely the challenge is not to marginalise those people further into the hands of Sinn Fein and the IRA, but to bring them into the political process and constructive, peaceful politics such as we can and do create.

That is one fatal mistake in the argument for the restriction, and it is a crucial point. We simply cannot close our eyes to the attitude of 35 per cent. of the community. If we do, we shall embark on a process which we cannot end. We shall be on a slippery slope. Where does that slippery slope go? Perhaps we should ask where it started. It started with internment without trial, progressed through repressive legislation, the emergency provisions legislation, the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984, the Public Order Acts, the supergrass system, to the shoot-to-kill incidents. All those aberrations, all those bendings of the law and movements from the normal to the abnormal, which the PIRA and Sinn Fein want, are derogations from the highest standards. It is a duty of the House and of everybody in politics to ensure that we retain those high standards as far as possible, because once they start to slip it will take many years to bring them back.

On 19 October the Secretary of State referred to this as part of the strengthening pattern of action against terrorism. I call it part of the rake's progress that began in the 1970s, based on the cardinal error that somehow we can make the law defeat terrorism. We cannot. The law is there to administer justice, not to defeat terrorism. That is a cardinal error. The rake's progress has brought us down the slippery slope.

If one can govern a part of Britain only by suspending laws, creating emergency legislation, introducing measures such as the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts, the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984, and the Public Order Acts, by having troops, soldiers, policemen, the UDR and the SAS all over the place, as well by having, as I have in my constituency, armed Army camps for every 400 of the population, is there not a fundamental question to be asked about the British position in Northern Ireland?

Is not the fundamental question to be asked after 20 years of such events: are we on the right track? The Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein have led the Government by the nose down the road along which the Government did not decide to go, but where the Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein led them. The question that must be faced sooner or later is how far we should go down that road and when should we stop. When a Secretary of State, who is known for his liberal views, has to introduce this sort of measure, where will we go if it does not work? And it will not work, just as abandoning the right of silence, tampering with the franchise and the electoral process that we will soon have will not work, in the same way as supergrass systems and all the other things have not worked.

It is time that we considered the fundamental elements of the debate and questioned the continuing British presence in the north of Ireland. If we continue for another 20 to 30 years with what we have, it will be no use to the Nationalist party or those in the Unionist community. It cannot and will not give us peace, economic well-being, self-respect or all the things to which we are entitled. That is the fundamental problem posed by the measure.

I suggest that we have reached the point where, perhaps, this measure has crystallised some of the questions that we should not only ask, but should answer. This measure is the tip of the iceberg. It is of no help to the British people, who had to look at the people and horses blown up in Hyde park. The British people must watch while their own laws are tampered with—laws which they treasure and wish to protect. Their relationship with their nearest neighbour, Northern Ireland, has soured, not just in the past 20 years, but for far longer, and that is causing international problems for this country. The hon. Member for Bexleyheath told us of his experiences. We know what has been said to the Prime Minister by South Africa and to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Russia, and that is doing no good to this country internationally.

I suggest that it is time to ask those fundamental questions because if, after 20 years and the extent of the problem, all that the Government can think of is censorship, not only are we back to square one, but we are many miles from a solution.

9.33 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) refered to normality. He seemed to imply that the press, and especially the broadcasters, have no responsibility for that normality. I have an interest as a journalist and as a member of the television branch of the National Union of Journalists; and, as a producer and a director, I am a member of the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians. I have spent some years as a current affairs producer and as a freelance reporter. While I would not presume to suggest that I know Northern Ireland anything like as well as the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh, I have made programmes and filmed in Northern Ireland.

For most of the time that I was with the BBC, there was a clear code of practice. One simply did not give air time to terrorists or convicted criminals. There was no question about it; it just did not happen.

Sir Huw Wheldon, writing in 1967, said:

"Detailed control over subject matter is exercised on specific production by a director and a producer with both artistic and public responsibilities. This is the least form of control. In case of any doubt the matter is referred to a departmental head or programme controller."

When Sir Huw wrote that, he was speaking about drama, but he went on to say:

"This holds true of all television programmes."

There was a clear and safe system of upward referral. If one was in doubt, one asked. I spent two and a half years on a current affairs programme on which the editor was a Marxist, the deputy editor was a Liverpudlian Socialist and the two producers, of whom I was one, were Conservatives. It was our proud boast, and still is, that in those two and a half years our politics did not influence our editorial judgment. I do not recall any of us being faced with any problems over the difficult decisions relating not only to terrorism in Northern Ireland but to terrorism worldwide that we were required to take.

That system of upward referral, self-denial and editorial responsibility began to break down. Unfortunately, the guidelines from the editor-in-chief became blurred. In autumn 1985 we had the "Real Lives" programme, with the IRA activist Martin McGuinness. Alan Protheroe, who at that time was the BBC's assistant director-general, justifying what the BBC had then permitted, said:

"The public is entitled to know what and why terrorists are doing what they are doing."

The justification was extended to giving in-vision air time, which had never been done before, to people connected with crime—and that is what we are talking about.

At a BBC seminar on 2 December 1987, Ron Neil, deputy director and editor of BBC news, said:

[Mr. Roger Gale]

"It is not simply what you show that can make news coverage voyeuristic but how often you repeat what is, in itself, a valid image".

What Mr. Neil said ignores the cumulative effect that allows a listening or viewing audience to become gradually inured to violence so that it is possible for the BBC to broadcast items beginning with the words, "Last night another soldier . . . ", to which nobody pays much attention.

Ms. Short: I watched "Real Lives". We saw extremists from both sides explaining their position and why they held those beliefs. People in this country constantly say, "Why do they do it?" They deplore the violence and do not understand its origin. The programme was useful and interesting, particularly the views of the Loyalist extremist, because I had not heard that case put before. It did not attract me to it, but I want to understand why people in Northern Ireland are willing to engage in such violence. I trust that the British people have as big and intelligent a judgment as I do over those matters.

Mr. Gale: The case that I seek and will continue to seek to make is that there was a quite clear editorial understanding that one did not give in-vison air time to terrorists or criminals or to those who gave them succour. That is what this programme did, and, perhaps more important than that, it started to erode the guidelines so that nobody knew any more what was all right.

The BBC tried again in 1987. It issued production staff guidelines. The news guidelines said:

"There is increasing public awareness and concern about violence in the news and increasing sensitivity about the plight of those who suffer—whether in Britain or abroad . . . Beware of the use of action footage for its own sake . . . Does the perpetrator appear to be enjoying the violence?"

We have allowed people to be put on the screen who appeared to enjoy the violence that those whom they support have created. This appears to be a tirade against the BBC. It is not. The IBA is just as guilty.

Mr. Hattersley: This is a diatribe against both the BBC and the IBA.

Mr. Gale: The right hon. Gentleman has scarcely listened to the debate. I should be grateful if he paid a little attention to what I have to say. In the autumn edition of "Airwaves", Lord Thomson of Monifieth says:

"I don't think the amount of problem programmes has changed at all. I think that the political concern about it has changed and become more of a political issue than it was."

So that is all right: it is the fault of the politicians, not the broadcasters.

Back in 1983, after the Harrods bomb, Danny Morrison, then deputy chief of Sinn Fein, was allowed to say on TV-am that he believed that the IRA was in tune with Sinn Fein. So the rot had set in at the IBA quite a long time earlier, and it was that weakened, emasculated, feeble IBA that allowed Thames Television to transmit "Death on the Rock" before the inquest had been held. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) is no longer present. I asked earlier whether he was prepared to put his reputation on the record and say that he believed that after the inquiry it would be found that "Death on the Rock" was an honest programme.

Ms. Short: One can make honest mistakes.

Mr. Gale: Before the system was eroded by those who tore away the guidelines, the IBA television programme guidelines said:

"The IBA is required to satisfy itself that, so far as possible, 'nothing is included in the programmes which offends against good taste or decency or is likely to encourage or incite to crime or to lead to disorder or to be offensive to public feeling'. Interviews with criminals are likely to run the risk of infringing this section of the Broadcasting Act, and there needs always to be careful consideration whether or not such an interview is justified in the public interest."

Ms. Short: That has nothing to do with the debate.

Mr. Gale: Referring specifically to Northern Ireland, which certainly has something to do with the debate, the guidelines said:

"Any plans for a programme item which explores and exposes the views of people who within the British Isles use or advocate violence or other criminal measures for the achievement of political ends must be referred to the IBA before any arrangements for filming or videotaping are made. A producer should therefore not plan to interview members of proscribed organisations, for example members of the Provisional IRA or other para-military organisations, without previous discussion with his/her company's top management. The management, if they think the item may be justified, will then consult the IBA."

That consultative process has broken down completely.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): The hon. Gentleman seems to think that the order will undermine the men of violence in Northern Ireland and those who support them. Can he explain the nonsense that, under the order, a Sinn Fein councillor who unequivocally supports the armed struggle —it is in the election manifesto—can be interviewed about community matters, social security matters, housing or unemployment, but when his paramilitary mates blow up a factory he cannot be asked to explain the contradiction? The Government are giving such people exactly what they want—they can be interviewed about the nice things but not about the atrocities.

Mr. Gale: The hon. Gentleman says that such people can be interviewed about nice things, but there is nothing to say that they must be interviewed about anything at all. Until the guidelines broke down, the situation was quite clear. One did not give air time, in-vision or radio appearance, succour or help to criminals of any kind at all. There was no argument about it—one simply did not do it. It did not take a genius to work out what one did or did not do.

Mr. Marlow: Further to the intervention of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), was Dr. Goebbels wrong, or is there a value in propaganda? If there is, why should we allow it on our public screens for men of violence in the IRA?

Mr. Gale: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I shall come to the propaganda element. I have seen quite a lot of it. I have spent too many hours, perhaps too late and too long, in video editing sections looking at the carnage on the screen in front of me. I have seen more of that than most hon. Members.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): The hon. Gentleman worked in children's television.

Mr. Gale: The hon. Lady said that I worked in children's television. I knew that if I went on long enough some mug would raise that. For six months, in a career of

nearly 20 years in broadcasting in one form or another, I was proud and privileged to direct "Blue Peter." I also had a hand in "John Craven's News Round," which is made in close collaboration with the BBC Television newsroom. If the same care and attention were given to the general programming on the BBC and ITV that is given to children's programmes, we would not be discussing many of these problems.

Ms. Abbott: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that I have nothing but respect for high quality children's television, such as "John Craven's News Round" and "Blue Peter." Could the hon. Gentleman spare us the histrionics about years spent editing footage of IRA atrocities when, in fact, his background in the media is somewhat different?

Mr. Gale: My background in the media was mainly in current affairs. I spent many hours making news and other current affairs programmes and many others reporting, and the children's television was just a part of that. I am sure that we can arrange to have some of this footage shown to the hon. Lady, if she wishes. Perhaps she would like to see the kind of carnage that is created and the kind of actions with which journalists deal day by day. I have respect for journalists.

These programmes offend the public. A MORI poll, carried out between 27 and 31 May 1988, interviewed 2,007 people in more than 150 constituencies—a fairly representative sample. The majority said that they did not wish to see terrorists on the screen in any circumstances. When pressed further, they said that they believed that screen appearances strengthened the status of terrorists.

Some hon. Members may know of Professor Paul Wilkinson, who works at Aberdeen university and who has carried out a study of terrorism which was published this year. He said:

"If you allow a terrorist a platform he can too easily present his case with lies and obfuscation."

He continued:

"I believe terrorist murderers and their apologists are the ultimate representatives of the pornography of violence."

I believe that, too, and so apparently does the new deputy director-general of the BBC. In the Fleming memorial lecture on 6 April this year, John Birt said:

"The ethical foundation of British journalism is not firm. Craft standards are slipping. Moreover, British media operate under a system of law which undervalues our legitimate role. Worse still, the institutions we report on, and particularly the state, are too secretive."

I am sure that some Opposition Members agree.

"All told, British journalism is not in a healthy condition, and is neither capable of serving nor allowed to serve society as it should. Until we in the media put our own house in order we shall not win the argument for a freer flow of information. If we do not put our house in order, more restrictions are likely, and we risk a spiral of decline . . .impartiality in broadcast journalism is a withering plant in need of some sustaining care and attention. And many broadcasters certainly need to have a keener sense of fairness towards their contributors. . .

The media, if they chose, could put their own house in order. They should work towards a greater sense of integrity, reliability and fairness, all for its own sake. We should have decent media."

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that if, over the years, the media had sought to give a balanced account of all views, including the most extreme, rather than going for sensational matter designed to attract audiences, we might not be debating this measure?

Mr. Gale: I agree with my hon. Friend. Had the very fair systems of internal editorial control not been allowed to break down by those who were supposed to have been their guardians, we should not be discussing this measure. The question would be academic. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has had to bring the proposals before the House because those who were charged with that responsibility have failed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) mentioned those who had canvassed for the televising of the proceedings of the House. I do not wish to go down that blind alley, except to say that members of the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House went to view the Canadian Parliament. This may be of interest to you, Mr. Speaker, if to nobody else. When asked what the effect had been, the Speaker of the Canadian Parliament said that it rewarded outrageousness. The media are faced with escalating violence—the kind of thing that Ron Neil was talking about—the fact that because today's story is violent, tomorrow's story must be more violent if it is to be used at all. Tomorrow's stories have to be worse than today's if they are to make air time. That has happened in the Canadian Parliament, and it has happened in Northern Ireland.

We, the journalists, have given credibility to IRA funerals. We see masked men firing volleys over coffins —giving some kind of false dignity to the murderers. That dignity is not granted in southern Ireland, which has had such controls for 10 years. Last week I took part in a debate at Trinity college, Dublin, on a completely different subject. I was privileged to have the opportunity to discuss a number of matters with some members of the community who have held, and still hold, offices far more senior than any Labour Member has held. Every person said, "We have had this law in southern Ireland for 10 years"—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where is southern Ireland?"] Hon. Members are right. They said, "We have had the law here for 10 years." To answer the point made by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh, those people said, "We cannot understand why those to whom we seek to deny publicity can go to Ulster and appear on television programmes which are then rebroadcast and received on our own screens."

To me, the only surprise is that we did not do years ago what we are doing tonight. As a Member of Parliament, journalist and television director, I believe that the Government are right to lead where the IBA and the BBC have failed to lead. I question whether national measures will ever go far enough. Perhaps we need to reach international agreements that deny air time to terrorists if we are to have any hope of preventing the continual promotion of murder, hijack and all manner of violent crime. I hope that the BBC and independent television companies will take the reins back into their hands, where they used to be, and deny to terrorists who commit crimes of murder the drug that they crave—publicity. I do not think that that is censorship; I think it is common sense.

9.54 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I feel very unlucky to have to follow that speech. So far, we have had a serious debate dealing with serious issues in a serious way. The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) has dragged down that very necessary tone. He has also blown the gaff about what Conservative Members feel about the issue. He turned it from a serious debate about a real problem—the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) conducted it in that way—into an attack on public service broadcasting in general. His experience of broadcasting, about which he told us so much, has taught him nothing about the real merits of public service broadcasting.

The hon. Member for Thanet, North was right to complain about some of the things that have been happening recently in broadcasting and the rest of the media—they are serious and worrying. No man is an island, and nor is any country. If we diminish liberty in Northern Ireland, we diminish it here. Faced with the most secretive Government among Western democracies —and they are becoming increasingly so—our media are being browbeaten.

The problem with Britain is that we have an Official Secrets Act but no freedom of information legislation. Our broadcasting is regulated to try to set standards and allow diversity of opinion; but next week measures will be brought in to deregulate it. From a secretive Government comes increasing pressure by way of an attack on the only safeguard that we have—the media.

I am sorry about this measure. Until now, we had regarded the Home Secretary as one of the few remaining liberals in the Cabinet. In this same week, the right hon. Gentleman will introduce massive deregulation to broadcasting. He will free it up eventually to commercial broadcasting—to the Maxwells, Murdochs and Stevenses who already control our mass media. At the same time, the Home Secretary is bringing in repressive measures. We shall be left with a mixture of pap and trash, and the repression of any attempt by decent broadcasters to penetrate the truth.

Some hon. Members have pointed out that the repression will not stop here, that this sort of measure begets others. That can be seen in the recent history of broadcasting. I saw "Real Lives". It was right to make the programme, which dealt with both sides of the divide in Northern Ireland. It dealt fairly and squarely with the green and the orange, and showed that people who were prepared to pick up guns had a motivation for doing so. It was important for us to know what that motivation was. This is not just a problem of a ruthless, callous or murderous instinct. The problem that has emerged can be traced to motivations and origins that we must understand, because we are responsible for their solution.

What happened next? In order to stop "Real Lives", the Home Secretary had to bring pressure to bear and to write to the governors. The broadcasters resisted the repression and oppression and forced the Government to interfere openly and publicly. That was followed by a year in which the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) launched a series of attacks on the BBC and on public broadcasting. At the end of all that, when the next issue arose the BBC intervened itself. The Government's war of attrition against broadcasting forced it to impose self-censorship at a lower level. Even that does not stop the repressors intervening; they merely intervene at a lower threshold.

This is what happened with "Zircon". The BBC resisted, but then intervened. "Zircon" was repressed, but that did not stop the Special Branch, controlled by the same Ministry that is supposed to safeguard the freedom of broadcasting—the Home Office—invading the BBC. A few weeks after that there was a series of exploratory programmes on a thing called "Spycatcher". That did not even get to the production stage because it was pulled out.

Censorship breeds self-censorship which is even more dangerous. As Bacon said, it is like the arrow that flies in the night. We never know what has been self-censored because it never sees the light of day. That is what is happening against the background of a total monopoly in the printed press. Three people control the popular press. We do not have a freedom of information Act but we have a secrecy Act which was introduced a few months ago with a great fanfare of trumpets.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion on Broadcasting and Terrorism in the name of the Prime Minister may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Buchan: That has made it even more difficult to arrive at the truth. The hon. Member for Thanet, North gave us a description of his history in broadcasting. The opportunities for freedom and openness of expression have been diminishing, not increasing. The most violent image that I have seen was that of a small child running down a road in Vietnam. The child was covered in napalm and burning. I do not know whether Rees-Mogg in his new job as the grand censor would have allowed that image to be shown, but it was among the images that stopped the war in Vietnam.

It is necessary to show some violence, because violence exists and should be seen. Virtually every interview that I have seen with an IRA spokesman has diminished IRA support and not increased it. Its support is increased if its members are exemplified as heroes against a repressive and censorious British Government.

This measure is not only repressive but stupid and self-defeating, and the Secretary of State knows it. He has been asked to act because Tory party conferences demand action and the Government take action that is repressive when the opposite is required. We need more openness about Northern Ireland. That is the answer. We are wrong if we think that, by ignoring the IRA, Ireland's problems will go away. The IRA will be with us until we get a political solution, and that requires understanding.

Censorship has increased and continues to increase. The Government intend to allow the monopolies of the commercial world to control our broadcasting. But the Government recognise the dangers of that and bring in a grand censor, Rees-Mogg, and give him a remit to deal with sex and violence. He is concerned not just with fictional sex or violence but also with current affairs and documentaries. That means that, for the first time, we have an internal censor dealing with standards which in themselves are beginning to affect the portrayal of truth,

not through fiction but in documentaries. That is a dangerous step, from the most dangerous and repressive Government that we have known.

If I were to take a text to quote to the House I would take it from a good old-fashioned Protestant puritan John Milton. The Secretary of State in this philistine Cabinet should remember that, when the "Areopagitica" by Milton was written in praise of freedom, it argued the case for the enemy to be heard. Milton said that it was the false prelates who should be heard—no country or society was perfect, and the only way to deal with a problem was to allow wrongs to be made known and openly discussed. He said that the way forward was through freedom for those with whom we disagree.

I disagree profoundly with Sinn Fein, and I totally reject the IRA, but they are at the moment legal. If he had the courage of his convictions, the Home Secretary would have brought in a law to deal with this. He has failed to do so and has brought in a diktat. I am not sure how legal that diktat is. What will happen if the broadcasting authorities say that they will interview someone from the IRA? What will happen? What will be the legal basis? Are we sure that we have it right?

The relationship between the Government and the broadcasting authorities was good. We were the pride of the world, but the standards of British broadcasting have been eroded. The example of John Birt was quoted by the hon. Member for Thanet, North, but the Secretary of State is now introducing the American habit of checkers on broadcast programmes.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Hear, hear.

Mr. Buchan: "Hear, hear," he says.

We are no longer allowed the editorial independence which alone can bring the diversity that we require properly to survive. The moment that we have a central diktat, thought goes out of the window. What a foolish paradox that today her ladyship goes off to Poland to lecture the Poles about freedom. She is to tell them that the shipyard must be saved, while the Government are closing a factory in the neighbouring constituency to mine, that freedom of expression must be allowed and that writers must be allowed freedom.

Two years ago, I took part in a conference with a number of people from the Soviet Union, at the Edinburgh festival. They were rejoicing that they were beginning to speak more freely. They were asked why the works of Solzhenitsyn should not be published and they said, "He does not speak the truth." I asked, "Who knows what the truth is? What is truth suggesting? Who can tell? The task is to let it be published and let the various truths clash." One man cheered—Yevtushenko himself. Now, the Russians are to publish Solzhenitsyn. There is progress in many places, but we are moving backward into darkness.

10.6 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) spoke in an unnecessary and irrelevant manner about the visit by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to Poland. The position that my right hon. Friend will adopt when she speaks in Poland will be in defence of the values that the Conservative party supports. We want to ensure that violence, whether it is state-imposed violence or unlawful IRA violence, is not allowed to go unchallenged. On the bottom line, that is why we have made these proposals.

I pointed out in an earlier intervention that it is not only the Conservative party that has adopted this position at this time, for it was the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in a Labour Government who adopted a similar position, for sound reasons, in 1977. We need responsible broadcasting, but we also need to contain terrorism and not give it publicity. Many examples have been given of how terrorist activities have been given unnecessary broadcasting time, but we shall have to look more carefully at the basis on which the BBC and the IBA exercise their powers under their charters.

We are talking about standards and self-regulation. Professor Paul Wilkinson has already been referred to, and it may be helpful to refer to one of the points that he made in his book, "Internal Terrorism and the Liberal State." Although he is a passionate opponent of terrorism, he thinks that the Home Secretary should have used his powers under the Broadcasting Acts to ban a programme in which the IRA was a participant. That position was taken by someone who is an acknowledged authority on terrorism. Professor Wilkinson has an acknowledged reputation in his field and has spent many years studying and considering such questions.

In 1983, a book about televising terrorism was published. The authors drew the conclusion that because cumulative protests by the public during the previous 10 years—that is from 1973 to 1983—had effectively brought television interviews to an end, it appeared that no formal ban was required. Evidently, the whole basis of that argument has been undermined by the continuing attention that the broadcasting authorities have given to interviews that would be prohibited by the directions.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), whose argument was described as conclusive by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), made derisory coments about my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Stewart). He said that it was absurd and fatuous for him to say that people should raise the matter with the Home Office. However, if one is considering the independence of the BBC, and if one concedes that in the charter and in the Act there should be a power—such a power is conceded by Opposition Members—to exercise such a ban by notice or direction, if it is self-evident that the BBC and the IBA and those on the upward reference through the system have not been complying with the powers that they have to ensure that a proper standard is being observed in matters of this kind, clearly the matter has to be dealt with at a higher level. Precisely those powers are contained in the charter and in the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act 1973.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman is terrifyingly ignorant. If the BBC or the IBA is failing to fulfil its obligations under the law, it is the law that must deal with it. The idea that the Government act as a court and that the IBA or BBC might ask the Government to say whether they are behaving illegally is in the nature of tyranny. It is a failure to distinguish between the courts and the Government. If the hon. Gentleman does not understand that, he understands nothing about what we are debating tonight.

Mr. Cash: I am delighted that the right hon. Gentleman has made such an absurd comment. He has demonstrated that he does not have the faintest idea of what a charter is. He should be more careful before he starts bandying words with people who have some understanding of these matters.

The ban has become necessary because the authorities have neglected to exercise self-regulation in the public interest. That is what the chartered body is all about, that is what the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook does not understand, and that is why I support the motion.

10.13 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): I wanted to take part in this debate particularly because my constituency contains one of the most important pieces of broadcasting real estate—the headquarters of the BBC in Scotland in the leafy Queen Margaret drive.

In my first ever speech in the House I was compelled to address a recent celebrated clash between the Government and the broadcasters. It took the form of size 9 boots on the feet of the Strathclyde constabulary walking through the hallowed portals of the BBC in Scotland. The order for the swinging of those boots came, it is now clear, through however many prisms from a street in London not many yards from this building. The reason for the order was the hunt for the enemy within. The enemy was perceived to be within those hallowed portals. A distinguished constituent of mine, Brian Barr, the producer of "The Secret Society" series, was being described as one of the enemies within. The Government have a fetish about enemies within, whether they are explicitly named, such as the president of the National Union of Mineworkers and the miners who supported him, or implicitly smeared, as in the recent decision over trade union membership at GCHQ. The Government are constantly looking for scapegoats on whom to blame their real problems.

Some new enemies within have been named today. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was accused by no less a personage than the Home Secretary of being an enemy within and encouraging Sinn Fein to stand in elections. He did no such thing. We had the even more outlandish suggestion by the hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) that the noble Lord Thomson—no raving Trotskyite or secret Provo—might also be an enemy within for failing in his statutory obligation to control the IBA companies that operate under his auspices.

Things would be different if I believed that the measure was a spontaneous reaction from a Government with a specific point of view on the Irish question—different from mine, but they are entitled to it and they are the governing party. If I believed it was a one-off, temporary measure which would be removed one day, if I believed that the Government were introducing it because, as I recognise, they have suffered intimately from terrorist violence, and if I believed that it was an honest response to a specific situation, I, having considered the details, would say that it was not the most draconian piece of legislation or the most totalitarian measure that has ever been before the House. I was able to study the details, thanks to the splendid services of our Library, and I suspect that more than one hon. Member took advantages of those services. If I believed that this was introduced in isolation, I would still oppose it but I would understand it.

I believe that it is not an aberration or a specific reaction, but part of an ongoing process, a process occurring sometimes, in the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) quoting Bacon, "like the arrow that flies in the night" through self-censorship, sometimes in response to a specific outrage when there is more heat about than light. It is steadily reducing us not to a totalitarian or authoritarian state, but to a shabby second or third-rate democracy with imperfect democratic institutions and steadily eroding civil liberties. Because we are involved in that process, I believe that we should oppose the measure fervently. It is a process that we have seen under this Government and, to be honest, under the previous Labour Government. One of my first political experiences was campaigning against the last Labour Government's deportation of Philip Agee and Mark Hosenball. Under both Governments we have experienced an erosion of freedom and liberty.

There has been a series of vindictive prosecutions, under the Official Secrets Act 1911, of people such as Tisdall and Ponting. Under the process of erosion, broadcasting companies have been harassed. In his witch-hunts, the former chairman of the Conservative party, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), pursued broadcasters such as Kate Adie and harassed the BBC.

Downing street has cheerfully contrived and organised a torrent of abuse about Thames Television's documentary "Death on the Rock". In advance of the investigation and inquiry, I do not concede that "Death on the Rock" was the farrago of errors that some Conservative Members described. We do not know all the truth, and I do not think that the court or the jury in Gibraltar believed that we knew all the truth about the events there.

As the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) memorably said, the process of erosion is happening under the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974, with its invention, for the first time, of the concept of internal exile in this country. Under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, citizens of the United Kingdom can be told that they are in exile in a part of the United Kingdom and that they are not permitted to travel to another part of it.

In the Diplock courts people have been tried before one judge, with no jury, and received long sentences, often deservedly. Under the process of erosion, the Secretary of State intends to abolish the centuries-old right of silence of suspects, without that silence being held against them as evidence of their guilt, not only in Northern Ireland but England and Wales.

The process of erosion has apparently led to election candidates—including right hon. and hon. Members whose integrity and patriotism are without question—having to swear oaths before they can seek election to the House and re-endorsement from their constituents. The process is slowly diminishing us not to totalitarianism but to a shabby, third-rate democracy, which increasingly compares badly with our partners in the European Community.

At the heart of most of the process of erosion is the Irish question. This is not the time or place to try to set to right the Irish question, which is not 20 years but centuries old. I am clear in my opinion that the Irish question is of such seriousness that there should be far more debate in the House. Almost as a knee-jerk reaction we deal with each atrocity and have a discussion about number plates or the

carnage on our television screens. Neither hon. Members nor any of the major political party conferences give serious analysis or attention to the Irish question.

I am clear in my mind that it is time for Britain to leave Ireland. Partition is the original sin in Ireland. We are already paying too high a price for maintaining our presence in Ireland—in the lives of our young soldiers, many of whom are teenagers, and in the expenditure of treasure from our national Exchequer, which is needed for many other things. Increasingly, our presence is leading to a deterioration in our international reputation.

It is not necessary for hon. Members to agree with me that partition is the original sin. Surely we can all agree that Britain has a serious problem in Ireland. A serious and bloody problem requires more serious measures than the pathetic and laughable contribution that the Government are making with this measure.

I cannot believe that someone of the intellectual weight of the Home Secretary really believes that a political movement such as Sinn Fein will be diminished by the order. It has a centuries-old tradition. It has mass support —35 per cent. of the nationalist community in the north of Ireland is mass support. With respect to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), 100,000 people cannot all be sewer rats; they cannot all be murderers. Those 100,000 people vote for Sinn Fein. In some parts of Northern Ireland it is the major party. If the age at which people can vote were reduced from 18 to 16, Sinn Fein would sweep to power in many more areas. Whatever anyone in this Chamber might think of Sinn Fein, it is a movement with mass support. Does any hon. Member really believe that that support will be diminished if people can only look at a still photograph of Gerry Adams while an actor enunciates his words? If so, he cannot be a serious politician and he cannot be addressing seriously the critical question of Ireland.

To some extent my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South has stolen my thunder. It is a supreme and dismal irony that we are discussing this measure on the day that the Prime Minister has touched down in Warsaw. She has gone to Poland for some strange reason. Notwithstanding her meeting with Lech Walesa, I presume that it is not to discuss trade union freedom. The sacking of the trade unionists at GCHQ in Cheltenham surely makes that redundant. No Prime Minister of Britain could be such a hypocrite as to discuss trade union freedom in Poland, given what the right hon. Lady has done in this country.

According to an editorial in one Tory newspaper this morning, the Prime Minister has gone to Poland to talk about just one issue—freedom. If she has gone to Warsaw to talk to General Jaruzelski about freedom, I hope that she has the grace to be embarrassed when he, as he will, gives her a transcript of this debate as she prattles about censorship.

At a time when the winds of change, reform and, yes, liberalism are blowing throughout eastern Europe, it is a dismal irony that our Prime Minister should be going to Poland from a country where the winds are blowing in the opposite direction.

10.27 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): During the parliamentary recess, my constituency was plunged into tremendous sorrow at the death of eight young soldiers. It was in my Mid-Ulster constituency that those young lads were brutally done to death by the IRA, which has no regret for what it has done. In fact, it was delighted to gloat over those murders.

The other day I walked to yet another graveside, that of a young 20-year-old reserve constable who was murdered in County Fermanagh as he was doing his duty in defence of freedom. He was brutally done to death by the terrorists. There were few Members of this House at his funeral. I stood by his open grave. Hon. Members do not know the reality of the deep sorrow felt by those who have gone through 20 years of murder and destruction.

Opposition Members must make up their minds. One Labour Member said that every interview with the IRA on television diminishes support for that organisation. There have been interviews with IRA members for 20 years. If every interview over the past 20 years represented diminishing support, one would expect them to have no support now, but that is not true. It sounds good, it is a nice argument to present, but it is not factual.

A moment ago, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) said that 100,000 people vote in support of Sinn Fein under the same label as that of the IRA. He went further than that. He said that, instead of interviews causing diminishing support for the IRA and if the voting age were lowered to 16—*Hansard* will confirm this—the IRA would sweep the board.

Mr. Galloway: Sinn Fein.

Rev. William McCrea: Yes, Sinn Fein. We must realise that Sinn Fein is the political voice of the IRA and is under the instructions of the military wing of the IRA. The hon. Gentleman said that, instead of receiving diminishing support, the IRA would sweep the board. One Opposition Member said that keeping IRA members from the media will lead to diminishing support, but the next Opposition voice said that it will increase support.

It is possible for some people to pretend that they can have it both ways, but Her Majesty's Opposition must make up their minds about what case they will present on this serious matter. It affects the lives of people not only in Northern Ireland—they are a part of the United Kingdom —but in the whole United Kingdom.

Listening to the debate, one would think that we were talking about a mothers' union and not about murderers. We must get away from the farcical idea that we are talking about a little mothers' group, sitting in the corner of a nice little room discussing the next cake that they will bake. We are talking about the representatives and spokesmen of cold-blooded murderers. That is the issue, and the House should recognise it.

I have listened carefully to the debate. I have not heard much said on behalf of the victims who must watch IRA members appear on television and gloat over what they have done. I am sure that that is hurtful. In the Strangers' Gallery is a young man whose young fiancee was murdered by the IRA. The IRA fired 46 bullets into her body. That was not a little picnic or party. I assure hon. Members that someone should not gloat over or romanticise the activities of the IRA. We are talking about sadistic murderers who have carried out some of the most brutal crimes.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Why does the hon. Gentleman not tell us about the UDA?

Rev. William McCrea: The hon. Gentleman is shouting from his usual position.

I shall vote for this measure in the Lobby tonight, bearing in mind what has been recommended by the Home Secretary, and that includes more than the IRA.

It must be clearly stated in the House that there has been a campaign of murder in Northern Ireland, and people are trying to romanticise it. The House should realise that it is dealing with callous, cold-blooded murderers and, equally, cold-blooded spokesmen for murderers.

The restrictions should have been forthcoming from the media. The media must carry a certain amount of the responsibility for this measure. Has the House any idea of the revulsion, resentment and hurt that media coverage causes the suffering families throughout the United Kingdom? They are not confined to Northern Ireland. Those eight young British soldier laddies belonged to and lived in this part of the United Kingdom. Their families suffer equally. If one listened to the interview with the father of one of them, one would understand his deep hurt at a spokesman for a terrorist organisation gloating over, smiling and cheering at what was done on that Ballygawley road. It was barbaric. Anyone who looked at that carnage could not say that the spokesman had any right to be heard on the media and air waves of the United Kingdom.

When the terrorists murdered that young girl, not only did they gloat, but they gave the sickening excuse that they thought that she and her young lad were connected with the security forces, but had made a mistake. "Sorry; we made a mistake." That is sickening. If hon. Members could only feel what it is like. One cannot understand unless it happens to oneself. One cannot know what a family goes through unless one is there or is part of the family. It is easy to pontificate about how one should react. Some may suggest that one should kiss the murderer for slaying one's son or daughter. It is about time proper action was taken to stop the long carnage and murder campaign in our beloved Province and throughout the United Kingdom.

This may be a small step, but I encourage the Government on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland to take further steps. As the Prime Minister said in her statement on the Province, we should not be satisfied until we eradicate terrorism. That should be our goal. The measures already announced will not solve terrorism. This is a small step and I will not cast it aside, as if it should be rejected.

The Government should take the further step of proscribing Sinn Fein. It is not a political party or part of the democratic process. Let no one try to justify its sickening deeds under the name of democracy. I do not care whether we are talking about housing—the IRA has blown more houses out of existence than anyone else—or jobs—the IRA has blown up jobs, leaving people jobless. Let not their apologists come on the box and tell us how sad they are about bread-and-butter issues, because they are the cancer in our midst that should be torn out and

destroyed to allow the good people of Northern Ireland, from whatever section they come—and they come from all sections—to live in peace and stability.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Does the hon. Gentleman understand that this measure will allow Sinn Fein to debate housing, health and education issues and will not allow anyone to criticise its heinous atrocities of the previous night? That is the fallacy of the proposal.

Rev. William McCrea: If the hon. Gentleman was listening carefully, he would understand that that is why I suggested that Sinn Fein should be proscribed. It would remove completely the facade of democracy. Sinn Fein should be robbed of that facade and should not sit on district councils.

I say to the hon. Gentleman that I found it interesting that his hon. Friend was talking about the media stripping apart the Sinn Fein chairman of Fermanagh. I would accept that as a genuine statement—I would be glad to give way on this point—if the members of the SDLP had not voted Sinn Fein into the chairmanship of Strabane district council. In fact, in June it was the votes of the SDLP that gave the chairmanship of Strabane district council to Sinn Fein. That is not romantic nonsense; it is a fact.

Mr. McGrady: I shall refer to instances when the hon. Gentleman's party and the Official Unionist party made pacts with Sinn Fein in the council chambers of Newry and Mourne, represented by the hon. Gentleman, and Down district for the same purposes.

Rev. William McCrea: I say clearly that if the hon. Gentleman could produce—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer".] I shall answer, have no fear of that. If the House can be told tonight what Sinn Fein chairman or councillor was elected by the votes of the Ulster Unionists and the Democratic Unionists, I shall be glad to give away. The hon. Gentleman's last statement was nonsense, because the facts stand. The books can be displayed so that everyone can see that the SDLP voted Sinn Fein into the high office of chairman of Strabane district council, as it did two years ago in Omagh district council and as it did three years ago in Fermanagh district council. They have walked hand in hand in the council chambers. It has also voted for the past four years to elect the Sinn Fein vice-chairman of Magherafelt district council. However, that is taking us away from the issue. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the questions".] The statement made by the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) is completely untrue. We have made no arrangement with Sinn Fein. I have put forward facts, which I would be delighted to hear challenged. I shall be glad to bring to the House our voting record. I would be delighted if the hon. Gentleman would also bring his party's voting records.

After the Gibraltar incident, the media in Northern Ireland told us first that the coffins were being taken from Gibraltar and moved to Dublin, then that the coffins were moved near the border, then that they were going over the border, and then that the coffins of these IRA persons were going to west Belfast. We were treated to this IRA propaganda hour after hour. I ask any hon. Member to find out how much time was given last week by the media to reserve constable McCrone's funeral. His funeral was in the afternoon and was not mentioned on BBC radio that morning. He was not worthy of a mention. He only happened to be a reserve constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and a member of the security forces—that does not make a good enough story.

I shall mention one other incident that caused me concern. In Aughnacloy there was a serious incident where a young soldier discharged his weapon and a person was killed—Mr. McAnespie. Immediately, the media took the statements and conveyed it across the world that McAnespie was shot in the back by a deliberate discharge of a weapon by a soldier. Not only that young soldier, but also his colleagues were put into great danger. It was proved that he did not murder Mr. McAnespie at all. An inquiry was carried out by the Government of the south of Ireland to back that up. We have yet to hear the findings, because his body was exhumed to find out whether the claims were true.

No one came back to apologise to the young soldier. His name was spread across the world as a cold-blooded murderer. He was put in great danger, and now his life will always be in danger because of what the media did. That applies to his colleagues as well.

It is easy for people to spread those stories. It is one thing to drop feathers on the ground, but when the wind comes it is hard to pick them up again. It is one thing to spread a story against that young soldier and our young lads, whether they be in the Army, the UDR or the RUC. It is easy to come out with a story about "shoot to kill", but it is different when people are proved innocent.

Those lads and lasses are in grave danger. They have fought honourably to defend all the citizens of the United Kingdom. The House should give them as much backing as possible, and I shall do so tonight.

10.45 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): We should all have more respect for the denunciations of violence by the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) if it was not for the fact that he and members of his party have such close entanglements with loyalist paramilitaries who engage in sectarian assassination——

Rev. William McCrea: Name one.

Ms. Short: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is true.

Rev. William McCrea: I challenge the hon. Lady to name one.

Ms. Short: The motion that we are discussing——

Rev. William McCrea: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. A serious charge has been made against an honourable Member of the House. I ask the hon. Lady to name one murderer with whom I have been associated, and I should prefer it if she did it outside——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that no breach of our Standing Orders has been committed. That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Ms. Short: Everyone in Northern Ireland knows that the leader of the hon. Gentleman's party has been photographed marching along the streets with masked loyalist paramilitaries.

Rev. William McCrea: Say it outside.

Ms. Short: I shall happily say it outside, and have done so already.

[Ms. Short]

The motion that we are debating is deeply undemocratic and very insidious. On the word of one letter from the Home Secretary, the views that are voted for by as many as 42 per cent. of the nationalist population in Northern Ireland can no longer be reported on our broadcasting media.

Conservative Members have talked as if their denunciations of the violence of the IRA—they talked exclusively about that, not about loyalist paramilitary violence—will remove it from the face of the earth If only it were so. The problem that I should like to put to the ex-producer of "Blue Peter", the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), is that 42 per cent. of the nationalist population in Northern Ireland are willing to vote for Sinn Fein——

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Disgraceful.

Ms. Short: The hon. Gentleman says, "Disgraceful." What are we supposed to do when a significant part of the population of the United Kingdom holds those views? Should we try to understand why? Should we allow the British people to try to do so? What an extraordinary thing it is that such a large number of people who are religious, who care for and love their children and elderly relatives and who are good people in every way that we assess other human beings are willing to vote in that way. The hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) does not like it, but it is a fact.

What should we do? Should we remove that from our broadcasting? Should we not allow the British people to know it? Should we not allow them to hear why people are willing to vote in that way? That is what we are doing now. It will not remove the support for such violence or voting, but we are trying to prevent the British people from understanding why people in Northern Ireland are willing to vote in that way.

That is to talk only of the nationalist community. We know that in the loyalist community there is deep ambivalence when it comes to support for illegal activity. At times it supports it and associates itself with it and at other times it pretends that it is not prepared to do so.

The tragedy of Northern Ireland was born of the threat of revolution and mutiny in the British armed forces. Violence has been used by those on all sides of the argument ever since Ireland was partitioned. That is part of the reality that we must face. The British people are entitled to know that the Government want to lessen their ability to understand the facts.

In what way do the Government lessen the ability of the British people to understand? They say that anything that is said by those who defend or support the use of violence in Northern Ireland can be reported in our newspapers. It can be reported by others who quote their words. We can see pictures of those who speak in support of this view, and an actor can produce a voice-over. That is laid down in a Home Office letter. That is not an interpretation of the ruling by lawyers at the BBC and the IBA. That sort of reporting is allowed, but the people are not allowed to speak for themselves.

There is something deeply wrong with that. One advantage of the broadcasting media—television and radio—is that people can see for themselves the individuals who espouse a cause and advance an argument. The public can make an assessment of such individuals, and that embraces their rationality, sincerity, attractiveness or ugliness.

It is notable that, on the "Call Nick Ross" programme, during which members of the public were telephoning to express support for the ban that was to be imposed on the broadcasting of those who support terrorism, there was reference to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), the leader of the Democratic Unionist party. The general understanding of many who phoned in to the programme was that the hon. Gentleman would no longer be able to broadcast on the media. That was extremely interesting.

Where are we now? The views of those who defend and support terrorism can be broadcast but the people are not to be allowed to judge for themselves what they think of those who hold that view. And the Conservative party told us that it was opposed to the nanny state. It seems that they do not trust the British people to make their own judgment. They find it necessary to intervene to prevent the British public from hearing why people in Northern Ireland are willing to kill one another in the course of their political disagreements.

Few Conservative Members have opposed the Government's policy, and the speeches in favour of it have gone much further than the ban that we are discussing. The speeches of many Conservative Members advocate complete censorship across the broadcasting media and the press. As it is inevitable that the ban will not work, it is inevitable that it will not reduce the level of violence. Indeed, it is likely to help to increase it.

I have no doubt that the demands of certain Conservative Members will be met in a few months' time. There will then be a further tightening of the screw and it will not be possible to produce a voice-over. A reporter will not be able to say why those who engage in violence seek to explain their involvement in it, and the ban will be extended to the press. That is the road that we are going down, and it is an extremely dangerous one.

We already have too much censorship of the broadcasting media in their coverage of Northern Ireland. It is vital that British people should understand why so many in Northern Ireland are willing to defend the use of violence in the advocacy of their political views.

Not long ago I watched a television programme that dealt with the father of a young British soldier who had been killed in Northern Ireland. The father went to Northern Ireland and he was filmed as he met representatives of the communities. He met an old man —he was sitting in his front room—whose son was imprisoned for having been involved in a paramilitary murder. The old man said that he was proud of his son. He said that he supported him. He thought his son was right and that the action in which he had engaged was necessary to achieve Irish freedom.

The father of the British soldier talked also with those in the other communities. When he returned, he said that he was glad that he made the journey and that he understood more about Ireland as a result of making it.

That was a useful television programme, but it would be illegal to make such a programme under the ban. The father of the British soldier would not be able to make the journey in an effort to understand affairs as they are in Northern Ireland.

We have to understand what is happening in Northern Ireland so that we can begin to attempt to put things right.

The House is outrageous in its neglect of the problems in Northern Ireland. Most hon. Members take no interest in Northern Ireland and do not visit it. It is treated like a colony. As long as the violence is contained over there, hon. Members hardly care. Because my father and others in my family come from Northern Ireland, I take a lot of trouble to visit it frequently. I take great care to try to meet representatives of both communities. I have had endless discussions with people in both communities who support the use of violence about why it happens. I want to understand the reasons and to remove the causes and the violence.

What do Conservative Members want to do? They want to contain the violence in Northern Ireland, allow it to continue and put a smokescreen over it and pretend that it is not happening. They do not want to allow the British people to understand why it is happening so that they can engage in the search for a solution to the problems. That is dangerous.

There has been much talk about the "oxygen of publicity" for terrorism. It is not the words of those who support the bullets and the bomb that get the publicity; the bullets and the bomb lead to the publicity. To remove the publicity, will we not have to go one step further? Will we not have to say that it is an offence to report that the bullets and the bombs are used in Northern Ireland? In response to the ban, the IRA said, "There is only one thing they understand—the gun. We have a way of speaking to them if they ban us from speaking. We can use violence to get our message across."

Anyone who tries to follow events in Northern Ireland will be aware of the debate in Sinn Fein and the IRA about whether to reduce the amount of violence they use and to rely instead on the politics of Sinn Fein and the ballot box. It would have been desirable if those who say that they should follow the political route had won, and there had been less violence from the republican side in Northern Ireland.

What is now likely to be the conclusion? All those who said, "Britain will not listen to reason; Britain will not listen to us when we act politically; Britain will not listen to our words; the only things that Britain understands are the bullet and the bomb," will feel vindicated. They will say, "We told you. There are banning directions. How can you use political action instead of political violence? They won't listen to us." They will feel strengthened. This move will increase the violence in Northern Ireland.

Those who are not allowed to broadcast include not just the representatives of the IRA, UDA, Sinn Fein and UVF but those who support their views. We must ask: who is to say who supports their views? When we were first told about the directions, I thought that the Government would go only for the IRA, Sinn Fein and so on, and then in a year or so they would start to question politicians who question the status quo in Northern Ireland and who, like me, believe that there will not be a solution until we get rid of partition and the border. I thought that the Government would start to say, "Because you advocate the same end as Sinn Fein and the IRA, you are not allowed to speak either."

What happened? We heard about the directions. On Sunday, an article in *The Observer* suggested that, because I was going to Antrim to go on "Any Questions" and because I hold the kind of views I do, I should not be allowed to broadcast. Conservative Members may think that that is okay. Later, there was an article in *The Times* suggesting that I should not be allowed to broadcast. On that occasion, I was allowed to broadcast, but the hierarchy of the BBC went to Antrim to see whether there were any problems there. I wonder what will happen next time. Perhaps the broadcasters will stop inviting people like me to broadcast. That will be another form of censorship. This is the road down which we are going. That is the danger for our country.

I have a sense of foreboding. The Government are ripping out the strategies that lay behind the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The agreement said that we had to stop the advance of Sinn Fein—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may disagree, but that is my understanding of the strategy behind it. The British Government were so worried by the advance of Sinn Fein and by political support for Sinn Fein that they decided to deliver reform to the nationalist community in Northern Ireland. They promised association with Dublin, improvements in the criminal justice system, respect for the Irish language and so on. None of those reforms has been delivered. Instead, we see repression. In addition to this ban, the right to silence is to be ended and an oath is to be demanded from people standing for election.

It is rumoured that the Government are looking for further examples of measures from the Republic of Ireland. But what is wrong in the Republic of Ireland is wrong here. The fact that something happens in the Republic of Ireland does not make it right here. We shall certainly not be intimidated by the argument that we should look to the Republic of Ireland for examples. Divorce is not allowed in the Republic of Ireland. Are those who shout that we should imitate the Republic in favour of that? We are told that the Government are thinking of proposing that in future someone may be accused of being a member of a paramilitary organisation on the say-so of one policemen and will have no defence.

The Government are getting rid of reform and going for repression. Under a smokescreen of censorship, the violence may be let rip. The British people will not be allowed to understand it, and the real danger is that bloodshed and death on the present scale will continue indefinitely in Northern Ireland. That is a real prospect, and the action of the Secretary of State makes it more rather than less likely.

11.3 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): When the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) goes back to Northern Ireland, perhaps she will take with her a straight message from the House. There will, indeed, be repression. There will be repression against men of violence who use the bomb, the car bomb and the bullet to maim and injure innocent people. Opposition Members may have some doubts about the introduction of measures to deal with terrorism, but there is no doubt about Conservative Members' resolve to do so. Conservative Members do not vote against renewing the prevention of terrorism orders, whereas Labour Members repeatedly do.

Although the hon. Member for Ladywood introduced a certain divisive note into our proceedings, we have had a good debate. I start by reminding the House of Voltaire's saying:

> "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

That is an adage to which most hon. Members would subscribe, even if there is a degree of intolerance among

[Mr. Gerald Howarth]

Labour Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) made that point, and we fully respect his views on the matter. Voltaire did not, however, say, "I disapprove of what you do, but I will defend to the death your right to do it." While we may be prepared to defend someone's right to say something, we do not defend their right to perpetrate certain acts.

Parliament is well advised to discuss carefully a measure that is introducing a degree of limitation on freedom of expression and to a certain extent restricting the rights of broadcasters. It is absolutely right that we should have had the opportunity of such a long debate.

I do not think that simple concern with freedom of expression should inhibit us from taking action where it is necessary and justified. A compelling case has been presented to us by the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), who told us what hon. Members from Ulster go through day in, day out, in their constituencies as they attend funerals and console the bereaved. The IRA and its supporters show no signs of letting up their unremitting, unspeakable programme of brutal killings, which are as calculated and cowardly as any committed anywhere in the world by repressive organisations.

We approach this debate against the background of what is happening in Northern Ireland. It affects us, as individual Members of Parliament. Some right hon. and hon. Members have to put up with onerous restraints on their day-to-day lives merely because the IRA continually threatens them and their families. They cannot behave like ordinary people, because they are always under threat from those cowardly and brutal people. The IRA and its supporters undoubtedly revel in the publicity and authority that broadcasting confers on them. Broadcasting, particularly by television, is a far more potent medium than the printed word, which is why my right hon. Friend was right to make a distinction between broadcasting and the written word.

I agree with my hon. Friends who have suggested that the broadcasters have failed to comply with their own guidelines. Many examples of that, such as the programme "Real Lives", have been given in the debate. Had they observed those guidelines, we might not have been in this position today. The broadcasters cannot completely absolve themselves of any resposibility for what is going on in Northern Ireland, or for this measure.

Too often the need for balance is used by broadcasters as an excuse to give air time to terrorists. There can be no balance between law-abiding citizens who seek to bring about change by peacefully persuading their fellow citizens of the need for it, and terrorists. I do not see why terrorists and their apologists should enjoy the same benefits of a civilised society as are enjoyed by the rest of the people, who forswear the gun and the bomb.

Some broadcasters are so arrogant that they do not believe they are part of this country. That was the problem during the Falklands campaign, when our troops were referred to as the British troops. There can be no excuse, either, for the Thames Television programme "Death on the Rock". I and most of my hon. Friends thought it an outrageous attempt to scour the Rock to find someone to say something to undermine the SAS. To judge from my post—perhaps other hon. Members have read different views in theirs—most British people completely supported the noble efforts of the SAS to prevent bloodshed and mayhem in Gibraltar.

Some hon. Members have suggested that the Government are heading down a slippery slope. I am surprised at that view. They have all paid tribute to the liberal nature of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, and to suggest that he would be party to sliding down such a slope would be to misunderstand his character. I see no slippery slope. We are waging war against terrorism——

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howarth: I would rather not; time is short.

This war is being waged throughout the United Kingdom. We accept certain restrictions as a result. Northern Ireland has the Diplock courts and the presence of armed soldiers, although I may say that on my four-day visit there I saw only two armed soldiers. We accept these restrictions, sad though it is that we must impose them. This further restriction should be accepted, too.

We are at war with the IRA and it is right to use appropriate measures. During the second world war nobody said that we should not have internment or any of the other draconian measures that were brought in to deal with the situation.

The man who represents Sinn Fein and who got himself elected to this House spoke on Radio Ulster on the day that Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's house was bombed. I was in Northern Ireland on that day. On that programme he warned civil servants of the risks that they were running in working for the security services. He said that the IRA was giving them a chance to resign. As the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster so rightly said, that explicitly illustrates that Sinn Fein is but the mouthpiece of the IRA.

There is a remedy for those in Sinn Fein who do not like what the Government are doing. They can renounce violence. If they do that the House might take a different view of them, but as long as Sinn Fein has representatives such as Gerry Adams saying what he does, the House is right to take its present view of Sinn Fein.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) is not in the Chamber. He suggested that the Home Secretary was under pressure to bring this motion before the House. There is no doubt about that. However, the pressure did not come simply from Conservative Members, because some of my hon. Friends oppose the motion. The pressure comes from the British people, who want something to be done. We must be careful to resist pressure to do the wrong thing. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary acknowledged that this measure would not in itself stop terrorism. However, it is a more constructive approach than the one adopted by some Opposition Members who meet members of Sinn Fein and invite them to attend Labour party gatherings.

This measure is constructive. It is designed to try to help, and it attempts to respond to the legitimate concerns of our people. Hon. Members are entitled to respond to those concerns. The measure does not restrict the reporting of opinions, but deprives those who are the front men for the perpetrators of violence of the authority that television confers upon them. This step is supported by the great majority of the British people. One of my hon. Friends mentioned a MORI poll reported in a recent edition of the *Reader's Digest*. That showed that 69 per

cent. of people interviewed believed that terrorist organisations should not be allowed, under any circumstance to express their views on television. Sixty-six per cent. felt that the reporting on television of terrorist activities enhanced the status of terrorists.

Quite clearly, this measure enjoys the support of the people. If the high percentage of people supporting the measure are all Tories, that demonstrates the low level to which the Labour party has sunk in public opinion. Similar measures have already been taken in the Republic of Ireland, and the British broadcasting authorities are able to reach most of the people in the Republic. I hope that Governor Dukakis will be told that the Republic of Ireland has more draconian measures than those being introduced by our Government. These measures demonstrate the commitment of the Government to deal with the men of violence. That is why I support the motion.

11.14 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Parts of the speech by the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) justify Opposition apprehensions about the motion. Conservative Members have made much of the level of terrorism and the atrocities. No Opposition Member in any way justifies the terrorism and the atrocities carried out by the Provisional IRA or by sectarian killers on the other side in Northern Ireland. We are all opposed to terrorism and violence. I have always taken the view that, even if the campaign that has been waged over 18 years brought the IRA success in its objective, a united Ireland brought about by killing and terrorism would not be viable and would not be able to survive. That is all the more reason to be against not only terrorism and violence, from whichever side in Northern Ireland it comes, but the methods of the IRA.

I do not deny that I want a united Ireland, but I want an Ireland united through consent and negotiation—certainly negotiation involving the people of Northern Ireland and of the Republic. Above all else, there must be consensus, or such a unitary state could not survive.

Mr. Hunter: Will the hon. Gentleman include in the thesis that he is propounding a direct explanation of why and how, a fortnight ago, Haringey borough council had on its premises an exhibition extolling the virtues of the IRA?

Mr. Winnick: I will give the hon. Gentleman some satisfaction when I express my view as a Member of Parliament. I was not in favour of the exhibition, and I did not know about it until I read about it in a London paper. I know that, once he was notified, the leader of the council made sure that the exhibition received no funding from the council. What purpose is served by raking up all these matters when we are concerned, as a House of Commons, to oppose terrorism and try to make progress? Such interventions do not help the victims or the potential victims of the IRA.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): The hon. Gentleman is condemning terrorism in a most forceful way. Would he include in that condemnation the African National Congress?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is straying rather far from the motion.

Mr. Winnick: It is difficult to imagine a more stupidly irrelevant question than one which linked the position in southern Africa with that in Northern Ireland. I had always assumed that Northern Ireland was part of the United Kingdom, that democracy existed in Northern Ireland, and that everyone there, no matter how nationalist or republican, could vote. That is why we have my hon. Friends the Members for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), who take a nationalist point of view. They have not been deprived of the right to vote. The situation in southern Africa is totally different.

Are we to take it that, as a result of the Government's ban, there will be any reduction in violence? Will a single life be saved from terrorism in Northern Ireland or on the mainland? The Home Secretary has not suggested that one would. He has not argued that the motion will reduce the level of violence.

Much has been said about the votes for Sinn Fein. I believe—I may be as wrong as any other person—that though the leaders of Sinn Fein have links with the IRA—and I would not wish to deny that—not all those who vote for Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland necessarily support the terrorist campaign. They vote that way, or a large number do, for all kinds of reasons—deprivation and economic and housing misery. Therefore, it would not be right to conclude that all voters for Sinn Fein are necessarily supporters of terrorism.

I take the view that, at most, the leaders of Sinn Fein look on the ban as a mild irritation, although they may say different things publicly and give the impression that they view this as a great setback. Some Tory Members may say that even if it is only a mild irritation, it is better than nothing. We should compare that with the unfavourable propaganda that this country suffers abroad, particularly in the United States. The supporters of the Provisional IRA in the United States—Noraid, the hard-core supporters of terrorism living there—want to persuade the majority of Americans of Irish origin that Britain is totally in the wrong and that the struggle waged by the Provisional IRA is justified. That is not my view, as I have already explained to the House. I believe that the ban provides further ammunition for the propaganda of the supporters of Noraid and the supporters of the Provisional IRA in various European countries who want to portray this country as waging a colonial war in Northern Ireland. They will say that the British Government are so terrified of the representatives of the Provisional Sinn Fein appearing on television that they have to take this step.

Have the broadcasting authorities abused their power? Is it being argued today that the supporters and leaders of Provisional Sinn Fein have been interviewed constantly? Like most hon. Members, I do not watch television all that often, but in the television news that I have seen I have not seen the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Mr. Adams) interviewed so often. I have certainly seen him interviewed when there has been a particular atrocity that has embarrassed the Provisional IRA and Provisional Sinn Fein. I have seen the hon. Gentleman trying to explain and rationalise something which simply cannot be explained away. Surely it is right and proper for the broadcasting authorities to interview someone like the hon. Member for Belfast, West when some atrocity has been carried out and civilians have been killed so that millions of people can see the hon. Gentleman trying to explain that atrocity. Is there any evidence that people are persuaded by what the hon.

[Mr. Winnick]

Member for Belfast, West has to say? Do they listen to him or to any of his colleagues when they are interviewed and say, "That is a rational argument"? There is no evidence whatsoever of that. Therefore, I do not accept that the broadcasting authorities have abused their power.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Winnick: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall not give way as time is getting on.

In his statement on 19 October the Home Secretary said:

"Broadcasters have a dangerous and unenviable task in reporting events in Northern Ireland. This step is no criticism of them."—[*Official Report*, 19 October 1988; Vol. 138, c. 885.]

So the Home Secretary is not suggesting for one moment that the broadcasting authorities are wrong.

I believe that the ban is a panic reaction on the part of the Prime Minister. I blame the Prime Minister far more than the Home Secretary. I believe that when the Prime Minister heard about the further atrocities carried out by the Provisional IRA during the summer recess, she came to the conclusion that something had to be done and therefore the ban was imposed. My criticism of the Home Secretary is that he should have resisted the Prime Minister. He should have told the Prime Minister that this is not the way to go about it; that this will not help. Instead, the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland went along with the Prime Minister.

My final point has already been echoed by my hon. Friends. I believe that the Government have an authoritarian streak. In many ways, the Government have tried to undermine some of our liberties. I believe, for instance, that there has been a vendetta against the broadcasting authorities, first and foremost by the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), when he was the chairman of the Tory party, who put totally unfair and unjustified pressure on the broadcasting authorities, and particularly on the BBC. If we are faced with a Government with an authoritarian streak, as the Opposition we should be all the more on our guard to ensure that no steps are taken which further undermine any of our traditional liberties.

Of course, we shall lose the vote tonight. I am pleased that one or two Conservative Members have understood our concern and, whether or not they vote with us, realise what is at stake. I believe that the ban that has been imposed on the broadcasting authorities is wrong. It is not justified; it will not reduce the level of terrorism; and it will put us in the wrong internationally. That is why I shall vote against it.

11.24 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) has suggested that if we in the House introduce what he would consider to be illiberal measures, it will increase the level of support for the IRA in the United States. The level of support for the IRA in the United States is dependent on one thing alone, and that is the number of people it kills. If we can introduce measures in the House that will cut back the carnage in Northern Ireland, we will cut back the support for the IRA in the United States.

We have had from the Opposition an emotional plea in favour of editorial freedom. We are all in favour of editorial freedom. What do they mean by "editorial freedom"? What is it that they are seeking to support? Is it the editorial freedom that is currently enjoyed by *The Sun* newspaper? If that is what they are trying to defend, it is a novel aspect from the Labour party. I wonder whether the Opposition appreciate the changing nature and the imperatives of today's media.

We heard an eloquent speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale). Do they realise that the media today are not about informing the public; they are about entertaining and stimulating the public? The media today seek to shock and titillate rather than to sustain serious debate. I am a little surprised that the Opposition seek to justify the form of editorial freedom, the "anything goes", irresponsible editorial freedom, that has been abused so much so that it can be used and abused by the IRA in its perverted campaign.

The Opposition say that they have a passionate commitment to freedom of speech. Conservative Members have a passionate commitment to freedom of speech. I wonder whether they have. Is it consistent with the thought police of the Left wing of the Labour party that we have seen marching up and down and parading throughout our country over the past few years? Do they support the freedom of speech for anyone, however evil? Do they support it for racists, murderers and child molesters? Would they support giving freedom of speech to Adolf Hitler, or to anyone, whatever damage they cause or however intolerant or intolerable they may be?

I am a little worried that the Opposition do not understand, after all our history, the value and effect of propaganda. Was Dr. Goebbels wrong? Was he naive? Were all those hours he spent broadcasting on German radio wasted? Did he waste all that time he spent carefully crafting and orchestrating his perverted and dreadful message? Do they want to allow the IRA the same opportunities and the same access to the media so that it can build up its image and credibility? That is what it would seek to do if it could.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) said that she felt that it was useful and worthwhile to allow people to come on our media to defend the right to kill. Is that what she really meant—to "defend"—or was it to sell, justify and propagate their evil campaign?

We are all concerned for civil liberties, but is not the greatest civil liberty the right to life? Over 2,500 people in Northern Ireland have been killed in this murderous campaign. That is equivalent to 100,000 people in the United Kingdom as a whole. Does the IRA think that if we had been suffering that level of violence on the mainland of the United Kingdom we would tolerate for one moment what we have been tolerating to date? The terrorists will grab every opportunity to parade on our television screens, not because they want to extend the intellectual debate but because it helps their cause. The objective of the measure is to starve them of the oxygen of publicity. The Government are right, and I support them.

11.29 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I have only three points to make, and I shall do so succinctly.

Conservative Members have challenged Labour Members to say whether they support the African National Congress. I tell them that I do, and I shall happily give way to the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) so that he can say why he supports the terrorist South African regime——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We have a narrow motion before us relating to Northern Ireland.

Ms. Abbott: The subject was introduced by the hon. Member for Gillingham; I was merely responding to it.

I have only two objections to the motion, one in practice and one in principle. My objection in practice is that, contrary to the hours and hours of speeches we heard from Conservative Members, the motion will do nothing to diminish the level of Northern Ireland's problems. The motion is propaganda, and the cynical politics of the gesture.

Conservative Members have spoken as if in a fundamental and essential way the IRA gains its political legitimacy from appearing on television, which is nonsense. The IRA's political legitimacy derives from the history of British involvement in Northern Ireland, from the abuses of power of the British occupying forces in Northern Ireland and, above all, from the fact that, contrary to what Conservative Members might like to think, the IRA has proved that it has the mass support of the Catholic electorate of Northern Ireland. Some 35 per cent. of the Catholic electorate vote for Sinn Fein. Labour Members believe that it is not the business of responsible politicians to try to pretend that Republican opinion does not exist and that it should be banished from the screen.

If the Government want to strike at the root of the IRA's political legitimacy, they must address the problems of history, the British Army and, above all, the fact that tens of thousands of people are happy to vote for Sinn Fein in a secret ballot. Nothing that Conservative Members have said has addressed those facts. My objection in practice to the motion is that it is cynical, it is the politics of the gesture and will not alter the number of killings in Northern Ireland by one.

My objection in principle is the attack that the motion makes on civil liberties. That argument has been well rehearsed so I shall not repeat it.

Nobody is saying that sombody should be allowed to go on television or radio and commit a crime or incite anyone to commit a criminal act. Merely because some Conservative Members or some members of the public find an individual or political party offensive, that is not a reason to ban them. If the Government wish to present a coherent position, they should ban Sinn Fein. Until it is a proscribed organisation, there is no intellectual consistency in allowing it to contest elections but not allowing its members to appear on television. In practice, the motion is wrong, in principle it is intellectually dishonest and Labour Members will vote against it.

11.33 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): May I refute at the outset what the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) said? At no time did my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) defend the right of any person to kill. That was a foul calumny, and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman uttered it.

Mr. Marlow: I said that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) defended the right of people to appear on television and defend the right to kill.

Mr. McNamara: My hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood did not say that.

Labour Members oppose this ban because we believe that it is wrong in principle and in expediency. It is an ill-considered measure that creates more problems than it solves and has nothing to do with the real difficulties that exist in Northern Ireland.

If it could be proved that the measure was justified in terms of expediency, there could be a case that the Opposition would have to consider more seriously. As it is, the broadcasting restrictions are so patently absurd that they should be dismissed out of hand.

In the ancient world, the messenger who brought bad news was liable to be silenced by a swift stroke of the sword. That is the sort of logic that underpins the order. Our ancestors eventually realised that bad news was better than no news, and put a stop to such practices. To pursue a sensible course of action, it is necessary to be well informed. In a democracy, that necessity extends to the citizens as a whole, because they have their part to play in the formation of policy.

It is clear that such limitations on the freedom of broadcasting were adopted hastily, without any serious thought about either their effect or their implementation. They are a panic response to the tragic and horrific events of this summer—a response inspired by the Prime Minister who, judging by her extraordinary interview in *The Times*, seems to be at variance with her Ministers about the temporary or permanent nature of the provisions. She referred to the suspension of civil liberties, but her Ministers have given no sign that the measures are not designed to be permanent. She said that the measures "have to suspend some of your civil liberties for a time." We are entitled to know whether they are meant to be permanent or temporary.

The Prime Minister's contempt for her Ministers was shown when she apparently did not tell the Home Secretary about her attitude before he made his statement in the House. The right hon. Gentleman's position is rather tragic. He is, in many ways, striking a pose, pretending to be resonant in his fight against the paramilitaries. Yet he knows from his experience in Northern Ireland and from the advice given by the Department—which his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has stood out against in the past—that in fact he is making a useless gesture.

It is a panic ban—that is quite clear from the developments since the original statement in the House. The truth is that the Government do not know what they are doing. They do not know what the ban is supposed to cover. They have already had to repeat and issue further clarifications to the broadcasting authorities.

That uncertainty pervades even the television companies. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, there has been the ludicrous spectacle of a programme cleared by Channel 4 lawyers being prohibited by the laywers of IBA. The lawyers are now making the programmes, not the professional broadcasters.

The Government have not made it clear who or what is to be banned. The Government do not know and the broadcasting authorities are unclear. I shall cite some

[Mr. McNamara]

examples. Can Robert Kee's outstanding series on Irish history, "The Green Flag", now be repeated on television? Will there be the strange spectacle of Gerry Adams holding forth on election programmes while the Open university will be prevented from allowing the Taoiseach in the Republic to talk about his father-in-law, the former Taoiseach, because of his participation in the Easter rising?

Even the right to report court proceedings—an essential requirement if justice is to be seen to be done—is not included in the two specific exceptions that the Home Secretary mentioned. We are entitled to know whether, in fact, that protection still exists.

What about the problems of fiction, which is being examined carefully by the broadcasting authorities? What do we make of O'Casey's "The Shadow of the Gunman"? Can we see or hear that on our television or radio? What about songs and music—for example, "The Rising of the Moon", "Who fears to speak of 98" and "The Sash"? Can we hear all those songs, which, in their various ways, attempt to support men of violence?

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury) *rose*——

Mr. McNamara: With the greatest respect to the hon. Gentleman, I do not wish to give way.

Some hon. Members from Northern Ireland, especially the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), praised the Home Secretary's action. However, any rigorous and impartial enforcement of the restrictions could well affect some members of the Unionist parties in Northern Ireland. Of Northern Ireland parties, only the Social Democratic and Labour party and the Alliance party have never flirted with paramilitaries. We know what the SDLP says to Sinn Fein, becaue it told us and it has published it. What we do not know is what some Unionist politicians discuss when they hob-nob with the UDA.

For example, do Members of the House who dress in paramilitary garb and make scarcely veiled threats to employ their illegally held shotguns for political purposes fall under the non-person category that will not be allowed on television, except for reports of what they say in the House? Will the leader of an armed incursion into the Republic of Ireland be granted free access to television and radio? Yet, when the rumour that we shall have the matter before the House was first mooted, will he be the first to rush to the media to support the ban against men of violence?

I for one, and my hon. Friends, would be opposed to depriving the British public and the public of all these islands of their right to hear the views of hon. Members from Northern Ireland, whether they are Unionists of the sort that I have described or otherwise. If people are allowed to continue unimpeded—if the ban does not impinge upon them—they will once again be able to bring the British presence in Northern Ireland into disrepute. That is another example of the need to be even-handed, not just with the UDA, which I welcome if we are to have the resolution, but with all people who are associated with people of violence. They must all be included, even if they are Members of this House, and even if they take their seats in this House.

There is another consideration which reveals how the Government's surrender to apparent expediency is short-sighted and counter-productive. For decades, the Foreign Office has resisted all approaches from foreign Governments to interfere with broadcasting on the ground that broadcasters are independent of the state. Now, however, the Home Secretary has opened the floodgates, and the Foreign Office is being besieged by various Governments. I understand that the Indian Government are looking for restrictions on Sikh nationalists. Presumably the Government will give equal consideration to requests from the Nicaraguan and Afghan Governments to ban the contras and the Mujaheddin from the World Service.

I heard carefully what the Home Secretary said about the measure being limited specifically to the problems in Northern Ireland, but he knows as well as I do that every foreign Government will accuse him and the British Government of hypocrisy on this matter, and challenge our bona fides if we do not practise abroad what we preach at home. Again, it is abundantly clear that the Government do not appreciate the international dimensions of the issue.

The Home Secretary tried to draw a distinction between people who had recently gone to the United States and were supporters of Fine Gael and Fianna Fail and would understand the reason for the ban, and others who view it differently. He does not seem to have taken on board the very first amendment of the American constitution, which I put to him, which states:

> "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the Press".

People in the United States will say, "You are flying right against one of the most cherished parts of our constitution." That will provide Noraid with ammunition and ability.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNamara: No.

That is quite apart from the Home Secretary's complete misunderstanding of the Irish-American context, where it is not just recent immigrants there who have found that happening. That view is found all the way through the Irish-American context.

Sir Giles Shaw *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has made it clear that he will not give way.

Mr. McNamara: It is apparent that, once again, the international community has reacted unfavourably to the terms of this order. Once again, Britain, which used to boast of its democratic traditions and exported them throughout the world, is now becoming a cause of concern because a certain group are making themselves ridiculous by their actions.

The Prime Minister will now make criminals of foreign broadcasters if they beam their programmes into Britain by satellite. When, in her famous interview in *The Times*, she was asked what she would do about satellite television broadcasting, she said:

> "The only thing we could do here is to make it an offence to beam such stuff into the country if need be."

Are we to have legislation to outlaw satellite television which extols the virtues of the IRA? She is talking rubbish and the Government are behaving in a rubbishy manner.

Those are only the practical difficulties of this problem. There are matters which are wrong, not for practical reasons but in principle. The term "McCarthyite" is bandied about in a way which diminishes the full horrors of that period, but this is a case where it applies. Not only are the paramilitaries and some of their political allies to be banned from the airways, but so is anyone whom the broadcasting authorities might possibly believe might possibly say something which might possibly appear to be supportive of their political stance. They, too, will be denied access to radio and television.

Given the sort of arguments that are often used in this House, such as that the Anglo-Irish Agreement gives succour to the paramilitaries, even people who support the Government's policy could be subject to vilification. That is not the nonsense that it appears at first sight. It is a problem of the Government's creation. They are damaging the credibility of the media and the democratic process. This is worse than anything that P.W. Botha ever dreamed up.

Sir Giles Shaw *rose*——

Mr. McNamara: At least in South Africa——

Sir Giles Shaw: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNamara: No.

Bans are imposed on named individuals or groups, and reports are proceeded by a censorship warning. Will we have on our television screens, "This programme has been presented subject to the censorship rules of the British Government"? If it were to happen, what a terrible time it would be in the history of British broadcasting and of this Government.

What is worse, there will be no safeguards, even such as those that exist in South Africa. There will be secret blacklists, like those of the Economic League. People will be banned from the airwaves without their knowledge or any redress, and they will be unable to confront their accusers. Furthermore, the possibility of democratic and intelligent discussion of the conflict in Northern Ireland will disappear.

Sir Giles Shaw: Rubbish.

Mr. McNamara: The real problem is that I agree with everything that the hon. Gentleman is saying about these orders. I only wish that he had got up during the debate and said that they are rubbish.

Sir Giles Shaw *rose*——

Mr. McNamara: This is perhaps the worst——

Sir Giles Shaw *rose*——

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Gentleman may indeed be rubbish, but he was not the one who was saying it of the measure.

Mr. Couchman: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) to suggest that hon. Members on this side have been drinking all evening?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a point of order for me. We are having a serious debate.

Mr. McNamara: Those who have been drinking are in a happy position. Some of us have been waiting here for five or six hours for an opportunity to get one down before we go home.

The worst feature of the ban is that it will hinder the growth of understanding of these issues on these islands. In recent years, there has been much greater and much more informed interest in the conflict. It would be damaging if this process were now to be reversed, which is exactly what the Government are intent upon doing. They make offensive and unsubstantiated claims about the irresponsibility of the media, when we know how cautious and self-restrained the broadcasting authorities have been.

I recall the fight that I had with BBC Northern Ireland to get a minute and a half to reply to the Secretary of State's outrageous statements about taking away the right of silence. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook said, it is not as though members of the IRA were on every programme every day and we had to avoid them. The figures that he produced showed how difficult it has been for the IRA to appear on the screens, and how difficult the broadcasting media had made it for its programme producers to get their programmes on to the air. Yet we have now reached a further stage in the Prime Minister's campaign to subjugate the media, to censor all criticism and to destroy free speech.

Too often Northern Ireland has been used as a test bed for repressive legislation. We are now entitled to ask whether similar restrictions will be imposed on coverage of social unrest on this island when that periodically breaks out in mainland cities. Is this the thin edge of the wedge for such situations? Nothing in the Government's record should rule out such fears. It is already far too difficult for the media to make programmes about Ireland. It will now have even greater hesitation to inform the public of the realities of the situation in the Province. The damage that will be inflicted will be not on the IRA or on the UDR, but on those who seek to expose the bankruptcy of the policies of the paramilitaries.

I object to the ban on the ground that one does not defeat paramilitaries by turning one's head away from them. The problems of Northern Ireland are too real and too immediate. The Government refuse to tackle the roots of violence, and resort to measures such as this. In the words of the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis)—with whose diagnosis of the problems of Northern Ireland, I would disagree, but with whose assessment of the value of the measure I would agree—the Government are merely tinkering with the periphery of the problem.

It is because the Labour party wants to stop the terrorism—not just to shut our ears to it—to regain the support of all sections of the community in Northern Ireland for the rule of law, and to have an impartial administration of justice that it opposes these provisions, which are counter-productive, dangerous for our civil liberties on this island, too, and succour for all those who are named in the measure.

11.52 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): Apart from the ludicrous remark of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) that the

[Mr. Tim Renton]

restrictions we are debating are more restrictive than anything ever introduced by P. W. Botha, this has been a serious and passionate debate.

I thank all my hon. Friends who have spoken in support of the motion, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) for his powerful contribution, in which he spoke of the need for the media not to be equivocal in its approach to terrorism. That point was reinforced by the eloquent remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale). I should like to thank, too, my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) for his thoughtful speech in which he said that in a free society it was right that our right hon. Friend the Home Secretary should be given the powers that he has exercised in relation to the restriction on the broadcasting authorities. He also said that television coverage of terrorist acts can encourage other terrorist acts. I take note of the allegations that he made at the end of his remarks.

I am mindful, too, of the speeches at the end of the debate by my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), who reminded us how much more potent a medium television is than the newspapers, and by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), with his passionate defence of free speech. That leads me to my first point in reply to the debate.

The House is rightly jealous of free speech. That applies to hon. Members on both sides of the House, but let us get the perspective right. What we are debating is not a restriction on the freedom of speech. It is not a restriction on the freedom of information in Northern Ireland. It is simply a targeted measure that we are undertaking to prevent terrorists and their supporters from exploiting the broadcasting media by direct access to them.

Why are we doing this? Why did the House vote by a majority recently to televise our proceedings? The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) agreed that he had voted for that. We are all agreed that television today is regarded as so powerful, so immediate, so vivid and so able to give respectability to those who appear on the screen that all politicians need it. All politicians take advantage of it. Whether or not we like the expression "the oxygen of publicity", we all experience it by appearing on television. Surely it is for that reason that at election time we have such strict rules on access to television—a complete ban on paid advertising, too. We have no such restrictions on newspapers at election time.

All the evidence suggests that the importance that Sinn Fein and the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Mr. Adams), whose name has been mentioned so much during the debate, attach to television is no less—in fact, rather more—than that of other politicians. Surely that is why camera crews are given access to paramilitary funerals in Northern Ireland. That is why Sinn Fein has given so many press conferences to television. That is why, after my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary's restrictions were announced, the hon. Member for Belfast, West was reported as saying that they would disadvantage Sinn Fein.

In Northern Ireland and, to a more limited extent, in Great Britain——

Mr. Hume: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Renton: No. With the greatest respect to the hon. Gentleman, the time is late and I think that the House would like me to make rapid progress.

In Northern Ireland and in Great Britain we face a well-organised and determined terrorist conspiracy. Supported wholeheartedly by Sinn Fein—a point strongly made by the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea)—the IRA campaign is based on ending the democratic process by the use of violence, murder and death, a fact that no one knows better than my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The IRA seeks to impose a united Ireland dominated by the IRA, with no mandate whatsoever from the electorate in Northern Ireland or in the Irish Republic. Its aim is to brush aside democracy, using whatever means are available.

Terrorism will continue to be opposed and resisted by the Government at every opportunity. We are determined to take every step possible to ensure that it does not succeed. We have no choice in that when faced with terrorism and violence, for they can never be allowed to triumph.

It is simply against that background that the Government, after long and careful consideration—certainly not as a panic reaction, as suggested by the hon. Members for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and for Kingston upon Hull, North—decided that they should not stand idly by and watch the apologists for terrorism exploit and manipulate the broadcasting media. That is the sort of issue that I hoped would unite the House in view of our determination to suppress terrorism. It was, therefore, with some dismay that I listened to the exaggerated contributions of, for example, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) and the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot).

I repeat that we are not advocating any reduction in freedom of information. We are preventing in a limited manner, and only in the context of broadcasting, access to the media by those who use it to encourage support for terrorism. This is not a major departure for Ireland. Similar but tighter restrictions have applied in the Republic for many years.

Mr. Hume: Will the Minister confirm that under these measures members of Sinn Fein can be interviewed about any subject under the sun, except atrocities?

Mr. Renton: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman has raised that issue. I can tell him that that is not the case, and that is precisely the point to which I am coming.

As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said earlier, the broad effect of the directions is to prohibit direct speech over the air by a person representing one of the named organisations, or an oral statement by anyone who supports, or invites support, for one of the organisations. Thus, I say to the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) that all oral statements by Sinn Fein or UDA representatives would be caught, whether they were made at a public meeting, during an interview, or in a discussion programme, whatever the subject, if such statements were made by Sinn Fein or UDA representatives, or on behalf of those organisations. The restrictions do not prevent——

Mr. McNamara *rose*——

Mr. Renton: I shall finish this point. The restrictions do not prevent the second hand reporting of such an oral statement, for example, by a news journalist, as we are of the opinion that this does not cause the same degree of impact or public concern, for the reasons that I have already explained.

Mr. McNamara: Is the Minister saying that no member of Sinn Fein will be allowed to speak directly on the radio or on television on any subject whatsoever? That is what he has just said to the House. That is not what we have interpreted from the directions and it is not true. That is not what the BBC and the IBA are saying, but it is what the Minister has just said.

Mr. Renton: Unfortunately, the hon. Gentleman is not listening or concentrating. He did not listen to what my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said earlier this afternoon, and I shall repeat what he said in other words before I move on.

The restrictions apply to people who represent the organisations concerned. Elected councillors speaking on behalf of one of these organisations about council matters will be subject to the restrictions, whatever the actual subject under discussion. That is crystal clear——

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Renton: No, I shall not give way to the right hon. Gentleman. I have repeated what my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said. I go on to say——

Mr. Hattersley *rose*——

Mr. Renton: I was talking about reporting. There is a public interest—*[Interruption.]* I am about to come to another point that the right hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Hattersley *rose*——

Mr. Renton: No. I shall make—*[Interruption.]* There is a public interest in reporting certain statements, for example——

Mr. Buchan: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. What protection can you give us when we have two Ministers from the same Department making two contradictory speeches? The Minister has contradicted the Home Secretary. Can we get the truth from one of them?

Madam Deputy Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Chair has no responsibility for the way in which Members or Ministers express themselves.

Mr. Renton *rose*——

Mr. Mallon: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The debate has continued for six and half hours, and I ask whether it is right that we should leave it without having cleared up the confusion that was created initially by the Home Secretary, which has been compounded by the Minister.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Renton: I believe that I have said precisely what my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said. I suggest that the hon. Members for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) and for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) study *Hansard* tomorrow and they will see that is so.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook told us that the notices have caused confusion. The intention behind the directions issued by my right hon. Friend has always been clear. Equally, the content of the notices has been as clear as we could make it. As my right hon. Friend said, there are some who have an interest in being permanently confused about these issues. I fear that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook falls precisely into that category.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) appeared to have the trouble of being unable to decide whether the notices that my right hon. Friend had issued either went too far or did not go far enough. In the end, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, revelling in this apparent confusion of which he made so much, said that what we had undertaken was a pointless action. After my right hon. Friend's announcement, the right hon. Gentleman's old colleague, Lord Mason of Barnsley, who served in the same Government as the right hon. Gentleman in the 1970s as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said:

"it is defensible to stifle all outlets of those terrorist groups who are bent on undermining the authority of the state and intent upon smashing our democratic institutions . . . radio and television gives a degree of respectability to terrorist groups . . . It boosts their morale, aids their recruiting drives and helps to keep them in business. This measure is one step forward on the road to defeating terrorism and its propaganda."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 19 October 1988; Vol. 500, c. 1144.]

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent said that he considered it—I hope that I do not paraphrase his words wrongly—an insult to the people of Britain——

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): He was wrong.

Mr. Renton: It is very helpful to have that comment from the Labour Front Bench. I think that he was wrong, too. I am glad to have that support.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent said that it was an insult to the people of Britain that they would not be able to continue to see programmes on which the hon. Member for Belfast, West and supporters of Sinn Fein appeared. I remind him of what my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood said. Is it really an insult to the people of Britain that they should no longer see the hon. Member for Belfast, West, as they saw him after the attempted murder of Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, appearing on Radio Ulster and saying that civil servants who advised the security forces "run the risks" and that the IRA was giving them the chance to resign their positions? That appearance was an insult to the people of Britain. The fact that that appearance will no longer be permitted will give great satisfaction to the majority of the people of Britain, including those in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Foot: I was saying that it was an insult to the people of Britain, and to the people of Northern Ireland, for the Government to say that the people of this country cannot judge for themselves.

Mr. Renton: I have my words showing what the right hon. Gentleman said. I shall read them in *Hansard* tomorrow, too.

Sir Giles Shaw *rose*——

Mr. Renton: With the greatest respect, I shall not give way.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) said that 19 years of appearance on television had added not a farthing to terrorist support. If that is his view, why is it so contradicted by, for example, Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien, the former Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, who introduced the ban in the Republic and who, the day after my right hon. Friend's action, said:

"Sinn Fein desperately need the access to broadcasting which they have in Great Britain which 'respectabilises' them and helps them in many ways. If that is denied them, their effort will be hurt"?

I accept the experience of Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien in preference to the judgment of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland.

Finally, let us analyse what happens when the IRA commits one of its frequent outrages, which include the murder of ordinary people, and claims responsibility. The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster told us what happens. Within minutes of the report, a Sinn Fein spokesman appears on television explaining why it is necessary for the IRA to commit murders and encouraging support for his so-called cause. It would clearly be wrong if that were allowed to continue.

Nevertheless, democratic Governments need to consider long and hard before introducing measures of this kind, even when dealing with the enemies of democracy. We have done so and we have concluded that we can no longer justify giving terrorists and their apologists complete freedom of the airwaves to further their vile campaign and sow fear in the minds of ordinary viewers and listeners at home. We have therefore taken limited steps to limit that freedom, and in doing so we have received the unqualified support of the public in the United Kingdom.

On 19 October the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said:

"the Labour party is dedicated to the defeat of terrorism" —[*Official Report*, 19 October 1988; Vol. 138, c.886.]

Those are fine words, but how is that dedication put into action? For six years now the Labour party has voted against the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. They deplore the announcements that courts may now draw inferences from the use of the right of silence, and tonight they will vote against these limited restrictions on direct access to the broadcasting media.

What, then, does the Labour party's dedication to the defeat of terrorism amount to? Words, words, words. Words have never defeated terrorism yet. Tough action, carefully targeted—unpalatable though it may be to some —is necessary, and that is what we recommend to the House tonight.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 183, Noes 244.

Division No. 467] **[12.11 am**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Bidwell, Sydney
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Blair, Tony
Anderson, Donald	Blunkett, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Boateng, Paul
Armstrong, Hilary	Boyes, Roland
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Bradley, Keith
Barron, Kevin	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Battle, John	Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Beckett, Margaret	Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.	Lewis, Terry
Caborn, Richard	Litherland, Robert
Callaghan, Jim	Livingstone, Ken
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Livsey, Richard
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Loyden, Eddie
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	McAllion, John
Clay, Bob	McAvoy, Thomas
Clelland, David	McCartney, Ian
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	McGrady, Eddie
Cohen, Harry	McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*	McKelvey, William
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	McLeish, Henry
Corbett, Robin	Maclennan, Robert
Cousins, Jim	McNamara, Kevin
Crowther, Stan	McWilliam, John
Cryer, Bob	Madden, Max
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Mahon, Mrs Alice
Cunningham, Dr John	Mallon, Seamus
Darling, Alistair	Marek, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*	Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Martlew, Eric
Dixon, Don	Meacher, Michael
Dobson, Frank	Meale, Alan
Doran, Frank	Michael, Alun
Douglas, Dick	Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Dunnachie, Jimmy	Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*	Morgan, Rhodri
Fatchett, Derek	Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Faulds, Andrew	Mowlam, Marjorie
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*	Mullin, Chris
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*	Murphy, Paul
Fisher, Mark	Nellist, Dave
Flannery, Martin	Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Flynn, Paul	O'Brien, William
Foot, Rt Hon Michael	O'Neill, Martin
Foster, Derek	Parry, Robert
Foulkes, George	Patchett, Terry
Fraser, John	Pendry, Tom
Fyfe, Maria	Pike, Peter L.
Galloway, George	Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*	Primarolo, Dawn
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John	Quin, Ms Joyce
Godman, Dr Norman A.	Radice, Giles
Golding, Mrs Llin	Randall, Stuart
Gordon, Mildred	Redmond, Martin
Gould, Bryan	Richardson, Jo
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*	Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*	Robertson, George
Grocott, Bruce	Robinson, Geoffrey
Harman, Ms Harriet	Rogers, Allan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy	Rooker, Jeff
Heffer, Eric S.	Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Henderson, Doug	Ruddock, Joan
Hinchliffe, David	Sedgemore, Brian
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*	Sheerman, Barry
Holland, Stuart	Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*	Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*	Short, Clare
Hoyle, Doug	Skinner, Dennis
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*	Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*	Snape, Peter
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*	Soley, Clive
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	Spearing, Nigel
Hume, John	Steel, Rt Hon David
Ilsley, Eric	Steinberg, Gerry
Janner, Greville	Stott, Roger
John, Brynmor	Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*	Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil	Turner, Dennis
Kirkwood, Archy	Vaz, Keith
Lambie, David	Wall, Pat
Lamond, James	Walley, Joan
Leadbitter, Ted	Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Leighton, Ron	Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*	Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*

Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hawkins, Christopher
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 243, Noes 179.

Division No.468] **[12.24 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris

Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cox, Tom
Cran, James
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hawkins, Christopher
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
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Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
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Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
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Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
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Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
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McCrindle, Robert
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MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Ilsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William

McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House approves the Home Secretary's action in giving directions to the BBC and IBA to restrict the broadcasting of statements by Northern Ireland terrorist organisations and their apologists.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Customs and Excise

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Amendment No. 2) Order 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1314), dated 27th July 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 27th July, be approved.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

Housing Action Trusts

12.35 am

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): I beg to ask leave to present a petition on behalf of the residents of Downhill, Town End Farm, Hylton Castle and Red House estates in my constituency. It reads:

To the Honourable Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of residents of the estates of Downhill, Town End Farm, Hylton Castle and Red House, Sunderland in the county of Tyne and Wear showeth That in considering the Housing Bill, brought from this Honourable House on 28 June 1988, the Right Honourable Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled have through their Committee amended Clauses 60 and 61 of the said Bill to the effect that the Secretary of State shall not designate an area as one where a housing action trust should be established unless he had made the arrangements for the conduct of a ballot of tenants affected and the majority of tenants eligible to vote have approved his proposal.

The right Honourable Secretary of State has notified us that he is considering designating the areas in which we live as areas where housing action trusts should be established and we would welcome the opportunity to make our views on the matter known by way of ballot and for the proposed designation not to proceed if the majority of those of us eligible to vote do not approve the proposed designation.

Wherefore, your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do accept, in considering the said Bill, the amendments made to the said clauses 60 and 61 by the Right Honourable the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray &c.

This is not a random petition. It is signed by 5,829 of the 6,632 tenants who could conceivably have signed it. It was taken from door to door, with only those tenants affected by the housing action trust proposal being asked to sign. A total of 87·9 per cent. of all those eligible have signed. They are not opposing the HAT in principle but are simply asking that the amendment made in another place be upheld when it returns to this place so that the tenants have the right to vote on whether they wish to see a housing action trust established.

I am proud to present the petition. It shows the overwhelming view of my constituents who are affected. I agree with them that it is appalling that the Secretary of State has told them that they should not be able to vote on their own future because they may be misinformed and vote the wrong way. That goes well beyond housing policy and threatens democracy in Britain. I see no difference in principle between a Government saying that tenants may not vote on their future and saying that people may not vote to elect Members to the House or to councils.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I must remind the hon. Gentleman that a petition is a petition, and that a long speech should not be attached to it. Perhaps he will now present the petition.

Mr. Clay: I shall bear in mind what you have said, Madam Deputy Speaker. I had almost concluded my remarks, and I shall now present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Radioactive Waste

12.39 am

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I rise to present a monster petition. It makes that presented by the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) look like a minnow.

The petition is signed by 48,326 constituents of mine, of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) and from surrounding constituencies. It was organised by the West Norfolk No to Nirex Campaign. The petition is headed "No to Nirex" and reads:

"We the undersigned are strongly opposed to the dumping of nuclear waste in Norfolk and the Wash. Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Secretary of State for the Environment not to implement any such proposals. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc."

West Norfolk is on a long list of sites. If Nirex locates an installation in or around this part of East Anglia, the consequences for the environment will be devastating. It is an area of outstanding natural beauty. An installation would meet tremendous local opposition and would have the most dreadful and appalling consequences for the environment. I am glad to present the petition. I gather that if one breaks the Mace——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The same rule applies to this petition as to the earlier one. I should make it clear that speeches should not be attached to petitions.

Mr. Bellingham: I am proud to present the petition, which is probably the biggest to come from East Anglia.

To lie upon the Table.

Fluidised Bed Experiment, Grimethorpe

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

12.41 am

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): I do not intend to take up too much time on this subject. It is apparent from the lack of attendance that we are all tired.

I appeal to the Minister to reconsider the financing of the pressurised fluidised bed combustion project at Grimethorpe. I may have a strange ally in my appeal because the Prime Minister has been converted to the protection of the environment. She believes in nuclear energy, but the petition that has just been presented showed one of the problems with nuclear energy—nuclear waste. I appreciate that the Prime Minister is now concerned about acid rain and the ozone layer. The project at Grimethorpe has an answer to those problems.

An experiment has been under way for some years. It began as a joint project between West Germany and America. Each of those countries has gone its different way, but they are interested in financing further experiments. Sweden markets power stations that are suitable for the Third world and other countries. Britain leads in clean-burn technology, but we have a history of allowing good ideas to go abroad. It would be deeply regrettable if we were to allow this good idea to go abroad. My concern is shared by the chairman of British Coal, Sir Robert Haslam. In a letter to me, he said:

"The joint CEGB-British Coal project, with input from the US, has been particularly successful in solving a number of outstanding problems and PSBC design studies show that the technology produces lower cost electricity than other systems for power stations below 500 MW. However, the CEGB feel they must concentrate their resources on improving the technology for the larger sets of 900 MW. Although the emerging privatised distribution companies will certainly be more interested in a smaller higher efficiency unit with short delivery times, most of these will be gas-fired unless this scheme is proved.

There is at present no UK collaborator with money to invest in the next stage at Grimethorpe. We certainly cannot carry this project ourselves as we aim to break even this year and are required to produce a 10 per cent. return on capital within a highly competitive coal market. This is particularly frustrating since there now exists a potential to develop an even higher efficiency version of the PFBC called a topping cycle—a uniquely British invention. With this in mind we have an application with the Department of Energy to support a £38 million four-year programme to develop the technology."

We can all recognise, as the board does, the tremendous potential of the project. It is sad that the only response from the Secretary of State for Energy is that perhaps it is ready for private investment. Because of the confused picture on the privatisation of the electricity industry, we doubt whether private industry will show an interest at this stage.

As the Department of Energy has demanded that British Coal break even by a certain date, it has limited the finances that British Coal can invest. There is a two-edged sword hanging over the future of the fluidised bed combustion project. The Minister has had to rely on reports because he has not been to see the project. If he did, he would recognise its tremendous potential. I should be grateful if he would speak to the people working there, who will be very disappointed if the project cannot continue. Unless a funding package can be found the establishment will have to close by March 1989, with the

loss of considerable expertise in advance coal combustion and the loss of the equipment and infrastructure, valued at £38 million, which support the development.

I do not think that anyone needs convincing of the tremendous potential of the project, so it is a shame that the Minister is prepared to hang back and allow the technology to go to other countries. Indeed, at some future date we might have to buy back that technology for use at power stations in this country. That is farcical.

Although we recognise the Minister's enthusiasm for nuclear energy, the amount of money required for the project is insignificant compared with that required to dispose of nuclear waste. With 200 years of coal reserves in Britain, it is farcical to proceed in such a way. We could have tremendously improved, efficient, clean-burn, coal-fired stations that could help to alleviate the problems of acid rain and damage to the ozone layer.

I ask the Minister to reconsider the matter and to find some way to fund the project—perhaps jointly between British Coal and the CEGB. For goodness sake, let us not lose this advanced technology to other countries, as has happened in the past.

12.48 am

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): I wish to support what has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett). Although the pressurised fluidised bed project is based in Grimethorpe, which is in my hon. Friend's constituency, it also affects my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay).

The project has been very successful. It is based on clean-burn technology for the burning of coal to produce electricity. The decision to withdraw funding from the project is somewhat shortsighted, not only because of the continued threat to jobs and the community in that area, but because of the mounting pressure both in Britain and throughout the world for more environmentally acceptable methods of burning fossil fuels and producing electricity. Grimethorpe has already suffered because of British Coal's past attitudes, particularly its rationalisation programme, which created job losses in the surrounding area. It is interesting that British Coal moved its Barnsley area headquarters out of the village to Allerton Bywater, 30 miles away, which also had a considerable impact on the area.

The closure of the pressurised fluidised bed project seems illogical in view of the Department of Energy's admission that cleaner coal technology is needed. We must first consider the greenhouse effect—the effect of the warming of the earth and its atmosphere, the artificial heating that will threaten polar regions, and, in future generations, the surface area that is currently at sea level.

A recent conference in Toronto drew attention to that matter. It stated that to do nothing would be the worst possible course of action. The conference would dismally regard the decision to discontinue funding for the pressurised fluidised bed project, which has achieved methods of cleanly burning fossil fuels in a manner that is acceptable to the environment lobby. As my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, East has mentioned, nuclear power stations will not be the answer to environment problems.

The privatisation of electricity will threaten the future of the nuclear power industry. Two research programmes have already been discontinued by the Minister's Department. The future for energy systems involves the environmentally clean burning of coal and fossil fuels. I, too, urge the Minister to consider ways of continuing funding for the pressurised fluidised bed project in Grimethorpe rather than allowing it to fall by the wayside, to be resurrected at a later date by other countries and perhaps by people in this country who will regard such technology as the way forward.

12.51 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) on raising in this brief debate the future of fluidised bed combustion technology. He has argued, as has the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley)—I notice that the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) is also present—the case for Government support for the continuation of a programme of work at the Grimethorpe facility in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Both hon. Gentlemen are right that for some years it has been clear that fluidised bed combustion offers the possibility significantly to lower nitrogen oxide emissions more than conventional methods of burning coal. There is also the added benefit that sulphur emissions can be substantially reduced by adding limestone or dolomite to the bed. There are other potential benefits in terms of the high rates of heat transfer within the fluidised bed.

With the rise in oil prices in the 1970s, the International Energy Agency understandably put forward proposals for research into oil substitutes. One such programme was the Grimethorpe project, in which the participants were the United Kingdom, represented by British Coal, the Federal Republic of West Germany, and the United States.

Contrary to much public impression, Grimethorpe is not and was never set up to be a power station. As the hon. Gentleman has probably implicitly acknowledged, it is the largest pressurised fluidised bed combustion research and development facility in the world. The British Government provided £17 million out of the eventual total project cost of £60 million. British Coal provided the balance of the United Kingdom share, together with a substantial contribution in kind.

The IEA programme was in fact almost complete when the miners' strike of March 1984 intervened and persuaded the American and German participants to transfer the facility to British Coal ownership. After the miners' strike, work continued at Grimethorpe with a £28 million programme funded by British Coal and the CEGB. The objective was to solve some of the problems already identified and to move the technology closer to the point where it could be developed commercially.

That programme was supplemented by work valued at around £10 million under contract from the United States Department of Energy and the Electric Power Research Institute, the United States utility's co-operative research and development organisation. At the end of this phase, problems relevant to the use of the technology in commercial operation were resolved, and a body of design data and information was produced which can now be used with confidence by engineering concerns wishing to develop and exploit the technology.

I wish to make two points on the future of Grimethorpe and its technology. First of all, pressurised fluidised bed

[Mr. Michael Spicer]

combustion is only one of several ways in which coal can be used to generate electricity while at the same time meeting high environmental standards. In 1981 my Department's Advisory Council on Research and Development, ACORD, commissioned a programme to assess the economics of clean power generation by advanced coal-based combined cycles, compared with a conventional coal-fired power station with flue gas desulphurisation.

The programme was managed jointly by my Department, the CEGB, British Coal and British Gas, and embraced both gasification and fluidised bed combustion technologies. A series of design studies were undertaken by experienced engineering contractors, and the results are summarised in energy paper No. 56 published in August of this year. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House, and I arranged for a copy to be sent to the hon. Member for Barnsley, East.

The most detailed assessments were made of pressurised fluidised bed combustion, using data derived mainly from the joint British Coal and CEGB programme, and also of the gasification combined cycle plant, using information from the 500 tonnes per day British Gas-Lurgi gasifier programme at Westfield.

The conclusions of these studies indicated that, for the near term at least, none of the fluidised bed designs offered an advantage over the planned conventional 900 MW electrical pulverised coal-fired units fitted with flue gas desulphurisation and a low nitrogen oxide combustion system. It was these conclusions that caused the CEGB to look again at its involvement in the Grimethorpe project. As a result, late last year, the CEGB decided not to participate in any further programme beyond that to which it was already committed, and it withdrew from further support for the work at Grimethorpe.

A further factor in that decision may have been that an integrated gasification combined cycle plant design based on the British Gas-Lurgi slagging gasifier now shows promise of being able to compete with conventional plant with flue gas desulphurisation at sizes of current interest to the CEGB, assuming continuing improvements in gas turbine efficiency and a market for the sulphur by-product.

The first point then is that there are competing technologies to fluidised bed combustion capable of meeting and possibly improving on its performance.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Taking the Minister's argument into consideration, is it not a fact that fluidised beds still have the advantage of their huge heat transference ability? That is far more beneficial to the environment than the other matters mentioned. Has it not proceeded so far that field trials should be carried out in which the Government should play a part?

Mr. Spicer: I agree that this technology has advantages, and I want to say how it might develop. I am not arguing that this technology does not have its applications.

The second point I want to make about the future of fluidised bed combustion is that it can be conceived of as largely a proven technology. We have the technology. It is not a question of having to research into new technology. Following on from the hon. Gentleman's point, the question for the future is one of the rate at which it would be taken up commercially. It is not a question of privatisation; it is the application of the technology by whomever applies it. I certainly know of one private power company which is introducing it—I suspect very effectively—in the United States. I understand that industry in Sweden and Germany—the hon. Member for Barnsley, East mentioned Sweden—has shown a similar interest in the technology as that shown by the United States. I believe that a privatised electricity supply industry may result in similar innovations over here.

What certainly seems to be clear is that many private companies considering entry to the power generation market are thinking in terms of plant considerably smaller than those planned by the CEGB, and there may be opportunities to exploit pressurised fluidised bed combustion in that context.

Certainly the joint design studies that I have mentioned, which were sponsored by the Department, showed that at smaller plant sizes, around 400 MW electrical, the pressurised fluidised bed plant is potentially competitive with conventional coal-fired stations with emission control. However, the technology that power-generating companies choose is a matter for those companies alone, and their choice will be governed by the economics of operation and by the experience of others.

The Government's position with respect to the Grimethorpe facility is therefore clear and has been made clear on a number of occasions recently. We believe that the next stage of work is near-commercial, and that decisions on whether and in what manner the work should proceed are best taken by those who stand to benefit from its development. I am confident that the results obtained from the Grimethorpe project, which have been heavily financed with public moneys, will be of great value to any industrial organisation wishing to exploit this technology. I have already mentioned that this technology is being exploited commercially in other countries.

In summary, the Grimethorpe facility is the property and responsibility of British Coal. It is for British Coal, and for any partners that it may interest in the project, to determine whether the pay-off from continuing research at Grimethorpe will exceed the cost of doing so. However, in the meantime, technology at a certain level exists, and I believe that in a privatised industry it may be that that technology will be applied. It is therefore a matter for the owner—British Coal—to decide whether to press ahead and develop the technology.

Beyond that, I cannot give the hon. Gentleman any assurances except that I agree that it is a good technology. It is a proven technology and it is now a question of its being taken up by commercial power companies and put to the use that they think fit.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at four minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 3 November 1988

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF LONDON (SPITALFIELDS MARKET) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time on Tuesday 8 November.

NORTHAMPTON BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time on Thursday 10 November at Seven o'clock.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *(By Order)*

FALMOUTH CONTAINER TERMINAL BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 10 November.

RIVER HUMBER (BURCOM OUTFALL) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

AVON LIGHT TRANSIT BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Tuesday 8 November.

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (NO. 2) BILL

NORTH KILLINGHOLME CARGO TERMINAL BILL
Orders read for consideration of motions.
To be considered on Tuesday 8 November at Seven o'clock.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Sunday Trading

2. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the number of convictions for breaches of Sunday trading law over the past three years.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): The total number of convictions for Sunday trading offences in 1985, 1986 and 1987 were 604, 559 and 550 respectively. Figures are not yet available for 1988.

Mr. Marshall: I thank my hon. Friend for his answer. Does he agree that a law that is frequently broken, rarely enforced and quite illogical should be reformed root and branch as a matter of urgency?

Mr. Renton: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. As he says, the law is out of date, shot full of anomalies and, at best, unevenly enforced. That is why we have consulted many groups to see whether there is a broad consensus for reform.

Mr. Alton: Will the Minister take account of the large body of opinion, both in the country and in the House, that does not wish to see Sunday made into any other day, and wants to see it kept special? Will he take those views into account before bringing forward any legislation?

Mr. Renton: I appreciate what the hon. Member says, but there are many ways of keeping Sunday special. Many people may find that they could, for example, combine going to a shop with going to church without ceasing to make Sunday a special day.

Sir Charles Morrison: In the light of my hon. Friend's entirely sensible remarks about existing Sunday law, will he also consider the law affecting Sunday sport, particularly as every Sunday during the summer, and often during the winter, every sport or body of sport breaks the law in order to meet public need?

Mr. Renton: I hear with sympathy what my hon. Friend says and shall certainly bear his comments in mind.

Mr. Pike: Will the Minister recognise that the House expressed a view on the issue not all that long ago? Is it not wrong for his Department to wash its hands of the matter and leave it to local authorities to interpret the law as they wish? Should he not send a letter to local authorities advising them how the existing law should be administered and enforced?

Mr. Renton: Certainly not. Clearly, in the Shops Act 1950 Parliament vested in local authorities the job of enforcing the law. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General recently made clear, that is what we expect them to do. The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) should bear in mind that on the previous occasion at which there was an attempt to reform Sunday trading laws every Labour Member voted against, including the Scottish Labour Members, who have enjoyed total deregulation in their constituencies for many years. When

does the hon. Member for Burnley think that his Scottish colleagues will help their English counterparts to act legally when they go shopping on Sundays?

Firearms Amnesty

3. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the result of the recent firearms amnesty.

7. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many weapons have been recovered under the recent firearms amnesty; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): The firearms amnesty held in England and Wales in September netted 42,725 firearms and 1,511,000 rounds of ammunition. Some 4,280 other offensive weapons were also handed in to the police. This response compares very favourably with the last appeal made in 1968, when some 25,000 firearms and 795,000 rounds of ammunition were surrendered. The outcome of the amnesty represents a substantial success in removing from circulation those illegally held and unwanted guns, which might otherwise have fallen into irresponsible or criminal hands.

I shall publish in the *Official Report* a summary of firearms, ammunition and other weapons surrendered to the police during the amnesty, by police force area.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: The House will be delighted to have those figures. Has my hon. Friend any theory to explain why the amnesty, although of only a month's duration, was so much more successful than the one in 1968? Does he think that it owes anything to a reaction against what happened in Hungerford in the summer of 1987?

Mr. Hogg: I think that my hon. Friend is right. The tragedy at Hungerford focused attention on the unlawful possession of firearms. I also think that the amnesty's success was one of the consequential advantages of the Firearms Bill, which received its approval in the House last night.

Mr. Bowden: I know that the public at large will be reassured by what my hon. Friend has said about the success of the firearms amnesty. Could he now give additional reassurance by saying when the increased penalties provided by the Criminal Justice Act 1988 for crimes committed by someone carrying a firearm will be implemented?

Mr. Hogg: Provisions in the Criminal Justice Act 1988 that came into force at the end of September raise the maximum sentence for illegal possession of a shotgun to three years' imprisonment following conviction on indictment, and the maximum sentence for carrying firearms while committing a crime to life imprisonment.

Mr. Tony Banks: I agree that there is an amazing collection of surrendered weapons and ammunition: perhaps we can expect a reduction in the Defence Estimates because of it.

I know that this is probably a difficult question, but in view of the number and range of weapons collected, has the Department any idea how many are still around, perhaps waiting to be collected?

Mr. Hogg: The weapons were held unlawfully and without certificate. It is therefore not possible to say how many are still held unlawfully and without certificate.

Following is the information:

Summary of firearms and other weapons and ammunition surrendered to the police during the firearms amnesty September 1988 by police force area

England and Wales

Number of items surrendered

Police force area	*Total firearms*				*Total other weapons*	*Total rounds of ammunition*
	Firearms	*Shotguns*	*Other firearms*	*All*		
Avon and Somerset	832	378	239	1,449	76	46,096
Bedfordshire	213	285	100	598	6	10,901
Cambridgeshire	284	201	86	571	112	23,973
Cheshire	492	214	178	884	95	24,999
Cleveland	164	90	86	340	15	11,007
Cumbria	291	249	62	602	37	26,162
Derbyshire	345	172	100	617	56	17,159
Devon and Cornwall	1,284	806	321	2,413	539	104,441
Dorset	686	349	256	1,291	199	62,355
Durham	216	79	84	379	25	10,335
Essex	676	397	190	1,263	64	[1]30,000
Gloucestershire	381	203	80	664	50	29,867
Greater Manchester	703	198	510	1,411	46	51,149
Hampshire	1,219	566	404	2,189	176	83,426
Hertfordshire	418	135	166	719	165	37,227
Humberside	302	141	118	561	159	18,069
Kent	812	369	201	1,382	136	52,124
Lancashire	581	299	253	1,133	234	40,813
Leicestershire	455	208	138	801	172	34,308
Lincolnshire	420	274	142	836	129	32,352
London, City of	23	2	4	29	—	6,507
Merseyside	563	172	310	1,045	67	28,266
Metropolitan Police District	2,092	545	897	3,534	12	117,112
Norfolk	419	348	110	877	26	27,204
Northamptonshire	249	124	122	495	34	15,085
Northumbria	649	188	201	1,038	2	57,036
North Yorkshire	471	356	106	933	62	24,133
Nottinghamshire	417	175	171	763	114	17,873

Police force area	Total firearms: Firearms	Total firearms: Shotguns	Total firearms: Other firearms	Total firearms: All	Total other weapons	Total rounds of ammunition
South Yorkshire	342	116	96	554	131	17,943
Staffordshire	314	197	145	656	39	19,131
Suffolk	418	347	111	876	57	28,906
Surrey	681	269	149	1,099	50	[1]28,000
Sussex	1,043	417	395	1,855	133	57,044
Thames Valley	893	429	248	1,570	165	51,334
Warwickshire	233	125	59	417	124	17,648
West Mercia	656	383	169	1,208	169	56,626
West Midlands	708	236	329	1,273	235	49,984
West Yorkshire	607	198	352	1,157	120	19,361
Wiltshire	384	204	127	715	37	35,865
Dyfed Powys	322	246	27	595	34	20,108
Gwent	205	100	52	357	24	15,063
North Wales	359	247	86	692	95	19,938
South Wales	532	215	137	884	59	33,777
All forces	23,354	11,254	8,117	42,725	4,280	[1]1,511,000

[1] Estimate.

Rural Violence

4. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on action taken by the Government to curb rural violence.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I have reminded the police and courts of their powers—both the original ones and now the increased ones—for dealing with outbreaks of disorder and infringements of the licensing laws, and have asked them to arrange for swift prosecutions and court hearings after outbreaks of hooliganism and disorder. I have also approved pilot projects in seven areas, Coventry being the first, to test the effectiveness of byelaws making it an offence to drink alcohol in designated public places.

Mr. Burns: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his answer. Will he confirm that the Licensing Act 1988 has given magistrates new powers to punish irresponsible licence holders? Will he also comment on what progress may or may not have been made in considering income-related fines to bring home to young, affluent people who have too much money and too little sense that the Government really mean business in curbing rural violence and loutish behaviour brought about by drinking?

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend's second point. It is very important that in each case the courts should have the information that enables them to make the fine bite as they want it to bite. We are trying to arrange that that is increasingly so.

My hon. Friend's first point is entirely right. The Licensing Act 1988 gives magistrates new powers, for example to restrict the drinking hours in discos and to revoke a licence while it is current; in addition, of course, to strengthening the law against under-age illegal drinking.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have received a number of letters from people in Cockermouth in my constituency who are angry about the police's failure to deal with rural drunkenness, irresponsibility and violence in that area. When I approached the police, they said that they needed more officers in the county. May I have an assurance that when more places are available the money will be spent in Cumbria and that such problems will be resolved? Or does the Home Secretary intend to do what he has done in the past—nothing—and allow these problems to persist?

Mr. Hurd: It is always difficult to know where to start with the hon. Gentleman. Even in the short time during which I have been Home Secretary, we have had a further record increase in the number of police in England and Wales. At a conference in Brighton not long ago I was able to announce a further increase of 1,100, which is a record on top of a record. I was also able to announce a further and substantial programme in the years to follow. We judge applications from police authorities as they come in, and when we receive the Cumbrian application I shall bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Alexander: Further to the question asked by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), is my right hon. Friend able to say that the Nottinghamshire police authority has all the police that it requires? Is he aware that, for example, at Southwell Minster, in my constituency, graves are regularly vandalised, and people in the area are desperate to have enough policemen to ensure that that does not happen?

Mr. Hurd: The police have received a bigger increase in resources in real terms than any other public service. It is important that that increase should continue and that a record should be piled on top of a record. It is for the chief constable in each police force area to decide how to allocate his men. I am sure that the chief constable in Nottinghamshire will note what my hon. Friend has said about the county. We shall continue to preside over and administer a programme of steady increases in the police forces of England and Wales.

Mr. Corbett: The right hon. Gentleman says that there is a record piled on a record, but is there not a further record—the record amount of violent crime on our streets in both rural and city areas, which increased by 12 per cent. last year alone? Does the Home Secretary not understand that it is not pious words but extra feet on the beat which are needed to combat the continuing and growing violence in rural and city areas? While he is at it, can the right hon. Gentleman explain why these loadsamoney lager louts behave in this way?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman will have noticed and, I am sure, given publicity to, the substantial achievements of the West Midlands police in reducing crime. He will have noticed that that force is among the pioneers who are finding the best ways to detect and deal with crime. The hon. Gentleman represents an area with an extremely good police force which is achieving substantial results in the reduction of crime. I am sure that he fully supports and encourages that.

The hon. Gentleman will provide his own answer to the second part of his question. I simply note that, whereas a couple of years ago the Opposition Front Bench said that all such crime was the result of poverty and unemployment, it now appears that the Marxist explanation has changed. I do not find either sociological reason particularly persuasive.

Association of Chief Police Officers

5. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Association of Chief Police Officers; and whether he will make a statement on what was discussed.

Mr. Douglas Hurd: I hold many meetings with the officers and committees of ACPO. The most recent was with members of the ACPO traffic committee on 24 October. The matters that we discussed included police breath-testing powers and the enforcement of road traffic law.

Mr. Leigh: With almost 5,000 police officers recruited in non-metropolitan areas since 1979, no one can doubt the Government's commitment to giving the police resources to deal with rural crime. However, when my right hon. Friend last met the association, did he make it clear that, having shown our commitment, Conservative Members demand from the police productivity, value for money and, above all, the concentration of resources on dealing with crimes against the person and property?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right. He simply emphasises what I said a few moments ago. We have a steadily expanding programme for the police, but, before we consider demands from particular forces, we must ask whether the taxpayer and ratepayer are already getting value for money. I am greatly helped in that by the Inspectorate of Constabulary and am glad to say that an increasing number of police forces are innovating and using civilians, who cost half as much, for jobs that were previously done by uniformed officers and are finding new ways of streamlining their procedures and coping more effectively with the wide range of tasks that increasingly fall upon the police.

Mr. Ashton: Is it not a fact that police chiefs have said that the new registration scheme for football supporters is nothing but a fig leaf and that it will not stop hooliganism, which takes place on the way to the grounds rather than inside the grounds? The Government's attitude towards rural violence differs from their attitude towards football supporters. They are insisting on a registration scheme that will do a great deal of damage to the game and its finances and will have little effect on the national crime figures.

Mr. Hurd: I do not understand the logic of the hon. Gentleman's view. It is true that much hooliganism takes place on the way to and from the football ground. That is one reason why we have drawn the attention of the licensing justices to their powers temporarily to close premises, such as off-licences and pubs, in such circumstances. However, there is no reason why we should not deal effectively with the other problem in the grounds. The scheme that will be produced by my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport—I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has yet seen the details—will be designed to deal with those problems.

Mr. Hill: During my right hon. Friend's discussions with the chief police officers, will he once again try to revive the neighbourhood watch scheme in Hampshire? I have had words with the newly appointed chief constable, and the police say that they are 135 under establishment. That is one reason why they are unable to co-ordinate quite as well as they should with neighbourhood watch schemes. In some areas, such as large estates, there is a problem of co-ordination, because too few people wish to take part in the schemes.

Mr. Hurd: The neighbourhood watch scheme movement has grown so fast—there are now about 60,000 schemes, whereas six years ago there were only two—that the police have a problem in deciding how to keep in touch with them, which is essential for the success of the scheme. My hon. Friend is right. It does not necessarily follow that all that must be done by uniformed police officers. In some areas of London it is being done by civilians working with the police. In other areas, such as West Yorkshire, it is being done by special constables. That is one area where the police can usefully innovate.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Home Secretary say how many chief constables at his most recent meeting had outstanding applications to him for increases in their forces? Is it not a fact that more than 50 per cent. of them have applications for increased establishments, which the Home Secretary has refused?

Mr. Hurd: It is probably true that about that number have outstanding requests, but they know perfectly well that they are not refused. We carry on the applications into the next year and consider them. Thanks to the arrangements made with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, I now have slightly more resources for next year, but they will be difficult to allocate. We are piling a record on a record. This service will continue to have a higher increase than any other public service, but it will be tight, and that is why the supplementary question of my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) is to the point.

Robbery (Sentences)

6. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the change in the last year in the average sentence for robbery; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): The average sentence imposed on men over 21, on conviction of robbery, has increased by 9 per cent. in the last year and by 22 per cent. since 1984.

Mr. Bennett: I thank my hon. Friend for that welcome news. I welcome the decision of the inquest jury in the

recent case in which two armed robbers were shot dead by the police after being warned to surrender their weapons. Does he agree that those who go armed for robbery must be aware of the consequences of their actions and should desist from such actions?

Mr. Patten: Anyone who goes out armed for robbery faces, on conviction, the risk of life imprisonment. The Criminal Justice Act 1988 strengthens that by making life imprisonment the punishment for anyone who carries a firearm in the conduct of crime.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Minister confirm that most thefts, apart from those that feature in sensational headlines, involve sums of less than £100? Will he confirm also that the cost of imprisonment is at least £250 a week? Would it not make more sense to concentrate on compensating the victims of crime and on non-custodial sentences, which are much less expensive and often much more effective in preventing the recurrence of offences?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman is right. The cost of keeping someone in prison is about £240 a week. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman welcomed the recently introduced new provisions for compensation in the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and in a recent circular issued by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the possibility of punishment within the community for less serious, non-violent offenders is probably a much better deal for the community. Our proposals are contained in my right hon. Friend's recently published Green Paper.

Mr. Hind: Given the increased level of offences of robbery, does my hon. Friend not feel that it is time that we took a close look at the remand centres that have been built in the United States in inner cities and close to the courts? That reduces the cost of transportation from prisons to the courts and frees the places that we have in our prison system for those who have been convicted and require long sentences of imprisonment. We need new designs and new thinking.

Mr. Patten: We are already producing new designs and new thinking is taking place. That thinking is encompassed in my right hon. Friend's Green Paper, which was published in July. Passages in that document ask a series of questions about the possibility of introducing private management and private construction into the building of remand centres.

Mr. Skinner: What sort of sentences should apply to City financiers who are intent on robbery, who arm themselves with bogus portfolios and kid on thousands of old-age pensioners? They are supported by Department of Trade and Industry Ministers, which means that they can continue their bogus business and rob people. Should not the Government round up and concentrate on these people?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman's attack on my right hon. and hon. Friends who are Department of Trade and Industry Ministers is perfectly monstrous and totally without foundation. It is—*[Interruption.]* I believe that loutish behaviour is unparliamentary, Mr. Speaker, but we are seeing it on the Opposition Benches. It is for the courts to decide what sentences to impose for City fraud. The hon. Gentleman has forgotten that in the Criminal Justice Act 1988 we increased the penalty for insider trading from two years' imprisonment to seven years.

Video Recordings Act 1984

8. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is planning to secure the better enforcement of the Video Recordings Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: In the Criminal Justice Act 1988 we have provided powers for local authority trading standards officers to enforce the Video Recordings Act 1984. We are also discussing with the trade associations how video dealers can be made more fully aware of their obligations under the Act.

Mr. Butler: When my hon. Friend meets representatives of the video trade, will he discuss with them how jointly they may clamp down on cowboys who deal in degrading filth?

Mr. Renton: Yes. I have already met representatives of the trade and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is planning to meet them shortly. It is the sort of subject that we discuss with them. I emphasise that progress is definitely being made. Now that the Video Recordings Act is fully in force, all videos except for a few categories, such as religion and education, must be classified. There is a fine of up to £20,000 for selling an unclassified video recording. I assure my hon. Friend that progress is being made in achieving the aims that he has in mind.

Mr. Randall: Does the Minister agree that if the number of prosecutions is anything to go by, enforcement is not working satisfactorily? Is it not hypocritical of the Government to advocate improved viewing standards that will reduce the showing of sex and violence without making more cash available to cash-strapped local authorities for enforcement? The Minister cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. The Criminal Justice Act 1988 gives local trading standards officers powers relating to videos similar to those that apply to other aspects of their work—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman should wait for a moment. The enforcement powers began only last month, but information shows that they are already having an effect. So far this year the British Board of Film Classification has issued 48 certificates in connection with proceedings under the Video Recordings Act 1984 and is now examining almost 500 video works for the same purpose, yet it is only a month since local trading standards officers were given those powers.

Offensive Weapons

9. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department has taken to prevent the manufacture and supply of offensive weapons; and if he will make a statement.

15. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department has taken to prevent the manufacture and supply of offensive weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have taken powers in the new Criminal Justice Act enabling the Secretary of State to specify, by affirmative order, weapons that it will be an offence to manufacture, sell, import, hire, give or lend. The purpose of this provision is to take out of circulation altogether weapons that have no legitimate use. A draft order specifying 14 martial arts and other weapons was brought before Parliament for approval on 19 October.

Mr. Gill: What possible legitimate justification can there be for the continued sale and manufacture of crossbows—a fairly recent phenomenon which the public increasingly feel to be a menace, not just to human, but to animal life?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend will recall that last year we tackled the problem of crossbows through legislation and increased controls over them. We intend to review legislation on crossbows to determine whether any further changes need to be made.

Dr. Twinn: I congratulate my hon. Friend and his colleagues on the action they have taken to reduce the threat from knives and other weapons. Is he aware that there is still considerable concern about other weapons that will still be freely available? Is he further aware that this week in Enfield borough, which lies within my constituency, catapults are freely available and are being sold from the same shop window as sporting guns? That is of considerable concern to the public.

Mr. Hogg: I understand my hon. Friend's concern. We considered catapults, but there were two difficulties about putting them on the order. First, they have a legitimate use, as many anglers use them for the distribution of bait. Secondly, it is difficult to make a sensible distinction between catapults made commercially and those made by young people at home.

Mr. Cryer: Although I endorse the prohibition of minor weapons such as crossbows, may I ask the Home Office to go after the Mrs. Big of offensive weapons, a faded blonde who lives at No. 10 Downing street, who is producing more weapons——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Such questions do not enhance our proceedings.

Mr. Cryer: She is touting an international trade in offensive weapons——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We refer to each other either by ministerial titles or as hon. Members. Please do that.

Mr. Cryer: She is manufacturing weapons——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman kindly rephrase his question?

Mr. Cryer: Will the Minister take action—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."]—against the organisers——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman will rephrase his question. I have already asked him to do so.

Mr. Cryer: In case my question was unclear, I was referring to the Prime Minister as being the head of a Government who are engaged in the international arms trade and who are producing weapons of mass extermination. Surely such matters are of as great a concern to citizens as crossbows.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman's question is unworthy of response.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the Minister reconsider high-velocity catapults? Is he aware that they have caused deaths, one wilfully? Is he further aware that they have caused tremendous damage in Cheshire, where one school has been severely damaged? I have already written to the hon. Gentleman and I now ask him to give the matter further consideration.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I will, of course, give the matter further consideration. The hon. Gentleman has drawn my attention to a particular case. The arguments that I have previously mentioned in the Chamber are persuasive. At the moment, it would not be right to depart from the conclusions that we reached.

Safer Cities Initiative

10. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress his Department has made with its safer cities initiative; and if he will make a statement.

16. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress his Department has made with its safer cities initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Twenty safer cities projects will be established throughout England over three years, with nine of them during the first year. Wolverhampton, Bradford and Nottingham have already been announced as safer cities areas. Staff have been recruited for the Wolverhampton and Bradford projects, and advertisements for staff for the Nottingham project were placed last week. Detailed discussions on local projects are well advanced in six further areas: Birmingham, Rochdale, Coventry, Hartlepool, Lewisham, and Tower Hamlets.

Mr. Sumberg: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his reply and on this splendid scheme. When he reviews it, will he bear in mind that crime is not limited to large cities and inner cities? Therefore, will he consider expanding the scheme to areas such as mine, which would benefit from it?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right. We started with the five towns project, as he knows, and Bolton, which is not far from him, was one example of that, although not what he wants. It is because that was successful in bringing down crime that we have enlarged the project to take in areas of cities in which crime is a particularly serious problem.

Mr. Loyden: On the question of safety in cities, will the Home Secretary give full regard to the distribution of police forces? In many cases, the outlying areas of cities in which there is a high level of crime are the most neglected. I hate to use the term "working-class", but in working-class areas there appears to be less police concern about criminality. When reviewing crime in cities, will he give full regard to such areas? There should be a better and more equal distribution of police forces on the beat.

Mr. Hurd: It is for the chief constable of a force area, particularly a big force area such as Merseyside, to decide how to deploy his men. The hon. Gentleman is quite right. Many of the most difficult circumstances and conditions

obtain on the edge of cities and not just in what are called the inner cities. The hon. Gentleman will have been pleased to see—I am sure that he has given publicity to it—that crime in Merseyside has been falling.

Electoral Law

11. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce legislation to implement the outstanding recommendations of the Speaker's Conference in the 1970-74 Parliament, relating to electoral law.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No, Sir. The primary aim of the legislation to amend electoral law, which we intend to introduce in this Parliament, will be to implement our manifesto commitment to extend the period in which British citizens abroad may register as overseas electors.

Mr. Knox: Do the Government intend to do anything about the 1973-74 Speaker's Conference recommendation to reduce the age at which people can stand for election to the House?

Mr. Hogg: I know of my hon. Friend's interest in this matter. He was a distinguished member of the Speaker's Conference. The recommendation to which he referred was reached by a vote of 10 to eight. There is no evidence that the public want to be represented by teenagers. We are sometimes accused of behaving as though we were teenagers. The question asked by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) explains why such allegations are sometimes made. I would not wish to add further substance to that charge.

Mr. Winnick: If it is right to control the amount of money that a candidate can spend during a general election—and it is right and proper that there should be such control—why is there no control on the amount of money that a party can spend nationally?

Mr. Hogg: Because Parliament has not deemed it necessary.

Electronic Tagging

12. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department where and when he now anticipates the introduction of pilot schemes for the tagging of offenders.

Mr. Hurd: We shall consult the police and the courts before deciding the areas for the pilot schemes. We expect the projects to begin next summer, monitoring people remanded on bail.

Mr. Coombs: Given the present overcrowding in prisons, despite a record building programme, and given the fact that it costs £1,000 a month to keep each prisoner in prison, does not electronic tagging represent a golden opportunity, especially for the 20 per cent. of those who are in prison for fine or maintenance default? It would represent a humane, realistic and flexible form of punishment, which will reduce the possibility of re-offending.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He has put the case exactly. We are all concerned about the increase in the remand population of people who have not been convicted of anything. If we can help the magistrates in the courts by providing this extra alternative, it will be well worth trying.

Mr. Mullin: Are there any plans for the electronic tagging of MI5 agents, since the Home Department seems to have lost track of what some of them are up to? May I commend to the Home Secretary an excellent book published today called "The Wilson Plot' by David Leigh, which will explain what some of them got up to in times gone by?

Mr. Hurd: The answer to the first question is no. The answer to the second question is that I take note.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Latham, Question No. 13.

Mr. Latham: Lucky 13.

New Police Station, Oakham

13. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is now in a position to approve the request by the Leicestershire police authority to proceed with building a new police station in Oakham.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Lucky indeed. I am pleased to say that we are now able to give approval for work on the new Oakham police station to start in 1991-92. We shall be notifying the Leicestershire police authority of this very shortly.

Mr. Latham: That is a nice present for an eye test rebel. I thank my hon. Friend most warmly for that reply. Is he aware that it will be well received in Rutland, where the police station is in a poor condition, and that it shows the Government's commitment to rural policing?

Mr. Hogg: May I say of and to my hon. Friend that he has been a persistent and determined advocate of the need to build a new police station at Oakham, and that the decision owes much to what he has said and done in this place and elsewhere.

Police Manpower, Leicestershire

14. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any further representations seeking more police officers in Leicestershire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The police authority wrote on 8 September notifying us of a revised application for 89 police posts subject to the county council's decision on the availability of finance. It has been asked to provide some further detail on the make-up of the new application. It will be considered along with applications that have been received from other authorities for increases in 1989-90.

My right hon. Friend is able to approve 800 police posts for provincial forces in 1989-90. This is an increase on the 500 that were available for the present financial year. Demand, however, already exceeds this and he will look to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for advice on how the available posts should be allocated. The aim is to announce decisions around December.

Mr. Vaz: Following the friendly exchange between the Minister and the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on the previous question, may I ask whether the Minister in aware of the deep outrage and anger in

Leicestershire against the Government, and the Home Secretary in particular, because of their failure to allocate a single extra police officer for the entire county in this year's allocation? Is he further aware that earlier this year a petition that was launched in my constituency to open Uppingham road police station on a full-time basis and for more police officers to be allocated to the outer estates has attracted more than 10,000 signatures? How long will the Minister persist in his snubbing of the chief constable and the police authority, which represents both political parties, by his refusal to allocate extra police officers to Leicestershire?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman does himself less than justice. The matter was raised previously in June 1988 in an Adjournment debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), to whom I have just paid tribute. He will be gratified by the hon. Gentleman's support today. As to the figures, I heard very little that was accurate in what the hon. Gentleman said. He will recall that since 1979 the total manpower available to the Leicestershire force, inclusive of civilians, has increased by 187. He will also know that between 1985 and 1987 the process of civilianisation has increased the number of operational officers by 70, and that the process will increase the operational strength by another 82 officers during the next three years. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman did not congratulate the chief constable on that.

Mr. Speaker: Questions Nos. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

Safer Cities Initiative

22. **Mrs. Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in developing his Department's safer cities project in Wolverhampton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten *rose*——

Mr. Patrick Thompson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask Question No. 21?

Mr. Speaker: I have called Question No. 22.

Mr. Patten: Wolverhampton was the first safer cities project to be announced. Since that announcement on 7 April 1988, a local steering committee, including representatives of the council, police, probation and voluntary sector, has been formed. It held its first meeting in July. I am encouraged by the progress that we have made in Wolverhampton. There has been an enthusiastic and energetic response from a wide range of organisations and individuals, and especially from my hon. Friend.

Mrs. Hicks: I thank my hon. Friend for those comments, which I endorse. Does he agree that one of the most effective crime prevention measures that we can take is to instil in our young people, both at home and at school, a healthy respect for the law? In paying tribute to the junior crime prevention panel in Wolverhampton, I ask what steps have been taken to ensure that young people will be represented on the co-ordinating committees of those excellent schemes?

Mr. Patten: The junior crime prevention panel in Wolverhampton is doing excellent work, and we encourage the local co-ordinating committees fully to involve it in its work.

Mr. Speaker: If it was my fault, I will call Question No. 21.

Gambling

21. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek to change the law on gambling.

Mr. John Patten: Yes. My right hon. Friend announced on 5 October that he proposes by regulation under the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976 to prohibit "multiple" lotteries and by order to increase monetary limits on individual lotteries under the Act. We keep the law on gambling under review, but have no other immediate plans to change it.

Mr. Thompson: I am grateful for the opportunity to ask this question. Is my hon. Friend aware of the concern felt in Norwich and elsewhere about young people who go into gambling arcades and get themselves into serious difficulties? Does he propose to give any further thought to this matter or take any action?

Mr. Patten: I am aware of the concern in Norwich, because of the delegation which my hon. Friend recently led to see me in the Home Office. We have made a recent announcement about our proposals to tighten up—with the co-operation of the gambling industry and of local authorities—access to amusement arcades. We hope and believe that those will have a substantial effect on the limited numbers of young people who suffer from an addiction to gambling.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 November.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is on an official visit to Poland.

Mrs. Shephard: My right hon. Friend will have noticed in Tuesday's Autumn Statement the announcement that spending on the National Health Service is to increase next year by more than £2 billion—the largest increase ever announced. Does he agree that such an increase demonstrates overwhelmingly this Government's commitment to the continuing success of the National Health Service.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is right. The Autumn Statement demonstrates the commitment to the Health Service. It provides the largest increase in resources ever made to the National Health Service—more than £2 billion in 1988-89. Full funding has been provided for the nurses' pay, and in real terms that is an increase of more than 45 per cent. under this Government. The biggest building programme in the history of the National Health

Service is under way and record levels of patient care are being achieved. The contrast with the Labour Government could not be more marked. Their words cannot disguise their actions when they were in power. It was Labour that cut nurses' pay and the hospital building programme.

Mr. Hattersley: Are the Government confident that charging for optical tests will not be a deterrent to examination, as the Minister of State, Department of Health hopes, or did the Under-Secretary of State for Health reflect the official view when she said on television last night that charging might well be a deterrent?

Mr. Wakeham: I thought that the right hon. Gentleman would at least take the trouble to look at what my hon. Friend said in full rather than what she said in the reports in some—*[Interruption.]*—at what my hon. Friend was reported as saying in some of the papers. My hon. Friend was clearly making the point that it would be commercial suicide for opticians to charge a fee for sight tests at a level that would drive away customers for spectacles. Three out of four sight tests result in a prescription for glasses. What my hon. Friend said was perfectly sensible and I support it.

Mr. Hattersley: I have the transcript, which clearly reveals that the Under-Secretary of State said that charges might be a deterrent, but on the other hand they might not. Was not the truth of the matter revealed by the Minister of State in the House in the early hours of Wednesday morning—that the Government have no idea whether they will or will not be a deterrent? In fact, the Government do not know whether they are cutting back on eye tests, and they do not care.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government do not believe that such charges will be a deterrent. We have had two very good debates on the issue in the House. Each time the Government have won the argument and the vote that followed. The right hon. Gentleman does not like to accept that. He will have to wait to see what happens down the Corridor. The right hon. Gentleman will try to have it both ways. If the Government win he will say that it is undemocratic, and if the Government lose he will say that it is a triumph for democracy. He cannot have it both ways.

Sir Anthony Grant: Will my right hon. Friend please ask all Ministers to speed up the replies that they give to letters from hon. Members? In particular, will he ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to reply to two requests that he has received from me on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) and me, to which we have not had the courtesy of a reply?

Mr. Wakeham: If my hon. Friend has not had a reply to his letter I shall look into it and see what can be done. It is timely that my hon. Friend should remind us that it is important that all Ministers reply to letters as speedily as possible. I hope that my hon. Friend will ask me the same question in a year's time and that there will be an improvement where there has been any shortcoming.

Mr. Ashdown: Is the Leader of the House aware that the United States Government have now refused to supply key software to British universities because they refuse to take action on end users, which his Government have described as illegal under international law and an infringement of British sovereignty? We all know that the Government have refused to stand up to the United States Government in protecting British industry. Will he now stand up to the United States Government in protecting British universities and academic freedom?

Mr. Wakeham: The relationship between the British Government and the United States Government is a good, long-standing and enduring relationship. Any difficulties that there might be in any particular instance can be dealt with through negotiation between the two Governments.

Mr. Bowis: Will my right hon. Friend find time to study Mr. Dukakis's criticism of the British legal system and courts? Does he agree that either that gentleman is muddle-headed or mischievous, and in either case there is a question mark over his judgment?

Mr. Wakeham: I have no wish to make any comments about the United States presidential candidates on either side at this time. I am sure that if any presidential candidate studies the United Kingdom's justice system he will find that it does not match up with some of the reported comments.

Q2. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 November.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave recently.

Mr. Bell: Can the Lord President of the Council tell the House why the Cabinet met on Tuesday morning, agreed public expenditure of £167,000 million, agreed a welcome £2,000 million for the Health Service, agreed a balance of payments deficit of £13,000 million, agreed a contingency of £9,000 million, and then reassembled here late at night and in the early hours of the morning to take three quid from the pockets of our constituents for dental checks and ten quid from their pockets for eye tests?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman gives an inaccurate account of a Cabinet meeting at which he was not present, and an inaccurate account of a meeting of the House at which he was present. At the Cabinet meeting in the morning we approved this year's Autumn Statement. That Autumn Statement shows the success of the Government's policies. Spending on priority programmes continues to grow. Total public spending as a share of gross domestic product is lower than it has been for 20 years and we are repaying the national debt. We have taken firm action to ensure that inflation resumes its downward path next year. Strong investment growth is adding to capacity, which will boost exports, discourage imports and help to reduce the current account deficit. All this will happen in the ninth successive year of economic growth. Any Labour Government would have been proud indeed to announce programmes of that kind, but they never did.

Q3. **Mr. John Browne:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 November.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Browne: Will my right hon. Friend support the drive against leaded fuel, highlighted in today's *Daily Mail*? Is he aware that although we appreciate Government action to date in terms of publicity and petrol tax incentives, we expect far more decisive and speedy action? Will he think in terms of legislation to set maximum percentage sales levels for leaded fuel, which would decrease into the future?

Mr. Wakeham: I agree that this is an important subject. The Government are playing a major part in the campaign to persuade motorists to switch to unleaded petrol. I urge all drivers to find out whether their cars can run on unleaded petrol. I am delighted to say that mine can and does. I hope that the industry will ensure that the clearest possible information is given to assist motorists in this.

Ms. Ruddock: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree with the British ambassador to Dublin that nuclear power is popular in Britain, and will he confirm the ambassador's assertion that a possible sight for a nuclear power station has been considered in east London?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government are strongly committed to nuclear power and in that, I believe, we have the overwhelming support of the British people, but I am certainly not getting involved in discussing sites for nuclear power stations.

Q4. **Mr. McCrindle** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 November.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McCrindle: Will my right hon.Friend join me in suggesting to those nurses who have a grievance about their grading that the way to overcome the problem is to use the appeals machinery that has been introduced, rather than to contemplate industrial action? Does he further agree that the British taxpayer will find it curious if, having met the bill for the largest ever wage settlement for nurses, the result were a diminution rather than an enhancement of patient care?

Mr. Wakeham: I agree very much with my hon. Friend. I am sure the public recognise that the great bulk of the nursing profession are very satisfied with the generous and well-deserved settlement. On average, even after inflation, nurses' pay is 45 per cent. higher than in 1979. That compares with a cut of 21 per cent. under the Labour Government. I am afraid that it is typical of some trade unions to prefer industrial action to sticking to agreements that they have reached, whether about the grading structure itself or about the way in which grading disputes should be handled.

Mr. Mallon: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that basic essentials such as food, heat and electricity cost 30 per cent. more in Northern Ireland than in other regions, with the result that many people will not be able to put food on the table in the winter? Are the Government intent on tampering with the right to eat in the same way as they are tampering with the right to silence, the right to free speech and the right to a free and open franchise?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman gives a one-sided account, although I accept that there are many problems in Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman put the same question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security the other day, and I have nothing to add to what my right hon. Friend said.

Q5. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 November.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hannam: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the growing public demand for higher standards in broadcasting, especially with regard to violence and pornography on the screen? Will he ensure that proper safeguards are built into the future deregulation of broadcasting to protect viewers against what could be a flood of undesirable material?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is right, and it was in response to the increasing public concern about the portrayal of sex and violence on television and radio that the Government decided to set up the Broadcasting Standards Council, which will serve as a focus for public concern on these matters. The need to maintain proper standards of taste and decency has been taken fully into account in our preparation of the White Paper on broadcasting, which will be published shortly.

Mr. Faulds: After the disturbing scenes at the Nuremberg rally at Brighton a couple of weeks ago, when do the Government intend to introduce uniforms for their followers?

Mr. Wakeham: I have a feeling that the hon. Gentleman would like to be wearing a uniform, and a year or two ago he might have looked quite smart in it. I have to tell him that we have no such plans.

Q6. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 November.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Porter: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge the warm welcome given by most East Anglians to this week's Autumn Statement and in particular that part which gives extra money to sea defence spending, coast protection and flood prevention? Will he confirm that it is Government policy that flood prevention is a national undertaking and not merely a local problem?

Mr. Wakeham: As a Member representing an east coast constituency, I share my hon. Friend's pleasure at the fact that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has given priority to improving our flood defences, and an extra £25 million per annum was announced in the Autumn Statement. We believe that local communities are the best judges of sea defence priority and costs, but the Government recognise that the expenditure can be heavy, and thus contribute substantial grant-aid to water authorities undertaking sea defence works.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): May I ask the Leader of the House whether he will state the business of the House for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 7 NOVEMBER—Committee and remaining stages of the Rate Support Grants Bill.

TUESDAY 8 NOVEMBER—Motion on the Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at 7 o'clock.

Consideration of Lords amendments to the Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill *[Lords]*.

WEDNESDAY 9 NOVEMBER—Consideration of Lords amendments to the Housing Bill.

Consideration of Lords amendments to the School Boards (Scotland) Bill.

THURSDAY 10 NOVEMBER—There will be a debate on a motion to take note of the draft revised guidelines for handling Members' representations in immigration cases.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at 7 o'clock.

Remaining stages of the Road Traffic Bill *[Lords]*, the Road Traffic (Consequential Provisions) Bill *[Lords]* and the Road Traffic Offenders Bill *[Lords]*, which are consolidation measures.

Motion on the Consumer Protection Act 1987 (Commencement No. 2) Order.

FRIDAY 11 NOVEMBER—There will be a debate on housing and homelessness on a motion for the Adjournment of the House. The Environment Committee's Second Report Session 1987-88 so far as it relates to homelessness will be relevant to the debate.

MONDAY 14 NOVEMBER—There will be debates on motions to take note of EC documents on safety in the workplace and personal protective equipment, on tar yields of cigarettes and the labelling of tobacco products, and on waste from the titanium dioxide industry. Details of the EC documents concerned will be given in the *Official Report*.

The House may also be asked to consider any Lords amendments and messages which may be received.

[Monday 14 November 1988 (3 separate debates). Relevant European Community Documents: (a) 5211/88 Health and safety in the workplace; (b) 5762/88 Personal protective equipment; (c) 4192/88 Labelling of tobacco products; (d) 4193/88 Control of maximum tar yield of cigarettes; (e) 6387/83 Titanium dioxide industry wastes; (f) 7733/84 Titanium dioxide waste pollution.

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee: (a) HC 43-xxiv (1987-88) paragraph 3; (b) HC 43-xxxiv (1987-88) paragraph 2; (c) HC 43-xix (1987-88) paragraph 1; (d) HC 43-xix (1987-88) paragraph 2; (e) HC 78-viii (1983-84) paragraph 6; (f) HC 78-xxxiv (1983-84) paragraph 3, HC 43-xxxiv (1987-88) paragraph 1 and HC 43-xxxv (1987-88) paragraph 1.]

Mr. Dobson: Why is there no proposal for an Opposition day this week? This parliamentary year is about 25 per cent. longer than the average parliamentary year, so, in equity, the Opposition should have got five extra Opposition days to match the increase in time available for Government business.

Even if the Leader of the House now has so little time left in this Session to meet his obligations to the Opposition, will he turn his attention in the forthcoming Session to all aspects of his official job description? The list of ministerial responsibilities issued by the Cabinet Office states that the Leader of the House

"should uphold the rights and privileges of the House as a whole."

Will the right hon. Gentleman either do that or get the Cabinet Office to change the job description?

While considering his obligations to the House, will the right hon. Gentleman also consider his obligations to Britain, and in particular to the people of Scotland? Last week, I named four Tory Members who took part in the debates on the Housing (Scotland) Bill and on the poll tax in Scotland. My hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) has written to no fewer than 17 of the right hon. Gentleman's Tory colleagues who have asked questions at Scottish Question Time asking them whether they would take up places on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

Surely, with such breadth of talent available to him, the Leader of the House should be able to use his influence to get at least four of his hon. Friends to serve on that Committee. Earlier this week, the Tory Whips worked hard to deprive people of free eye tests; could they put their threatening talents to work again, at least to bring the Scottish Select Committee into action? We would rather that happened than have a debate about why the right hon. Gentleman has failed to constitute the Committee.

Have the Government now agreed that the House will be given an opportunity in Government time to hold a separate debate and vote on the failure to uprate child benefit? As we said last week, the usual omnibus debate on all the benefits is an inadequate way of dealing with this matter.

Finally, arising from last night's debate, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the Home Secretary to make a statement to clear up the confusion created last night by the conflict between what he and the Minister of State said about who may or may not be interviewed live on television and radio in the context of terrorism? The Home Secretary owes that clarification to the House and the broadcasters.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman raised four questions about next week's business. First, I congratulate him on his re-election to the shadow Cabinet with, I gather, one or two more votes than he managed to get the year before. I hope that his performances on Thursdays have helped him in his endeavours.

I regret that it has not been possible to find an Opposition day. We have much important business next week, but the Standing Orders clearly provide that 20 days shall be allotted in each Session to proceedings on Opposition business. We have already provided the Opposition with one additional day, and in accordance with the wishes of the minority parties we have agreed to carry over one of their days to the next Session. I regret to say that the Opposition do not receive fewer Opposition days in a Session which is shorter than average.

We have had a number of exchanges about Scotland in recent months; I want to move the debate on a bit further.

[Mr. Wakeham]

I would welcome such a debate, but, unfortunately, it has not been possible to find the time. I have given an undertaking, and the discussions are best resolved through the usual channels.

I told the House last week, in the context of child benefit, that benefits will come before the House before Christmas. I stick by that undertaking, and I shall discuss through the usual channels how best it should be carried out.

Neither the Home Secretary nor the Minister of State believes that any confusion arises out of last night's debate, as a fair reading of *Hansard* will confirm.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Despite the isolationist gloss which the Prime Minister's press secretary seems to put on her perfectly sensible statements about Europe, there is a general recognition in the House of the need to co-operate more closely. Will my right hon. Friend be in a position next week to make any statement about improved facilities for contact between this Parliament and the European Parliament?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept for a minute what my hon. Friend has said about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's press secretary. I thought that my right hon. Friend's speech was important and interesting, and it received considerable support. I believe that her officials did not attempt to put any gloss on it. I recognise the importance of the point that my hon. Friend has raised about closer contact. I have been trying for some time to make arrangements that are acceptable to all parts of the House. I shall continue my endeavours. However, I need other people to agree with me if we are to make progress.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): In regard to the Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order on Tuesday evening, we understand that the Home Secretary is contemplating the introduction of similar legislation. Does the Leader of the House agree that it is desirable that such legislation should be similar throughout the United Kingdom, even if that means a delay in introducing the Northern Ireland order?

Mr. Wakeham: That is a perfectly proper point of view for debate. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has said how he wishes to proceed, subject to the approval of the House, and so has my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The best thing for me to say to the right hon. Gentleman is that these points will be relevant to the debate next week.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Is my right hon. Friend getting rather tired of seeing me rising each week to ask whether he will provide time for a debate on the reports of the Select Committee on Procedure? He gave an assurance to the House that a debate would be held before the summer recess in 1987. As we are coming to the end of this Session, will my right hon. Friend assure the House that we shall have a debate within a fortnight of the completion of the debate on the Queen's Speech?

Mr. Wakeham: I assure my hon. Friend that, whenever he rises in the Chamber to ask me a question, I look upon it as a bright part of the day. I enjoy it very much.

When trying to find time to debate the Select Committee's reports, we have to consider that the reports contain a number of important issues on which we need to advance with as much co-operation as possible from all parts of the House. Some parts of the House have not, perhaps, been as quick to understand the implications of those issues as my hon. Friend has been. A debate will be held on the reports as soon as I feel that it would be a profitable exercise.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Is it not utterly disgraceful that life-saving medical help here is being denied to Marquita O'Garro, aged five, the severely disabled child in the British dependency of Montserrat, whose case is described by *The Sunday Times* as "Britain's shame"? Is the Leader of the House aware that, without an operation which cannot be performed in the dependency, she will probably die by Christmas? Will the right hon. Gentleman therefore arrange for a very urgent statement, either by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs or the Secretary of State for Health, on whether they are prepared to intervene to save the child's life? Can we also have an early statement on the Government's whole attitude to patients in British dependencies who need urgent and specialised medical care?

Mr. Wakeham: The right hon. Gentleman raises a case that is obviously of concern to everybody. I cannot answer the question immediately, but I shall ensure that my right hon. Friends are aware of his concern and that he receives an answer about the way in which the Government feel best able to help.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. James Hill. I apologise for miscalling him previously.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Did my right hon. Friend see last week the excellent documentary on the environment, presented by a member of the royal family, which described some of the monstrosities that are being passed by local council planning committees? Is there not a case, at a time when the issue is almost daily news in the national papers, for a debate on the process of environmental planning? Could we also not consider ten commandments for good, tasteful planning for human purposes?

Mr. Wakeham: I did not see the programme, but somehow I seem to have heard a bit about it. It sounded like an interesting programme for somebody who had studied the issue carefully. I know that those who are responsible for such matters will study the points that were made.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Will the Leader of the House find time in the near future for a debate on environmental pollution, especially on Teesside, because although there has clearly been some progress, there is an increased level of public concern about the amount of waste which is being imported to be reprocessed and redirected in England?

Mr. Wakeham: No sooner asked than delivered: tomorrow's debate will be relevant to that subject.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Between now and next Wednesday evening, when on the Adjournment I and other Leicestershire Members of Parliament will raise the question of hospitals in Leicestershire, will my right hon. Friend please speak to

the relevant Minister of the Department of Health and tell her—I assume it will be "her"—that it will not be sufficient to make some generalities in reply because we shall expect to hear that the proposals to close all rural maternity units have been dropped?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know which Minister will reply, but if it is my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), I should say that I have not heard her being accused of making generalities in most of her speeches. Nevertheless, I shall put my hon. Friend's points to her.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Arising out of the right hon. Gentleman's reply to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), first, what further work is being done in looking into the way in which the House deals with Northern Ireland business, especially the Orders in Council procedures? Secondly, at what stage are the proposals to establish a British-Irish parliamentary tier?

Mr. Wakeham: I know that the way in which we conduct our affairs in matters relating to Northern Ireland is not entirely satisfactory, but I do not see any immediate chance of changing it, although it would obviously form part of progress generally in these matters if we could reach agreement. On the hon. Gentleman's second point about a parliamentary tier, I had some discussions with the leaders of parties in the House just before the summer recess to suggest where I thought we might be able to make some progress. I intend to have further discussions with them in the near future to see how they feel we should now proceed.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): In providing time for discussions on the future of the National Health Service, will my right hon. Friend deplore the method adopted by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) when discussing the future of the NHS by reference to hard, individual cases, however sad they may be? Will my right hon. Friend remind his noble Friends in the other place of the constitutional convention that in money matters relating to the Health Service—for example, charges—they should defer to the opinion of this House?

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly do not wish to criticise the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), but my hon. Friend has made a valid point. It is sometimes difficult, when an hon. Member raises an individual case and that hon. Member is the only one with access to the facts, for others to be able to make a considered comment upon it, because there are often many more facts that should be brought out first.

With regard to the House of Commons' decision on the Health and Medicines Bill and the other place, I believe that the constitutional rules by which we conduct ourselves are right. The House of Lords will make its own decision in its own way. I am sure that it will take into consideration the fact that this issue has been discussed twice, very adequately, by the House of Commons and that in both debates the Government won the argument and the vote.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): The Leader of the House will be well aware of the early-day motions which raise the issue of Barlow Clowes and of its effect on ordinary citizens of this nation who, in all honesty and with good advice, invested their hard-earned money in that enterprise. Unfortunately, we have been unable to have a proper debate on that, so will the Leader of the House consider having such a debate, or will the Government dodge that issue for ever?

Mr. Wakeham: No, it has not been possible to arrange a debate in the period up to the prorogation of Parliament. Obviously, many right hon. and hon. Members would like one, but that is a matter to which we can return after the Queen's Speech.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The Leader of the House will no doubt have noted early-day motion No. 1169, "Crèche facilities at the Palace of Westminster".

[That this House considers that crèche facilities should be established within the Palace of Westminster for the children of Right honourable and honourable Members and members of the staff working within the Palace.]

That motion, which is in the name of one of the right hon. Gentleman's right hon. Friends, has attracted more than 100 signatures. Will the Leader of the House study that motion and make a considered response to whether crèche facilities can be introduced—not just for the children of right hon. and hon. Members but also for those of staff who work here?

Mr. Wakeham: This matter has already been referred to the relevant Sub-Committee of the Services Committee for further consideration. We must leave it to that Sub-Committee to consider the matter first.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Can my right hon. Friend arrange a debate in the new Session, if not before, on a matter that touches on many problems, from football hooliganism and law and order to terrorism? I refer to the provision of a national identity card. We seem to be playing with that proposal and suggesting that others should introduce such a card, but even electronic tagging will be impossible without a national identity card system so that we may know where our population live and the rights they have.

Mr. Wakeham: I know that some people believe that such a card would be helpful in dealing with some problems. However, the Government have not been persuaded of the desirability of going down that road at present, although we encourage the voluntary issue of identity cards in certain cases, such as by licensed victuallers. I agree with my hon. Friend that this matter could be debated at some time. It may be relevant to debates that we shall be having in the not-too-distant future, but I cannot promise a special day.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I wonder whether it would be possible next week to arrange Prime Minister's questions and business questions at a time convenient for the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition. Incidentally, does my right hon. Friend know where he is today? It could not be, surely, that he is too important to honour the House with his presence when the Prime Minister happens to be abroad on important business?

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Well, he certainly does not come in to see you.

Mr. Wakeham: The Leader of the Opposition always very courteously tells me when he is not able to be present, and I appreciate that. It is for him to decide how he best uses his time.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House allow time for a debate on journalistic standards? I draw his attention to a headline in last night's *Yorkshire Evening Post* that casts a slur on Opposition Members by blatantly lying about their attendance during consideration of the Health and Medicines Bill. May we have such a debate urgently?

Mr. Wakeham: If we had a debate every time that either the press or the electronic media says something untrue or disagreeable about right hon. or hon. Members, we would discuss nothing else; that is something we must accept. By and large, the media do their best, but they do not always get it right. I agree that journalistic standards are an important matter, but I cannot promise an early debate. There will be one on the broadcasting White Paper that will touch on some of the issues, but perhaps not in the way that the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) phrased her question.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): In the debate that my right hon. Friend has just mentioned, will it be possible to raise the issue of media standards generally? Despite the controversy surrounding "Death on the Rock", Central Television recently allocated two hours of prime-time televison to accuse three gentlemen of President Kennedy's assassination, without bothering to find out that they all had cast-iron alibis. Right hon. and hon. Members are increasingly fed up with the powers of self-appointed TV producers to conduct trial by television and accuse innocent men without giving any right of reply. It really is disgraceful.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) makes his point extremely well and clearly, but what will be in order in any debate is a matter not for me but for you, Mr. Speaker, to decide.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Will the Leader of the House consider the six early-day motions 1475 to 1480, referring to local government and competitive tendering?

[That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Local Government Act 1988 (Defined Activities) (Exemptions) (Scotland) Order 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1415), dated 8th August 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th August, be annulled.]

[That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Local Government Act 1988 (Defined Activities) (Competition) (Scotland) Order 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1413), dated 8th August 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11th August, be annulled.]

[That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1360), dated 29th July 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 10th August, be annulled.]

[That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Local Government Act 1988 (Defined Activities) (Specified Periods) (Wales) Regulations 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1470), dated 12th August 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 19th August, be annulled.]

[That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Local Government Act 1988 (Defined Activities) (Exemptions) (Wales) Order 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1469), dated 12th August 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 19th August, be annulled.]

[That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Local Government Act 1988 (Defined Activities) (Competition) (Wales) Regulations 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 1468), dated 12th August 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 19th August, be annulled.]

Will the right hon. Gentleman consider also the three orders that have been laid in relation to local government and competitive tendering in Wales, and the situation in Scotland in particular? Can there be an early debate on those matters because of the uncertainties affecting local government employees and local authorities in general?

Mr. Wakeham: I know about the orders and the anxiety of the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. Friends that a debate should take place, but I think that it is a matter for discussions through the usual channels.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Does my right hon. Friend feel that it would be for the convenience of the House to curtail important debates by midnight, bearing in mind our experience with the Health and Medicines Bill on Tuesday, when two important votes took place in the early hours of the morning and at least two senior members of the SLDP found it more important to be at home in their beds than present to vote?

Mr. Wakeham: I am afraid that those of us who seek and obtain election to the House must recognise that our hours are what I believe is known as unsociable. There have been attempts over the years to change that, and my task is to keep business down to the minimum, but I am afraid that late nights will still be involved from time to time. Nevertheless, I do not think that we have as many late nights as we used to.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Has the Leader of the House read the Le Quesne report on Barlow Clowes? Has he noted that, despite what was said at the Dispatch Box, it points to the guilt of the Department of Trade and Industry? Investors throughout the country want Parliament to discuss that report, but the decision is for the Leader of the House. Can we debate it?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot add anything to what I have already said, which is that I cannot find time for a debate at present. I have, however, read the report, and I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's conclusions. I believe that the problem arose because a private sector firm defaulted on its obligations, and I do not think that the use of taxpayers' money to make good such losses can be justified. Investors must consider for themselves whether they have grounds for legal action and, if so, against whom. Let me repeat to the hon. Gentleman that no taxpayers' funds were used in the 1970 lifeboat operation for the secondary banking crisis, or when equity prices fell sharply in the mid-1970s.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the exceptional support on the

Conservative Back Benchers for early-day motion 275, which calls for the abolition of the national dock labour scheme?

[That this House believes that the National Dock Labour Scheme is an anachronism which both endangers the viability of jobs in the scheme areas and acts as a deterrent to job creation by new ventures; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to abolish the scheme, and open negotiations immediately with employers and unions to bring that about.]

Is he aware of the considerable dereliction on the banks of the Thames and elsewhere in the docklands of the inner cities, largely brought about by the scheme? Can we hope for an early debate, or perhaps action to bring an end to the scheme and return jobs to those areas?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government are aware of the views of many of my hon. Friends about the drawbacks of the national dock labour scheme. As I have made clear to the House on other occasions, however, we have no plans at present to change the scheme's operation, although such matters are of course kept under review.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): May I draw the Lord President's attention to early-day motion 1503, signed by 84 Labour Members, which refers to British Airways' decision to purchase the Boeing 737 rather than the Airbus 320?

[That this House condemns the decision by British Airways to buy Boeing 737 in preference to the Airbus 320; regards this decision as a body blow to the United Kingdom and the European Aerospace industries; believes that it will threaten the long-term job prospects of workers in the Aerospace industry; recognises that this is a classic example of a privatised industry taking decisions without regard to the best interests of the United Kingdom; calls upon the Government who have supplied launch aid for the A320 to point out strongly to British Airways that their decision could adversely affect the repayments of the launch aid and the United Kingdom balance of payments; and requests them to reconsider their decision as the national carrier to fly the Stars and Stripes instead of the British flag.]

The move will bring very little work to this country, and is a matter of great concern to the aerospace industry. British Airways is one of the only national carriers in Europe to turn its back on the Airbus 320, which is technologically far in advance of the Boeing 737. Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for an early debate?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot arrange a specific debate on the subject, but there will be occasions on which the hon. Gentleman can raise points of concern to him. British Airways is of course a private company, and the way in which it chooses to equip its fleet is entirely a matter for its own commercial judgment. It is not for the Government to seek to influence its decision making in this or any other commercial matter.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the apparently surreptitious acquisition of 65 acres near Heathrow airport by or for British Airways, which my constituents and others living nearby in west London suspect to be on offer for a fifth terminal? Could we have an early debate so that hon. Members may express their determined opposition to the establishment of a fifth terminal there?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend raises an important matter, but I cannot promise him a debate on it. I am sure, however, that he will, with his usual ingenuity, find a means of raising it.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will there be an opportunity for the Prime Minister to make a statement on Monday—the day of industrial action over GCHQ—about how she can talk in Poland about trade union rights while in Britain she denies people at GCHQ their basic right to join a trade union? If the Prime Minister makes a statement on Monday, will she also be able to explain how she can sympathise about a shipyard in Poland being closed when she shows absolutely no interest in the imminent closure of a shipyard in Britain?

Mr. Wakeham: Those are two typical, but still mischievous, questions. The hon. Gentleman knows the difference perfectly well. We believe that workers should have the freedom to join a trade union of their choice——

Mr. Winnick: At GCHQ?

Mr. Wakeham: —or not to join one. There are, however, special considerations when national security is involved.

Mr. Winnick: That is what they say in Poland.

Mr. Wakeham: Members of the security services have never been allowed to join a trade union. The hon. Gentleman must accept that there was a considerable amount of industrial difficulty at GCHQ between 1979 and 1981. The differences have been well aired in the House, and the hon. Gentleman knows it. I cannot imagine that that matter will form part of any statement that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister may or may not make in the House next week.

The hon. Gentleman drew a wholly false comparison with regard to shipbuilding. The North-East Shipbuilders Ltd. issue is important and should not be treated lightly or casually. No decisions have been taken. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy is getting additional information that he wants about one of the bids, and will no doubt make a statement when a decision has been made.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will my right hon. Friend find time early in the new Session for a full debate on Barlow Clowes? A debate would give us an opportunity to show how the City got it wrong in terms of solicitors and accountants advising the Department of Trade and Industry and intermediaries advising investors. A debate is important as there cannot be an hon. Member who does not have some sad cases in his constituency. It is important to show the country and investors in Barlow Clowes that we care about their plight and are prepared to join in a rescue fund. Such a debate would also clarify the situation.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is always very persuasive, but I cannot add to what I have already said on the subject.

Mr. Tony Banks: How did the Leader of the House feel when the Prime Minister so cruelly dashed his political hopes by dismissing the prospect of his or his colleagues ever taking over as leader of the Conservative party? Perhaps he will take this opportunity to get his own back by announcing that he has speeded up consideration of the

[Mr. Tony Banks]

terms of the experiment for televising the House, as it is about time that we had an opportunity to discuss the initial report. When will that report be presented to us? Does he yet have a date for the televising of the House?

Mr. Wakeham: One thing that we cannot criticise the hon. Gentleman for is lack of imagination. He can dream up all sorts of things to ask questions about.

Members of the Select Committee set about their work seriously and conscientiously. They are dealing with an important and substantial topic. Any rumours in the press about dates of reports and postponement are mostly in the imagination of people who want to disrupt us from the course we set ourselves, which was to produce a report having considered all the issues. If the House had wanted just a working party to set up this experiment, it would have got a working party. It wanted a Select Committee, and the hon. Gentleman knows that a Select Committee has to take evidence, consider it and make a report. It takes some time to do that properly, and it is being done properly.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): My right hon. Friend will be aware of a recent incident of appallingly bad driving, when a barge went into Battersea bridge. He will also be aware that Battersea is an area of London with no rail or underground links. Traffic is prevented from going north across the river and only cars are allowed to go south. Will he arrange for a statement next week on when the bridge will be open? I hope that it will be open before Christmas. Will he also arrange for a statement on what steps are being taken to avoid such incidents in future?

Mr. Wakeham: I know all about that, because I was stuck in my hon. Friend's constituency for about an hour last Monday morning on my way to the House. Only because I saw so many people who had voted for my hon. Friend did my temper stay nice and cool. I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to see whether a statement is required. If so, it can be made.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Will the Leader of the House find time for an early debate on the problems that many pensioners will experience this winter in getting enough money to keep warm? It is a national scandal that there are so many deaths each winter from hypothermia in what is hardly the coldest climate in Europe. Can we also debate what practical steps can be taken to abolish the disconnection of utilities from people aged over 60?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Lady, I know, takes a serious view of these matters, but I must tell her that the Government's record on helping old-age pensioners is substantially better than that of the Labour Government who were in office before she came to the House. Also, additions to take account of heating costs are substantially greater now than they used to be.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Employment to come to the House next week to explain what action he has taken to make a reality of the Government's guarantee to school leavers of a youth training scheme place or a job? Does he realise that thousands of 16 and 17-year-olds who left school this summer have neither a YTS place nor a job and that, since 12 September, they have been unable to claim benefit? Is it not wildly irresponsible of the Government to leave thousands of 16 and 17-year-olds without any income, thereby forcing some of them into trouble and crime? It seems recklessly irresponsible. Will the Government take urgent action to reverse this policy?

Mr. Wakeham: I have heard this before. When I looked into it, I discovered that there are substantially more places than people to fill them, but that in some areas the match is not as it should be. In those very few cases, the Government are taking urgent action with the providers of training to get over any little difficulties that there may be in one or two places. By and large, the scheme is working extremely well.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Can we have a debate in the near future—preferably next week—to consider the bids that have been put in for the Settle-Carlisle railway line and to see whether they have any sense, sensibility and realism? British Rail has treated the whole exercise as though it is a major defence secret. We could at the same time discuss the Government's plans to close 1,000 miles of branch line, fattening up—or slimming down—British Rail for privatisation, thereby destroying a valuable public service and forcing travellers to go on already overcrowded roads which yield more than 5,000 deaths and hundreds of thousands of injuries each year, instead of preserving a full public network. It is vital to have a debate before this organised vandalism is implemented.

Mr. Wakeham: I can deal with great authority with the article in *The Guardian* about the 1,000 miles of railway which is to be closed. One word describes it: the article is rubbish. I know that the hon. Gentleman has taken a keen interest in the Settle-Carlisle railway. I cannot add to what I have said to him in the past, but I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will the Leader of the House, with his customary courtesy, correct a factual inaccuracy? He said that I alone was familiar with the case of the 5-year-old disabled child who is dangerously ill and in need of urgent medical care. While I may know more about the detail of the case than other people, how can the Leader's statement possibly be true when the case was reported at length and in detail by the *Sunday Times?*

Mr. Wakeham: If I said something that upset the right hon. Gentleman, of course, I withdraw it.

Health and Medicines Bill (Lords Amendments)

4.10 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This morning, the radio was retailing an account of representations that had been made to you regarding the continuation of the debate that took place on Tuesday about eyes and teeth. It was being suggested that the Parliament Act would prevent the debate and the vote on one of those issues taking place.

I am probably the last person in this building to want to give an oxygen cylinder to the other place, but the plain fact is that, under the Parliament Act as I see it, and in view of the fact that the other place has debated these two issues, it would be able to continue the debate and perhaps bring the matter back to this place, if the vote is carried.

Will you confirm, Mr. Speaker, that there have been no representations from the Government on this issue , that no decisions have been made and that, contrary to all the reports on the airwaves this morning, those debates will take place?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot confirm that, because I am not in any sense connected with the Government, but I heard what I judged to be a somewhat inaccurate statement on the news about my ruling.

To clear that up, I should say to the House that I have given no ruling on the Health and Medicines Bill other than that which I gave when I was in the Chair during the debate. Lords amendments Nos. 20 and 22 involve Commons privileges. The House gave a reason for disagreeing with the Lords on amendment No. 20. It did not do so in respect of amendment No. 22 as it is not the custom to give a reason when consequential amendments are made to a Bill.

Confidential Documents

4.11 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would be greatly obliged if you would consider and express, in due course and in principle, a view on an issue relating to a matter set down in extenso on page 93 of "Erskine May" under the general heading

"Matters arising outside Parliament which may be treated as proceedings inside Parliament".

This point arises by virtue of the close relationship of those two matters, pending business in the House and, especially, in the context of breaches of the Official Secrets Act. I refer generally to the release of certain stolen confidential documents from within Whitehall relating to the pending business of this House, and their use by hon. Members, inside or outside the House.

In the light of condemnation of such actions by the Law Lords in the "Spycatcher" case, I simply ask whether you would be good enough in due course to give a general ruling on such matters and to explain to the House what guidance it might take from your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: That is a hypothetical matter, but, if the hon. Gentleman is making an allegation about the leaked documents of which we have heard this week, as a matter of privilege, he should write to me in the usual way and I shall certainly consider the matter.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that, in the late 1930s, when Winston Churchill was leaking information and documents that he received from the Ministry of Defence, which was leaking like a sieve, an inquiry was set up in the House and the House ruled that it was his duty to bring that information, however he obtained it, before us?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot confirm very much of what went on in 1930. I was still at school.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Further to your response to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Stafford, (Mr. Cash), Mr. Speaker, will you confirm that, in the event of the hon. Gentleman writing to you and your ruling on matters relating to the privilege in respect of leaked Government documents, any ruling by you will apply to any document, whoever leaks it?

Mr. Speaker: These are hypothetical matters. I will wait to receive a letter and look carefully into the question.

BILL PRESENTED

COUNTING WOMEN'S UNREMUNERATED WORK

Ms. Mildred Gordon, supported by Mr. Keith Vaz, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Tony Benn, Ms. Joyce Quin, Ms. Marjorie Mowlam, Mr. John Hughes, Mr. John Battle, Mr. Tony Banks, Ms. Dianne Abbott, Mr. Doug Hoyle and Mr. Bill Michie, presented a Bill to require government departments and other public bodies to include in the production of statistics relating to the gross domestic product and other accounts a calculation of the unremunerated contribution of women and to include this calculation in the Gross National Product: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 225.]

Public Accounts Committee

4.14 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the 1st to 36th and 41st Reports and First Special Report from the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1987-88 and of the Treasury Minutes on those Reports (Cm. 307, 323, 367, 410, 502 and 509), with particular reference to the following Reports:—

16th: Monitoring and Control of Charities in England and Wales

20th: Ministry of Defence: Fraudulent expenses claims; Meteorological Services

26th: Community care developments

31st: Naval warship and weapons procurement

32nd: Review of the operations of the Land Registry

Today we are having our annual debate on the public accounts reports. They do not cover all the matters that we have discussed; they are the matters on which we have had a reply from the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who, acting on behalf of the Treasury, produces the Treasury minutes for us.

Our last debate was on 3 December last year when we considered the 54 reports tabled in the motion. This time, we are dealing with 38 reports and six Government replies. There are fewer this year because, first, it is only 11 months since the last debate and, secondly, as a result of the election, we took rather less evidence during the year. I must put the House on notice that we are likely to bring significantly more before it next year.

As on recent occasions, we have chosen five reports to highlight in the motion. The way in which we selected those reports reflects the lessons which can be learnt and should be drawn to the attention of the House because substantial sums of money are involved and particular interests should be explained and discussed. A number of other reports are likely to be mentioned in the debate.

I must give my personal thanks to Committee members. It is an extraordinarily hard-working Committee, frequently interviewing two Departments each week. That means that there is a vast amount of paperwork and the work is now undertaken by the Committee far more assiduously than it has ever been during the period that I have been associated with the Committee, which, like that of the hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw), goes back over 20 years. That work has borne fruit in the reports now before the House.

A number of hon. Members have left the Committee. The hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), has become chairman of the commission which looks after the detailed operations of the National Audit Office and the Northern Ireland Audit Office. He considers such matters as pay, conditions and recruitment. I am also a member of that commission and, only this week, we visited Northern Ireland to see the National Audit Office there and to ensure that it has the appropriate impact.

The value of these reports—I cannot stress this too highly—is that we have unanimity in every report. That is important because we differ from other Select Committees, which have their differences from time to time. We achieve this unanimity because we are trying to protect the taxpayer. That matter is of overriding importance to us. We achieve that unanimity, not by diluting the force of our report, but by concentrating on whether the taxpayer is obtaining value for money. That is why we have such an impact and, I hope, always will have. The Financial Secretary to the Treasury will reply to the debate. He is welcome to attend our meetings whenever he wishes, but we know that the burdens of his office prevent him from attending frequently.

If the Committee and the National Audit Office are to work successfully, they must do so in a form of partnership. That is much easier to achieve now that the Comptroller and Auditor General is an Officer of the House. That is an important change. He is responsible to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the House. That was not so in the past and has been an enormous improvement. In the past, we had almost a branch of the Civil Service, which meant that recruitment had to be undertaken within the normal rules of the Civil Service.

Now the situation has changed and the staff are auditors and accountants in their own right. They have more in common with accountancy firms in the City and in provincial towns than they have with the Civil Service generally. This is as it should be. So successful are they that a number of them are being attracted by the City and other areas of the private sector, where they are paid higher salaries, because of their expertise. When the recruits sit their accountancy examinations, we find that they take about 80 per cent. of the top places when the results are announced. These are the recruits of the National Audit Office. It is a great success story and we should be proud of it. We can be proud of this part of Parliament in which we have some responsibility.

The PAC works closely nowadays with the National Audit Office's investigations. Our work is based upon detailed examination of all Government papers that deal with the work undertaken in the Department which is the subject of the report from the Comptroller and Auditor General. The NAO produces its report to the House, and the Government know that the PAC and the NAO monitor the action that they take in response to the Committee's reports. We know that under the National Audit Act 1983 the Comptroller and Auditor General has discretion in the investigations that he chooses to make. There are regular discussions with the Committee, which is a novel feature of the PAC's work. This is part of the process which involves annually a detailed NAO corporate plan and a detailed examination of the reports and areas of activity. The relationship between us has prospered as we have brought our views to bear. The NAO gives us its views on important issues within the areas that are under investigation.

The new NAO Comptroller and Auditor General, John Bourn, was appointed by the Queen after the relevant motion was approved by the House, and we have a happy relationship with him. We feel that he has proved to be a successful choice. The office has nearly 1,000 staff members and it needs to keep under review the value for money that is achieved by the Government. The staff members are comparable to the sort of staff that would be found in industry. They examine the way in which the Civil Service spends public money.

I visited the National Audit Office in Northern Ireland on Tuesday. The task of auditing Northern Ireland expenditure on behalf of the Committee is an arduous one. There are particular problems in dealing with expenditures in Northern Ireland, but there is power now to make reports on value-for-money investigations. Five years ago, before the National Audit Act 1983 came into force—this was prompted by my hon. Friend the Member for

Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett)—we had the appropriation accounts. These were one or two voluminous reports that dealt with detailed matters.

We are now engaged in the process of getting value for money, and I shall say something about the way in which we go about that. Our prime consideration must always be to ensure that public money goes for the purposes which Parliament intended. Our purpose is to ensure that when the House votes money it goes to those whom Parliament intended to receive it and for the purpose which it intended. That must always be a prime consideration as we assure ourselves of the probity of the public service, and perhaps we take for granted too readily that probity.

I have met members of PACs from other parts of the Commonwealth. Their major preoccupation is to reduce fraud and corruption, and they want to know how we tackle the problem. Once fraud and corruption starts, it is extremely difficult to root out. The greater barrier to fraud and corruption in the public service is formed by honest individuals within the service. Once a group acts in concert to defraud the public, it is extraordinarily difficult to root out. Whenever we see any possibility of fraud or corruption we treat it as the most serious matter to come before us, and it is right that we should do so.

I am happy to say that these occasions are few and do not take as much of our time as they demand of other PACs in other countries. Thus we are able to deal more effectively and more usefully with the value-for-money parts of our operation.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): I am interested to hear the right hon. Gentleman's remarks. I ask whether he is being rather complacent. How can we be sure that we are getting value for money in the National Health Service, for example, when there is no real accounting system, which means that there can be no real auditing system? It has been arranged deliberately that there should be no inventory control in many sectors of the NHS. This is made clear in the 14th report of 1985. Having considered the situation in the Health Service over all the years of its existence, the Department still did not know whether there were too many nurses or too few. The comment was made that that was unsatisfactory. I questioned my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State about this matter only the day before yesterday and he still could not say whether there are too many nurses or too few. The necessary information is not available and there is nothing on which to make comparisons. There is no proper accountancy system in the NHS or, I think I am right in saying, in any other sector of Government. I feel that complacency is being shown, and that talk of getting value for money is unrealistic.

Mr. Sheldon: I had not really moved to the question whether we are getting value for money. The hon. Gentleman is anticipating what I have to say about the problems of getting value for money. If he had waited a little longer he might have learnt rather more about the way in which we approach the issue.

I do not know whether the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) has read the PAC's 11th report, which deals with the internal audit of the Health Service. We set out what we need to have if we are to assure ourselves on these matters. In the past two years we have undertaken, with the co-operation of the Comptroller and Auditor General, a close and continuing examination of the NHS. The report on nurses was one of the early fruits of that work. We showed that the Department did not know whether there were too few nurses or too many. There was a report produced last week about the state of the NHS. It deals with whether it is being looked after properly. We cannot discuss the issue fully within this debate because we have not had a Treasury minute. There has been no opportunity to debate it properly. The important issue of operating theatres will be arising shortly. We are giving consideration also to family practitioners and doctors. We have suddenly moved into this area.

I am aware of the continuing interest of the hon. Member for Norfolk, North in these matters and I am pleased that we are able to deal with them. That is largely because of the way in which the NAO has superseded the old Exchequer and Audit Department. The value of the reports that are produced will become more widely appreciated.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I appreciate that my right hon. Friend has moved on from fraud and corruption to value for money. I revert to fraud and corruption, however, because he has said that there are relatively few examples of it. It would seem that there are some spectacular rake-offs as a result of fraud and corruption, especially that which involves the Ministry of Defence. Some of the large defence contractors, or defence monopolies, have taken the taxpayer for a ride. Investigations appear not to be bearing fruit and, in effect, the taxpayer is not recovering his money. What is the PAC doing in this area?

Mr. Sheldon: I was dealing with fraud and corruption as a proportion of the work that we undertake. I shall be dealing with specific instances that arise in two of the reports among the five which have been singled out. My hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Norfolk, North are right to attribute to these matters the importance that they deserve.

The elimination of fraud and corruption must be our major task. After that, we shall have time to consider value for money, economy, efficiency and effectiveness, all of which are written into the National Audit Act 1983. Economy is simply a matter of ensuring that we are not paying any more for what we are getting than we need to pay. That is a straightforward undertaking with which the accountants can usefully deal. Efficiency is a little harder because sometimes it is worth paying a little more to have something a little better. It is a trade-off between extra efficiency and how much more might have to be paid for that. Effectiveness is more difficult. We must ask, "What do the Government intend?" We do not question policy, which is the major difference between our Committee and other departmental Select Committees. We take the policy for granted, even though many of us may disagree with certain aspects of it. We ask what the Government are doing to make the policy more effective. When we know that, we can compare results with expectations.

All that actually lies at the heart of the auditing function. Every time that a civil servant comes before the Committee, we want to know about the programme that he sets out before us—when it was initiated, how he quantified what he wanted to achieve, when it would be achieved, how much money it would cost and his arrangements to monitor month by month, or year by year, how effectively the programme operated. It is the

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comparison between expectation and achievement quantified. That is important. There have been some disastrous experiences of the failure to do that. The civil servants did not know what they wanted to achieve, they did not know when they had achieved it, they did not know the cost and they did not know whether the programme had ended. We must avoid those horrors if there is to be proper public accountability. We must know, with some precision, what is expected, how much it will cost, when it will be achieved and that proper monitoring arrangements have been installed. In fairness to Government Departments, they are now aware of that and it is relatively rare for those expectations not to be built into the programmes that we examine.

I must mention the Treasury Officer of Accounts, Mr. John Beastall, and his Northern Ireland counterpart, Peter Small, who work closely with us and are valuable contributors to our discussions. The accounting officers take our evidence sessions seriously and spend a great deal of time preparing for them. I am conscious of the amount of time that we take from those senior civil servants, who have many other activities to undertake. I know that when they are informed that we will take evidence, they spend a great deal of time—several days or even more—preparing for their appearance before us. The easiest thing in the world would be to browbeat those civil servants, as do some of the Congressional committees. However, that is not the way that we take evidence. Part of our major task is to ensure that we improve the administration of the way in which money is spent. We understand the problems of the accounting officers and I and my colleagues try to take them into account in our questioning.

I am not sure about the number of reports that will be published this Session and whether we will beat the previous record of 52 reports in the 1985-86 Session. Of course, it is not the number of reports that is so important. Indeed, we used to combine all reports into one big report. It was unwieldy and few people were interested in it. The way that we do things now—one report per subject—makes them more digestible. People then know what they are doing and can go about it rather more quickly than if they had to wait for an annual report.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): My right hon. Friend knows that I greatly admire the functioning of the PAC under his chairmanship. In many ways, it has carried out the improvements and the changes that many of us have wanted for a long time. Today we are considering 38 reports, of which five have been selected for particular debate. The Committee often produces 50 reports in a year. Does my right hon. Friend agree that some of them are rather superficial? Would it not be far better to concentrate on, say, half the number in much more detail?

Mr. Sheldon: I fully understand my hon. Friend's point, as it is one that arises from time to time. Part of our job is to ensure that Departments expect supervision of their work. If there were only a limited number of reports, we would not get round many of the Departments. That is the way that the Canadian House of Commons operates. Some of its Members visited our Parliament two years ago and said that they were unhappy with the system and that their relationship with their Comptroller and Auditor General was little short of disastrous. Their relationship with the other Members of their House did not appear to be that good either. They came here to find out how we handled matters. There could be no greater tribute to our work than the fact that they returned two years later to examine our work in greater detail because they had been so impressed with the way that we operated. Their Committee produces fewer reports, which the various Departments do not take seriously because it could be a few years before the Committee dealt with those Departments again.

One of our great strengths—and this applies especially to the large Ministries such as the MOD—is that Departments know that we will come to them again and again on matters such as procurement and that we take a continuing interest in what they are doing. For example, if they tell us that they have dealt with certain problems, they know full well that the next time that they come before us they will be confronted with that statement and be held to account for it.

I grant that the Committee might be working far too hard, and for the benefit of those who work with me I should dearly like to find some way to limit the load. I fully understand both sides of the argument and we shall continue to keep these matters in mind.

It is likely that there will be a larger number of reports this year than in the record year of 1985-86. The National Audit Office is, rightly, planning a gradual increase in the number of value-for-money studies, and we welcome that. We want it to become active in many areas. It is probable that a number of those reports will not have the great depth that the Committee rightly requires. We have it in mind to ask certain questions and, if we receive fairly satisfactory answers, we will leave it at that and not necessarily produce a report on each occasion. The alternative would be to set up a sub-committee, but we are very much against that because we believe that all of us must have responsibility for the expenditure of public money and the examination of the way in which it is spent. We have always been against any division of responsibility within the Committee.

I must say a few words about the way that we review past actions. One of the features of the past year has been the large number of representations from inside and outside the House asking for examinations of all sorts of matters. Indeed, some have asked us to consider future matters, and I have to remind them that we essentially consider the past, monitoring whether money has been spent effectively, economically and efficiently. We are trying to learn lessons and to offer lessons to Departments in the expenditure of moneys. Of course some lessons are valuable, because they highlight some points that are worth examining. We discuss with the Comptroller and Auditor General how they might fit into his rolling programme. That is also an important development.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): On matters in which the Public Accounts Committee has taken an interest, will the right hon. Gentleman, on behalf of the Public Accounts Committee, accept my warmest congratulations on its excellent reports on Ministry of Defence schools of music? They were thorough, effective and crucial in the representations that were made to Her Majesty's Government on the survival of the royal military school at Kneller hall. The Public Accounts Committee's reports were extremely important and had a bearing on the result that was obtained. The Royal Military School of Music at

Kneller hall was saved, as a result of which it continues to produce the finest military bands in the world, which are the envy of every other nation.

Mr. Sheldon: The hon. Gentleman has given the House part of the lesson that I was about to give. I might as well introduce it now. The interest of many hon. Members and of those outside alerts the Committee to certain matters that are worthy of further consideration. The hon. Gentleman's case is precisely within that definition. Because of his efforts, we realise—[AN HON. MEMBER: There were others as well.] Yes, there were others as well.

Because of the efforts of the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), we realised the full extent of the problems involved, and carried out a more detailed investigation than we might otherwise have undertaken. We found that the Ministry of Defence proposals and the way in which it carried out its examination were woefully inadequate. We were able to satisfy ourselves that alternative methods were better. The fact that it pleased the constituents of the hon. Member for Twickenham is a bonus for him, and it is a pleasure for us that we were able to deal with the matter effectively and sensibly.

As the activities of several Government Departments are hived off agencies will come into being. It becomes important to consider how they will be dealt with and who will appear in front of us. We must have before us the person who makes the final decision. We do not want to be fobbed off with seconds or, God forbid, thirds. We want in front of us the people who are to make crucial decisions. With agencies, it is a more complicated matter, because an agency might be a minor body in which the permanent secretary might make the major decision, or an agency's chief executive might make a final decision on a major spending matter. We content ourselves by saying that we must have the main person responsible. We have sent a note to the Treasury detailing our interest and concern and putting forward our recommendations.

I now refer to the Government's response to our various proposals and recommendations. We shall soon begin to quantify matters. The quantification of proposals and acceptances is not an exact science. For the record, I point out that the National Audit Office, which I asked to produce figures for me, said that, in 1987-88, out of 161 specific recommendations or findings, 153 were agreed by the various Government Departments involved. I suppose that that is a success rate of 95 per cent. But let us not make too much of it, because it depends more on the importance of the recommendations than on the numbers. However, it is a sign—no more than that—of the way in which our reports are treated and accepted, and we value that. An essential part of our task is to make sure that we not only get value for money and proper accountability but try to improve administration in the way that I mentioned.

I shall deal with one or two reports apart from the five that are set out on the Order Paper. I begin with the report on the monitoring and control of charities in England and Wales. We would not have had that kind of report, say, five years ago. The Committee considered that it was important because there is a clear Government responsibility dealing essentially with value for money. Nobody is questioning whether any certification work has gone adrift—for example, fraud or corruption within the Charity Commission.

Charities are big business. There are more than 150,000 of all shapes and sizes. They spend over £10 billion a year —frankly, when I first saw that figure, I thought that there had been a mistake—and hold assets of more than £2·5 billion. They enjoy tax concessions and get support from public funds worth an extra £2·5 billion a year. Obviously, by their nature, they have a special place in the minds of the general public. It is crucial that charities be seen to be not only above fraud but perfect in their operation, or as near to perfect as we can get them. The Public Accounts Committee was disturbed that charities were not properly controlled and efficiently managed and that there were major gaps in the Charity Commission's control and monitoring systems. We found that the register of charities was seriously out of date, unreliable and ineffective, and that there was no computerisation of records. All that they had were brown folders and they were not undertaking their responsibilities. Paragraph 9 of our report states:

"All registered charities are required, under the Act or by the Commission, to submit annual accounts to the Commission. But the NAO found that this requirement was being widely ignored, with little attempt at enforcement by the Commission. And less than a third of the accounts received had been professionally audited."

Paragraph 14 states that we found that an NAO

"test examination indicated that the Commission examined only 4 per cent. of the limited number of accounts received from charities".

Two thirds of charities' accounts were not submitted in the past five years. We found that administrative charges varied from 0·5 per cent. to 20 per cent. in top charities. Apart from the top 21 charities, some charities were charging 95 per cent. for administration. That is clearly fraud, unless something has gone wrong. One of the advantages of our report is that it stimulated many other people to investigate further. We discovered charities that really were rackets. People were going from door to door, saying that they were from a registered charity. It is the easiest thing in the world to become a registered charity. All that one must say is that one's objects are charitable, not whether what one is doing is charitable. That is an absurdity. There is no need to submit any accounts, because nothing happens. One can go from door to door, pick up money, and put it in one's pocket. That is shameful. There is now a new broom in the Charity Commission, and we wish him the very best.

Something could have been done. I can understand problems with staffing, a lack of money for computerisation, and a vast amount of work to do. Because charities could not do everything, it did not mean that they should do nothing. That was one of the saddest aspects that occurred to the Committee. There could have been a sample examination, for example, and there could have been an undertaking to publicise the charities that had not published their accounts. The Commission could have threatened to do that. There were many possibilities that fell between doing nothing and doing everything. That would have satisfied at least part of the criticism. The Committee was gravely concerned at the risk of fraud, abuse and maladministration. We considered that such organisations needed to be much more positive and purposeful.

Since we produced that report steps have been taken to tackle some of the problems, and we are happy to have prompted some action. Like many other bodies, when the Charity Commission knew that we were examining this area, it took steps to discover the true position and

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produced its own report. That happens frequently with the work of the Public Accounts Committee. One must not compare the position that we discover with the position as it should be, but with the position that might have existed had we not announced our intention to examine. The very announcement of that intention often prompts changes. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) will be aware of that. I am delighted when bodies say to us, "Things are not as bad as they used to be", and I make no criticism of them, but I am aware that much of the progress is a direct result of the understanding that the Committee will take its examination further.

We are pleased that action is being taken, and pleased with the Treasury minute, which endorses the Committee's anxieties and fully accepts the need for revised priorities and firm action in the areas identified. The change in senior management in the Charity Commission and the fresh impetus in its work appear to be leading to continuing improvement. We look forward to those aims being vigorously pursued.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Is this the first occasion on which the Public Accounts Committee has investigated the Charity Commission?

Mr. Sheldon: I know of no previous investigation. The Home Office, which had responsibility for the Charity Commission, never regarded it as having the importance that charities should have. The great thing about our country is the way in which the charitable impulse is readily catered for. We need only a disaster or information about something terrible happening for a great deal of money to come forth, even from very limited pockets. That is a great tribute to the response of the British people, but we must ensure that the money goes to the right people to carry out the right task.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman is right when he says that with such large sums—about £10,000 million a year—the potential for abuse, and indeed for a major scandal, is great, but does he agree that, although the Committee was right to criticise the Charity Commission, the fact is that the law under which it operates is wholly unsatisfactory? For example, there is no requirement for a charity to produce audited accounts, so there is no external check on its finances, and the Charity Commission itself is under-resourced. Might it not be a suitable candidate to become an executive agency?

Mr. Sheldon: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that there is a fundamental need for a change in the law. The Government accept that, but the problem now is one of time. I agree that audited accounts must be produced, or an alternative found for smaller charities, but whatever happens the legislation will take some time, and in the interim I am anxious that people's confidence in the value and work of charities should not be diminished. The Committee was conscious of the need to retain respect for charities, most of which are perfectly well run. I did not want there to be a gap between what was wrong in the past and what will be as near right as one can get it in the future. We have handled the matter reasonably well, and it is for the Government to produce their proposals. We hope that they will not be too long delayed.

The Committee's 20th report related to fraudulent expenses claimed in the Ministry of Defence, mainly fraudulent travelling, and subsistence claims made by its ordnance searchers staff. The amounts of money were difficult to determine. We identified more than £203,000, but the true sum may have been millions of pounds. The important matter was not that the money was obtained fraudulently by people who regularly went home every evening but still claimed subsistence in hotels and other accommodation, but that the claims were countersigned by military personnel.

It goes without saying that the Public Accounts Committee is always greatly concerned about evidence of fraud by public servants who handle public money. This was a serious and shocking case, and there was evidence of long-established local malpractices and management connivance. But, following police inquiries, the Director of Public Prosecutions advised that criminal prosecutions could not be sustained. Although the Ministry of Defence considered disciplinary action, none was taken and nothing has been recovered. The Public Accounts Committee found that astonishing. It regarded as extremely disturbing the scale of the fraud, the blatant control failures and the weak disciplinary approach and delays of the Ministry of Defence. What disturbed us most was that military personnel who were responsible for civilian employees were conniving in the operation. We were sad that the vigorous action that was vital was not taken, and the public standards which rest on the truthfulness and integrity of supervisors were found to be sadly lacking.

In the Treasury minute, the Ministry of Defence assured the Committee that serious fraud cases should normally be followed by prosecution or disciplinary action, and that the effort needed was not sufficient reason for not pursuing such action. It is easy to say that it would cost more to get the money back than the amount of money at stake, but that can never be the argument when one is dealing with public money. With private money, we may decide individually that it is not worth throwing good money after bad. But that argument cannot easily be sustained in the public sector. Taxpayers' money should be more rigorously controlled than our private money, about which we may decide as we think fit.

We are pleased that the Treasury minute accepts that such cases require prompt, vigorous action and that it has taken decisions to improve internal control. That emphasises what we considered to be the deplorable handling of the cases that we examined. I hope that the Financial Secretary will be able to say whether there has been any success in recovering money and what has been done to give all Departments guidance on disciplinary action in serious fraud cases.

The 26th report deals with community care developments. We noted the Government policy that elderly, mentally handicapped and mentally ill people should, as far as possible, be cared for in their own homes or in the local community. Most of the 8 million elderly, mentally handicapped or mentally ill people are cared for in their own homes, but 220,000 people live in residential homes and 155,000 in National Health Service accommodation. The implementation of a policy of transferring from hospital into the care of local services run by the NHS and the local authorities demands a certain relationship between the two bodies, but we found that relationship to be inadequate.

We examined the success of the transition from hospital into community care and placing people in their own environment. We found a complex administrative framework involving local authorities, NHS hospitals and family practitioner services, and the danger that patients could be transferred to the community without appropriate services being in place. In one case, people were being discharged from hospital, sent to their homes, sent back to hospital in an ambulance and then sent back home. Joint planning and finance schemes were not as effective as they should be.

The funding mechanisms needed to be improved to provide practical ways of moving people to the community without penalising those who wish or need to stay in hospitals. The Committee also examined the rapid growth of residential care for the elderly, many of whom have been financed by supplementary benefits, which amounted to £500 million in 1986. That support was provided irrespective of any assessment of the need of the claimant for that sort of care. Almost a quarter of those receiving benefits could have stayed in their own homes had community support services been available. What is more, it could have been done more cheaply and more in line with the claimants' requirements and wishes.

We were concerned that those in residential homes might not be receiving good value for the money paid to the proprietors, and that the registration and inspection of homes were inadequate. We were told that, if value for money was not being obtained, that would prompt the elderly to go elsewhere. I shall read one question put to the accounting officer—at 1786 in the 26th report—by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr Davis). He asked:

"Have you done any comparisons on the basis of value for money as between private residential homes"?

He then went on to ask:

"you say you do not bother about value for money because you leave it to the customer, the person who is receiving supplementary benefit . . . Do you think that is realistic?"

Mr. Partridge replied:

"Yes, it is realistic."

My hon. Friend asked further:

"Have you ever heard of the fears of elderly people of being victimised if they complain about what is going on in a private residential home"?

Therefore, the claim that one can receive value for money by asking elderly people to make their protests and to take their custom elsewhere, if they are not satisfied, was not only unrealistic, but it disturbed us that this was the view held by the official concerned. We have all been to these homes and know that these people would not take their custom elsewhere. Many of them dare not make a squeak of protest. The House may recall that this report led to a number of further examinations, one of which showed what happened in some of those homes. That added to the force of our argument that these homes need to be looked at more fully and more regularly. We said that the registration and inspection of homes was inadequate. I am pleased with the response that we have received. The Treasury minute promises further consideration of the need for care assessment, which is essential to achieve not only the right care for the elderly, but, of course, value for money for the taxpayer.

The Treasury minute promised an increase in the minimum number of inspections from one to two a year, and that the question of the reasonableness of charges would be researched further. That would seem essential to ensure proper value for money.

Our report on this was issued before Sir Roy Griffiths' report, "Community care: Agenda for Action", was published. The Griffiths report recognised the need for fundamental changes in the funding and administration of community care. The recommendations of that report are still under consideration by the Government. However, whatever changes are made, they need to ensure that individuals receive adequate and appropriate forms of care that also provide good value for money, which was a point made by the Public Accounts Committee.

The 31st report, "Naval Warship and Weapons Procurement", followed up earlier Public Accounts Committee reports on the Ministry of Defence's management of torpedo programme and design and procurement of warships and management of Trident programmes. Those are substantial expenditure programmes. It is bona fide because we must have a Ministry of Defence examination of at least one of its reports in our regular annual reviews, because of the amount of money involved as well as the lessons that need to be learned.

The torpedo expenditure programe is more than £5 billion and the programme for Trident is more than £9 billion. There is a long history of poor value for money in defence procurement. We now know that up to half of defence expenditure on procurement was not anticipated at the time that these defence contracts were considered.

It is important to look first at the question of torpedoes, because the Public Accounts Committee has lived with them for more than 20 years. If one were to start from scratch and consider whether it was worth spending £5 billion on a torpedo programme, or whether it would be better to get them off the shelf from America or somewhere else, few of us would have any doubt. We have had extremely poor value for money. Paying £5 billion for a weapons system would be appropriate if it were a weapons system that would determine many conflicts at sea or elsewhere, but torpedoes do not come into that category. They are not so crucial as to require that amount of money when they can be obtained elsewhere so much more cheaply.

Perhaps I may start with the way in which the Ministry of Defence has been operating, because we acknowledge the Department's efforts in response to earlier Public Accounts Committee criticisms. We know that the MOD is pursuing possibilities for introducing competition for the first time in main torpedo production contracts in the light of Marconi's previous monopoly position. We were encouraged by the way that Mr. Peter Levene is studying those contracts and trying to introduce competition wherever possible. Clearly the proof of the pudding will be in the eating, and we shall not be eating very much for a few years yet, but the process, the examination and the instructions that he has given have been satisfactory. The Committee would like to see, especialy in those large elements of expenditure on weapons procurement where one cannot get competition—for example, for a submarine—competition in the subcontracts that are placed, which is important. Further to that, Peter Levene has assured us that he is encouraging those firms that have not previously considered themselves as defence contractors to enter the field. The difficulty of entering the field is obvious to

[Mr. Sheldon]

anyone in industry, but given the right encouragement this can be done, and that will introduce competition in a way that would not be possible otherwise.

We are pleased, too, with the way in which Mr. Peter Levene is trying to eliminate gold plating. That is the system whereby one waits for the very latest update and then tries to incorporate that into one's weapons system, so that one has the very last word. The importance of Mr. Levene's work is that he sets a date so that one will not get something which is right up to the minute, but something that will work in the time scale required. It is no use having a weapon that is never ready because it is always being updated. Almost equally important is the fact that, once one starts adding to and altering specifications, control of costs is lost. That is a lesson that we have had again and again. We find that the way in which Mr. Levene is tackling this is satisfactory, and we hope that it will lead to results in the next few years.

We felt that it was important for the Ministry of Defence to have a strategy for reconciling the conflict between the objectives of securing competition and preserving a viable warship building industry, and for it to give warship builders sufficient information for them to plan efficiently.

We welcomed evidence that financial control and project management of the main programme for Trident appeared to be operating reasonably, and that the programme costs had been reduced overall in real terms. We noted the constraints on competition in Trident work, particularly submarine production, but we were concerned at the lack of control on the size and cost of the atomic weapons establishment programme, which is not charged to the main Trident programme, although it is obviously vital to its successful completion. The atomic weapons establishment programme increased from nine projects, valued at about £134 million, in 1980 to 32 projects in 1986 with an estimated cost of £1 billion plus on a worst cost basis. Cost increases and delays illustrate the dangers of departing from accepted control procedures, which I mentioned earlier.

The MOD should have ensured from the beginning that arrangements at the atomic weapons establishment were as good as those for the main programme and that adequate co-ordination existed between the two programmes. The Committee was worried that the resulting reliance on the use of existing aging facilities at the Atomic Weapons Establishment and, taking account there of staff shortages, identified warhead production as a major risk to the Trident programme.

On all that we have received Treasury minute 501. On torpedoes and warships, it generally welcomed and accepted our comments. On Trident, it said that competition was sought where feasible and competitive subcontracts would be secured for submarines; that the works programme had been brought under effective control; that old atomic weapons establishment services can be used until new ones are ready, and that staffing will be kept under constant review. Obviously, a programme as big as that will be kept under constant review by the PAC. We would be failing in our duty if we did not go at least that far.

Let me deal now with the fifth of the reports that have been singled out for special mention—the review of operations of the Land Registry. The main point is that the Land Registry's business lies at the heart of land and property transactions. Therefore, the speed and efficiency of its operations are important to almost everybody. It is not so much its work as the impact that that has on other people's transactions and operations that is important. It really needs to be efficient, like the Companies Registry and other such bodies, not so much in its own right but because of its effect upon the rest of business and other communities.

On the face of it, the registry is a profitable organisation, spending £90 million a year and collecting fees of £140 million. That is a nice business to have. What did it do? Under Treasury rules, it was prevented from using that income to meet a major upsurge in demand. As a result, there was a large backlog of 400,000 unprocessed cases and long delays. It had 8,000 staff but its productivity had fallen well below 1982-83 levels. It is hard to think of any other area of clerical activity where efficiency would be reduced as much as that. There were continuing staff shortages and the registry was trying to regain lost ground from 1982-83 and computerisation had been delayed. Productivity was less than it was six years ago. I know that it had some problems then, but this was, after all, a number of years later. Despite that poor service, customers had been significantly overcharged in recent years and the fees needed to be reduced. Fairer and more flexible fee-fixing arrangements were required.

Such a monopoly, which has its effect on the community, is a serious matter and we recommended improvements in those and other areas. The Committee emphasised the importance of strengthening the registry's planning and management to speed up its response to increasing demand. We recommended a review of its management structure, organisation and location. There is no reason why it should be where it is. It could be in any part of the country. Speaking personally, not as Chairman of the Committee, may I say that it is sad that we have far too often accepted that congestion in the south-east means that people must be paid a bit more. That makes the area more attractive, more people come and they need to be paid a bit more again. It is a vicious circle that the Government and others should be able to break.

The Treasury minute was published only a few days ago. It accepted in virtually all respects the concerns expressed by the Committee and the recommendations made. Funding has been changed from 1 April 1988 to allow the registry greater freedom to use its full resources to meet changing work loads. Staff numbers are being increased and training improved. Output is being improved to cut the backlog as soon as possible. Higher standards of productivity, service and cost-effectiveness are being built into forward plans and computerisation is now moving forward. Fee arrangements are being closely watched and the need for fresh legislation is being pursued. There is a firm commitment to strengthening planning and management to meet increasing responsibilities and the registry is now being considered for agency status under the Next Steps initiative. We hope that that will lead to improved work by the registry. We shall wait to see and, like all the examinations that we undertake, we shall keep it under review.

I should briefly mention a couple of other aspects. In reply to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North, I mentioned the internal audit in the NHS. Also important is internal audit in Government Departments. The need for internal

audit is becoming greater. It is not just certification that is important; it should be undertaken for value for money. It should be undertaken—not every firm does it—to ensure that a Department is as effective and efficient as it should be. One way of doing that is not to wait for the National Audit Office to produce a report every now and again, but for the firm to undertake the work itself. If Departments do that, when the National Audit Office comes, a useful relationship can develop between the Department concerned, the National Audit Office and the PAC. It should be able to ensure that adequate quality and quantity of resources will be provided and proper aims met.

Then we dealt with the Export Credits Guarantee Department. That has a number of uncertain debts and obligations because it has not carried out what we felt was the proper way of applying the Bank of England guidelines to the money that was lent overseas. Now there is an indeterminate amount of debt of doubtful quality. The sums of money can be substantial and we found that it had failed to meet one particularly important requirement.

A report that has only just been published, which is not strictly the subject of today's debate, relates to the royal ordnance factories. That will be covered in a subsequent debate. I would only briefly point out that the need for Government Departments to value their properties properly and effectively is of great importance. We need to ensure that whenever public money is accounted for it is done properly and that we have proper valuations. We may be going further into that in other areas, but the royal ordnance factories report stands on its own. Because there has been confusion on this, I would just point out that the royal ordnance factories were the subject of a report that was produced before the recent outcry and our further examination was a consequence of that.

Those are the matters that we have discussed and deliberated upon at great length. I am happy to say that we had a good working relationship within the Committee and with people outside. It is one of the great pleasures that we have such a happy relationship. It means that the effectiveness of our work can be that much more precise, accurate and valuable, and long may it remain so.

5.18 pm

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): I am glad to follow the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), who properly covered the wide area dictated by the motion. The Public Accounts Committee has done a lot of work and made a number of reports. The right hon. Gentleman has dealt with those which are of particular significance. One must take cognisance of the fact that the debated covers a year's work. Some of the reports are more than a year old and some of the Treasury responses are already nine months old.

We used to be very upset that our reports were not debated more quickly by the House, but I have since changed my view. One must accept the facts as they are and as they are developing within the Committee. As the right Member for Ashton-under-Lyne mentioned, in the old days the Chairman did virtually everything and ordinary Committee members had very little to do. I am glad to say that under the right hon. Gentleman's leadership that attitude has changed and all are brought fully into the discussions and the examination of witnesses. Indeed, it is hard to conceive of our working much more efficiently than we do. That is largely due to the right hon. Gentleman's leadership and I take this opportunity to thank him on behalf of the Committee for all that he has done.

Another change has been that the Committee no longer meets in secret. Now that we meet in public, the impact of our activities is far more immediate. That must be a good thing. The reports of the National Audit Office attract a certain amount of publicity and reaction, which sets the ball rolling. We then cross-examine witnesses and if we deem it necessary—we do not always do so—we prepare a report of our own which, in its turn, has an effect on the public and certainly on the Department concerned. The effectiveness of our work is thus far more clearly centred on the work that we do upstairs. It is significant that, as we discuss these reports, we already know the reactions not just of the Treasury but of the Departments concerned. A great deal has happened in relation to those reports before they are debated in the Chamber. This debate is therefore much more of a tour d'horizon, seeing how the system is working and picking up one or two special points in the year's work. Sometimes certain trends also appear which need picking out and emphasising.

Now that our meetings are nearly always open—not quite always, as some matters have to be discussed in private—there is the danger that members of the Committee may be tempted by the desire for publicity which, I am afraid, is never very far from the minds of Members of Parliament. I believe, however, that members of the Public Accounts Committee can take credit for the fact that we put that temptation aside and genuinely try to get on with the business of examination rather than headline-seeking or party politics. So far, I believe that we have been successful in that respect—here, again, our Chairman has given a very good lead—and long may that continue, because if ever we cease to abide by that precept the value of our Committee will largely disappear.

A major change this year has been the departure of Sir Gordon Downey. We wish him well in his future activities. He has played a notable part in developing the National Audit Office in its new form. I also join the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne in welcoming Mr. Bourn and hoping that relationships will be equally fruitful in the future.

Mr. Tim Smith: Does my hon. Friend agree that publicity for the Committee's work and reports is a great help? If we can expose some of the maladministration and inefficiencies of Government, that must be a good thing. And will it not be even better when the television cameras come to the Public Accounts Committee and the public can see for themselves the complacency of the accounting officers and the "Yes Minister" answers that we sometimes receive?

Sir Michael Shaw: I entirely agree. That is why I welcome the fact that our meetings are open these days. If they receive the publicity that they so often merit, that is certainly good, but if members of the Committee began attending meetings bent on seeking publicity for themselves or sensational headlines that would be a very bad thing. Frankly, after a number of years in this place, I am thankful that certain Members were never appointed to the Public Accounts Committee.

I should like to deal with certain specific reports, beginning with the seventh report. That report deals with

[Sir Michael Shaw]

the BBC external services, in which I believe strongly. They do an extremely good job. One has only to travel abroad to realise their importance. I draw attention particularly to paragraphs 29 and 31. Paragraph 29 states:

"we cannot emphasise too strongly that the BBC External Services should, in common with other second-tier bodies funded by grant-in-aid, be directly accountable to Parliament through the audit of the C & AG".

I stress that point because the BBC is not examinable by the National Audit Office due to the terms of its charter and the way in which it draws its money from licence fees rather than from the Government. The external services, however, draw their money from the Government and it is right that they should be examined by the CAG and the NAO. To examine the external services accounts, we must have all the information and not just part of it. It was noticeable that in the past the BBC had refused access for the Exchequer and Audit Department, as it then was, but happily, according to the Treasury minute, there has now been agreement.

I emphasise this as a general principle as well as a specific one. Whether one is considering the BBC external services as a separate department within the BBC or a particular business function run by a local authority, if there is not access to all the information it is all too tempting to feed into a department being paid for by someone else overheads which should not exist in that department. It was therefore absolutely right that the CAG should insist on looking at all the facts and figures. Almost every year we have an argument with the Treasury and others about how much money is to be spent on the BBC external services. I wish to ensure that every penny that possibly can be used goes towards putting the message across to people abroad in the way that has been done in the past. There should never be any danger of any of that money being used to pay for overheads which, strictly speaking, should not be suffered by that department.

The 10th report deals with internal audit in central Government. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne has already dealt with this and we have examined it in considerable detail over the years. I am glad to say that over the years we have noticed—whether as a result of our nagging or for other reasons—a great improvement in the internal audit service. In the past, it was regarded as just a temporary function of civil servants as they moved through the department and up to higher things, and I thought that that was a most unsatisfactory way to proceed. They were birds of passage, passing their time as quickly and as best they could, and then moving on to other things, and they had no expertise in internal audit, despite the importance of their having that expertise.

Things are now much better. The whole subject of internal auditing is taken much more seriously. The internal audit should be a vital management tool in the hands of the finance officer. I hope that this fact has been realised. It is significant that now, according to evidence given to us, the ideal period for somebody to work in the internal audit department is five years, and in that five years it is expected that full training will be given. I expressed doubts about whether all the high-fliers regarded this as seriously as they should, and suggested that they might try to avoid it as not being their cup of tea. I was assured that it was taken seriously and the finance officer, Sir Peter Middleton, whom I was questioning, said that he would use his power to the utmost to make sure that my doubts were unfounded. On page seven, at paragraph 2185, he said:

"You will see the statistics for people being promoted who have done internal audit improving quite noticeably if you give it another five years. There are two reasons for this: one is that we have been promoting a lot of people within internal audit as we have been improving the grading and secondly, they have not been out long enough to have been promoted in many cases."

That is in interesting contrast to the earlier evidence that we took. I hope that it is true. If so, there will have to be a different atmosphere within the Civil Service because there will be more emphasis on those who enter it, and those who proceed, expecting to be makers of policy. There will be fewer of them, and more people learning the skills of management because in many cases Departments are there to manage rather than to make policies. I know that the function of Departments is neither one thing completely nor the other completely, but more of a mix, and it may be that, as a result of what is happening, we shall get the right mix in the end.

The 11th report deals with the internal audit of the National Health Service. We did not spend too long on taking evidence, but it is an important report, and I have thought about it a great deal since we took our evidence. I asked questions when we took that evidence. The internal auditors at district level are appointed at district level and they work entirely within the district level. We have regions and districts and I know that there are arguments about whether that is the right set-up and whether the regions should exist. I am not arguing about that, because it is a matter of policy, but if we have regions and regional auditors, it is worth looking at whether the regional internal audit system should be aligned all the way down the line with the district audit system. That should not stop the district auditors having close contact at district level with the chairman and director, but there should be a much more direct contact with the regional internal auditor. That would be of benefit to everyone, and would ensure that everything is done as it should be. That is just a thought and a reflection arising from our questioning and study of the NHS internal audit.

The 26th report deals with the community care developments. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne dealt with that in some detail, and rightly so, because it is one of our most important reports. I shall not go over the details again, save to say that many people are involved in community care and their number is growing rapidly. That means that we have to get our treatment of them right, and that the money that we spend on their care must be spent to the best advantage. It is not for us in the Public Accounts Committee to look at the policy, but it is our duty to see that the money is spent in the best way.

As a result of talking to various people, I have become worried about whether the resources and the planning are adequate to the growing needs of community care. In particular, I am worried that the responsibility for community care lies with no one authority. It is a joint responsibility, and I hope that the Government will look as carefully as they can at the way in which joint responsibilities are carried out. All too often, people tend to say, "Well, it is the other chap's duty to look after this or that." I hope that the final responsibility is clearly defined in every case.

During their life, those in care may move from Government responsibility to local authority responsibility, and back to Government responsibility. I hope that those lines, and the responsibility, are clear. I also hope that when people are moved back into their homes or outside institutions full plans are made for their safe arrival in their new homes and that there are adequate safeguards to ensure that they are looked after. I am by no means convinced that in certain cases I have seen that is always so.

I am convinced that the work that we do is essential to the smooth running of Government. There is a job to be done and it is important that those of us who decide to join the Public Accounts Committee do not decide to do so just for a month or two, or even a year or two. If we join the Committee we must be prepared not only to put in the time to study reports, but to put in a number of years' service. The value of seeing the same pattern repeating itself is inestimable because of the influence that we can bring to bear on the Departments whose staff we interview. This is an important matter. We have seen it all before, and probably long before any of the witnesses started in that Department. That puts us at a great advantage—an advantage for the Government and for the country as a whole.

5.39 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): When the hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) said that we had seen it all before, I was reminded of the fact that he is the most senior member of our Committee, with many years of responsibility for examining these matters. I listened intently to his contribution; if he saw me discussing something with my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) that was because we were talking about his reference to arrangements for audit at district, as opposed to regional, health authority level. Perhaps the hon. Member for Scarborough would care to raise the interlocking arrangement he mentioned in future proceedings on the matter.

Tonight I want to discuss other reports that are not on the Order Paper but which we are in a position to mention. I do not expect authoritative answers from the Minister today, but perhaps he will write to me about some of these issues in the future. I particularly want to discuss something that I have frequently spoken about over the years, drawing on a little new material, as is my wont each time that I discuss it.

I am concerned about defence contractors and procurement irregularities and fraud. In the appendix to our 35th report, we set out several cases of fraud against the Ministry of Defence which were allegedly perpetrated by defence contractors. Having considered all those cases together, I shall give the House my overview of them. The first case, which concerned the Aish company, resulted in £421,000 being refunded to the MOD; yet no prosecution was brought, for reasons of insufficient evidence.

The third case, which involved Thorn-EMI, resulted in £69,000 being refunded to the MOD, and again no prosecution was brought, as a result of a decision of the Director of Public Prosecutions that there was insufficient evidence. Case number 4 involved Rolls-Royce, and case number 5, involving Marconi, is now the subject of investigation by the DPP's fraud investigation group. In the sixth case, the name of the company is not identified, but as in the seventh, eighth, ninth, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th cases, it was concluded that there was insufficient evidence of fraud.

The DPP refused to bring action in all those cases. Cases 16 to 24 also resulted in no action being brought by the DPP—but he instituted proceedings in two cases, which, interestingly, involved only companies that had gone into liquidation. Another case was brought against an official who had accepted a couple of electric kettles and a toaster. The prosecution was brought for minimal offences.

An examination of the prosecution policy of the DPP shows that in cases of major defence fraud no prosecutions ever seem to be brought. In case number 16,

"the MoD police investigation in 1986 revealed a prima facie case against the firm and/or its directors on fraud based charges involving about £40,000. However, the Crown Prosecutor decided that the evidence was not sufficient to justify a criminal prosecution."

I brought another case that made me angry to the Public Accounts Committee some years ago—that of Dowty Rotol. In that case, almost £500,000 was handed back to the MOD. There was clear evidence of fraud; I interviewed the chap who was involved in it through having been asked by his company to participate in it. Today he is unemployed. He was one of my five whistle blowers. He cannot find a job and has never been compensated. I want to know why no prosecution was brought in that case.

My preliminary view about defence contractors and fraud is that the DPP has decided that when it might be said that the reputation of a company could be damaged in overseas markets the DPP will not bring proceedings for fraud in a British court of law whenever possible. The list of cases I have mentioned shows that all the companies operating in export markets which were involved in fraud were not the subject of legal action by the DPP.

I quote from the case of Dowty Rotol:

"It was referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions who ruled, nine months later"—

following a great number of parliamentary questions from me—

"that it was not in the public interest to institute criminal proceedings."

What precious words

"not in the public interest".

In these cases, they mean that, when a defence contractor has markets overseas and its reputation may be damaged, no prosecution for fraud will be brought against it, even if there is prima facie evidence of major fraud having been committed.

Let us compare this with what happens in the United States of America. We suggested in our report that the Ministry of Defence should consider examining the hotline system in America—a system that enables people to ring in with information about Government Departments—especially the Department of Defence—to alert the American equivalent of our National Audit Office to fraud in the places in which they work. I quote from a General Accounting Office report that I picked up in Washington about three weeks ago. Referring to the hotline, it says:

"In its nine years of existence the GAO toll-free fraud hotline has received over 94,000 calls, of which 13,992 have warranted further review. Seventy per cent. of the latter were received from anonymous sources. Some of these were from Federal employees. Altogether calls from Federal employees

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

totalled 26·2 per cent. and the majority of cases were reported to have taken place in California, with Washington DC coming in second place"—

that is, in the administrative head state of the United States.

It is worth considering what all this fraud reporting has meant. Here I am using another document produced by the GAO in America, a report entitled "Defence Procurement Fraud: Justice's Overall Management can be Enhanced". The Americans have set up a system called the FACT system. It provides an overview of all fraud inquiries and investigations and legal proceedings against defence contractors. The problem with the system is that it does not collect all the information. The report questions its ability to attract all the information that is available about prosecutions of American defence contractors:

"For the period October 1 1983 through to May 31 1987 the FACT system showed that Justice received 680 defence procurement and DOD-related fraud referrals involving 1,184 subjects for bribery of Government officials, conflicts of interest, anti-trust violations and procurement fraud. Of the 680 referrals 599 were sent to the US Attorney offices for action, 75 to the criminal division, six to another Justice headquarters litigation division. As of September 1987 211 referrals have been accepted, 183 referrals declined and 286 referrals were pending action. As of January 1988 the FACT system showed that Justice components obtained indictments on 180 subjects, of which 113 were convicted, 5 were acquitted and 62 are pending final court action."

I read this into the record to point out that they mean business in America. They bring actions in the courts; they do not sit down and work out whether a particular defence contractor's reputation might be damaged in foreign markets. If the law has been breached and a way can be found of prosecuting, the Americans prosecute—they do not dither like the DPP in this country.

I shall now deal with the question of whistle blowers who ring in on the hot line. Some are identified and they are in a particularly difficult position. We have had a number of whistle blowers in this country. Burgess Cooper from Dowty Rotol has been unemployed since blowing the whistle and may never find employment again. Other whistle blowers have been Don Pitman of Thorn-EMI and Jim Smith of Aish and Company. We now have Mr. Thrower in Preston, the man who gave information to me and to members of the Ministry of Defence police about allegations of fraud in Marconi.

It is interesting to examine the pressures that are exerted on people who have decided to be whistle blowers unless the state steps in to give them some form of protection. Don Soeken, an American psychologist, has done research on whistle blowers. He examined 233 whistle blowers in the United States of America and found that 90 per cent. of them had lost their jobs or been demoted, 27 per cent. faced law suits, 26 per cent. faced psychiatric and medical referral, 25 per cent. admitted to alcohol abuse, 17 per cent. lost their homes, 15 per cent. were divorced during the aftermath, 10 per cent. attempted suicide and 8 per cent. went bankrupt. The pressure on whistle blowers is extensive.

In the United States of America, an organisation called the Government Accountability Project has been set up to help whistle blowers. We do not have such an organisation here, although we need one. Whistle blowers are crucial to the Ministry of Defence in establishing what is going on in defence contractor companies.

That brings me back to the report of defence procurement irregularities. If the Committee is to do its job properly, we need to be assured that we have the resources and procedures to ensure that information about defence contractors which are involved in fraudulent activities is made available to the people who can either prosecute or bring rapid action. Unfortunately, I have no confidence in the current arrangements. I have confidence in the new arrangements which Mr. Levene has introduced on the general question of defence procurement and in the substantial training that is carried on in his department.

However, if the Director of Public Prosecutions repeatedly fails to bring action against fraudulent defence contractors, the morale of those who are responsible for investigating those matters in the Ministry of Defence police and in Mr. Levene's own department will drop and those people will lose confidence. They rely on the Director of Public Prosecutions to bring legal actions, but he has failed in his public duty by bringing so few actions. I hope that every pressure will be brought to bear on him to review that position.

I want to deal now with the 33rd report and particularly with the evidence that we took from Her Majesty's Customs and Excise about VAT collection and fraud. The hon. Member for Scarborough referred to publicity. When I raised the matter, considerable publicity surrounded my allegation—and many of my colleagues may not have believed what I was saying. It subsequently emerged that the allegation was true.

The appendix to the report states:

"Offences are normally investigated for criminal proceedings when one or more of the following conditions apply: the evasion of at least £75,000".

I had uncovered the fact that the policy in operation was that, if someone was involved in a VAT fraud for a sum of less than £75,000, the chances were that he would not be prosecuted and a deal would be done behind closed doors whereby the money would be repaid. I understand that that system is called compounding. It is defined in annex A:

"Compounding is one of a range of sanctions available to the Commissioners of Customs and Excise. It is a process whereby as an alternative to taking legal proceedings for an offence under the Customs and Excise Acts, they may offer the alleged offender the option of being prosecuted or settling out of court."

The people concerned are invariably respected in their local communities. They will want to do a deal with the Revenue or with Customs and Excise because they do not want their names to appear in the newspapers in connection with a prosecution. However, they are the very people we should be prosecuting. I know that such prosecutions will cost a lot of money, but it will be a rapidly reducing sum, because the day that Customs and Excise announces that it intends to start prosecuting people for much smaller amounts of VAT fraud, many of the people involved in such activities will quickly pull their socks up because they will be frightened by the prospect of being mentioned in the local newspapers in communities in which they may be church wardens or chairmen of Rotary clubs.

The Government should look carefully at the principle of compounding and be a little more liberal in their attitude to prosecution. The Government's talk about the resources not being available is not the issue. We should frighten small VAT fraudsters into cleaning up their act by making it clear that we intend to prosecute. If the

Government do so, they will quickly find that there is a rapid reduction in the number of people and small firms involved in VAT fraud.

It is invariably small firms that are involved. Large firms find it hard to cheat in that area because employees often want to break ranks. Such frauds often take place in small companies in which the chap who does the books is the proprietor or has some special relationship with the proprietor. We should be far more rigorous in our prosecution policy.

I turn now to our 22nd report. Our introductory paragraph states that that report

"concerns the arrangements for the employment of works consultants by government departments and health authorities where the PSA"

has been the biggest spender. Our report expressed concern about the arrangements for hiring such consultants. We were not convinced that competitive tendering had been the order of the day in all cases. However, we stated:

"We welcome the very recent reduction in the PSA's competitive tendering threshold to projects valued at more than £1 million. We acknowledge that it may not be cost-effective for PSA to abolish thresholds completely."

The whole question of consultants has come up in a number of reports in the past 12 months. For example, allegations were made, in which I played a part, about irregularity in the award of contracts for docklands development.

Development corporations are another area that we should consider. The PAC may well end up doing a full-scale inquiry at some time. All I am doing now is alerting those people who might be considering such matters to the fact that the Committee will inevitably have to consider development corporations. I make particular reference to the Milton Keynes development corporation. We all know what has happened in Milton Keynes. A development corporation was set up—I believe by a Labour Government—and a lot of public money was spent. Although I do not agree, I understand that the Government wanted to switch emphasis from development by a public sector organisation to development by the private sector. Although I argue against that, I accept it as the Government's ideological position.

When development corporations are wound up—the Milton Keynes development corporation will be phased out by 1992—a special responsibility is placed on the people who are responsible for that winding down to ensure that work is given out properly and fairly. One must ensure that, once work is awarded to the private sector, competition prevails and everyone has equal access to the cake. I am not convinced that that is the case in Milton Keynes. I am told that there, legal services have been given to a local firm of solicitors; that a landscaping contract has been awarded to a firm called Country Landscaping Design; that engineering contracts have been given to a company named Pell Frishman; that accountancy services are being provided by Touche Ross; that a national firm of estate agents is undertaking the strategic planning services; and that architectural services have been awarded to a firm called Planning Design and Development Limited.

Are the people who awarded those contracts absolutely sure that if, at some stage, the PAC examines the way in which they were awarded, and the way in which that work was tendered for, if it was, it will be satisfied that they are above suspicion? If not, let the people concerned get their house in order now. I give them advance warning that, in the event that an opportunity arises, I shall question them on those matters in detail.

Consideration should also be given to what will happen in 1992. I return to the subject of the Royal Ordnance factory land scandal, for want of a better description. I am told that, when Milton Keynes development corporation is wound up in 1992, a large acreage of land will be available for development. Some people put a value of £500 million on that land today. Let them know in Milton Keynes that that value is placed on it by someone here in Westminster. If that sum is not realised when the land is sold, uprated to 1992 values, then I shall be asking questions. We shall want to know that, in every way, that land, if its disposal is necessary, has gone to the private sector at its full market value.

I turn to the 18th report of the Committee, "Regulation of Heavy Lorries". When taking evidence, I sensed—as I believe did the majority of Committee members—that the Department of Transport was dragging its heels over the arrangements for weighbridges at British ports. Yet we know that in Kent there has been for a number of years a major argument that overloaded foreign lorries often enter the United Kingdom but manage to reach their destinations without being stopped by the police. Throughout the report, the PAC comments that the Department of Transport hid behind a lack of resources as an excuse for failing to deal with the matter. Several months ago, Kent county council produced a report showing that many of its own weighbridges were not even in working order. Such is the authorities' lack of priority in ensuring that equipment is maintained in perfect condition at all times to guarantee the maximum possible number of weight checks of vehicles entering Britain from the continent.

That report also drew attention to the fact that fitting improved suspension systems to all heavy lorries could save about £100 million annually in road maintenance. The Committee commented:

"We believe that DTp should have taken earlier and stronger action to encourage the use of vehicles which take advantage of available suspension systems and axle configurations which cause least wear."

The Department of Transport has not responded or legislated for and required that the authorities put in place the equipment required and that transport companies ensure the fitting of equipment designed to minimise road damage. If they had done so years ago, millions of pounds worth of damage that has already occurred, the repair of which will inevitably have to be funded by the taxpayer, would have been prevented—and even less money would have to be spent in future.

This is a crying priority. The Department of Transport must act. I hope that it takes the report very seriously. During our proceedings over the past 12 months, it was one of the reports most debated behind the scenes and away from the Committee Room. It was felt that the Department's position was indefensible. If I might say so, it was a disgrace.

6.4 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): It is always interesting to participate in one of these debates, because the work of the Committee of Public Accounts is, from the

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point of view of most hon. Members and of the public, among the most important instruments in Parliament for ensuring that the taxpayer receives value for money.

There are 38 reports lying on the Table, constituting much material that could be examined in considerable detail by right hon. and hon. Members. I am only sad that there are not more of them present, as I see from looking around that most of the right hon. and hon. Members present are themselves members of the Committee. Although I have not in the past been greatly in favour of introducing television into the House of Commons, one factor that persuades me to change my mind is the hope that its introduction will cause some of our absent colleagues to take a greater interest in the Committee's reports and that we shall have an opportunity to examine them by the light of that wonderful medium and bring the oxygen of publicity to bear in sharpening up the accountability of Government Departments.

The Committee is an interesting one because it is by convention non-political. That it does not reach political decisions is an important aspect of our work and it contributes substantially to the agreement we reach over the reports that have been presented. I echo the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) in paying tribute to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) for his unfailing courtesy and encouragement to all members of the Committee, which makes our work pleasurable as well as extremely interesting.

I shall focus on the 32nd report, "Review of the Operations of the Land Registry". Of all the reports we have considered and to which the Order Paper refers, this sticks in my mind because we were able to discover what was undoubtedly a most unsatisfactory situation. When the PAC examined the chief land registrar and his colleagues on 1 February, it was concerned to discover that there was a backlog of nearly 1 million items representing four months' work. Every right hon. and hon. Member knows only too well the importance of the registry's work to the average citizen. The evidence we received pointing to that considerable backlog was, I repeat, a matter for great concern.

The Committee was told that the cause of the backlog was a massive surge of work occurring between 1986 and 1987. However, having taken fully into account that surge, which is a matter of fact, we were disturbed to discover that, instead of productivity improving, it was deteriorating, and that in 1985-86 it was 6 per cent. less than in 1982-83. The levels of productivity ranged from 3·07 per cent. in Peterborough to 2·01 in Harrow—which, incidentaly, happens to be the office serving my constituents living in Hillingdon. The chief land registrar told the Committee that the reason for those variations was varying conditions. One was the difficulty of recruiting suitable people of the right calibre in the south-east of England. Another factor, at the Harrow office in particular, was that the conveyancing work was especially complex because that office is responsible for work involving properties in central London.

I am the first to admit that there is a considerable problem in recruiting suitable staff of the right calibre in a town such as Harrow. That points to the need for the Government to look urgently at the location of the Land Registry's offices around the country. If ever there was a case for moving them to areas where recruitment is easier and properties less expensive, this is it. But it is gratifying to note the improvement in productivity in 1985-86 and in 1986-87.

One measure taken by the Land Registry to deal with the backlog has been the transfer of responsibility for two of the London boroughs, Hillingdon and Hounslow, to Swansea—a somewhat novel development, but one that perhaps can point the way to the future and bring improvement in its train.

We are told that at Harrow—that hard-pressed office—a measure of computerisation is to be introduced, and we hope that that will result in a reduction in the backlog there, but I found it astonishing to sit in the Public Accounts Committee in 1988 and to learnt that

"a measure of computerisation was to be introduced."

Why was it not done years ago? Why is an organisation like the Land Registry still operating manually, with a quill pen system, when all around it are businesses operating very satisfactorily with modern computerised methods? I believe that the average property owner has the right to expect an office of this kind to use modern business methods, and to have a high standard of management with the resources at its disposal to do such a complex and responsible job.

At the time when we examined our witnesses, the registry had accumulated a surplus of some £84 million. That was in March 1986; by April 1987 the surplus had risen to £110 million. As the registry is a statutory monopoly, I think it particularly important—and I know that my colleagues agree, for they say so in the report—that the public are not overcharged for its services. But as our Chairman has pointed out in the report and subsequently, that has clearly happened. It is not good enough that a Government Department, responsible for the organisation, should have allowed it.

Fees have not been properly aligned with costs. We were told when we took evidence that lower fees were in prospect when a new fee order was approved. We understand from the Treasury minute that we have received that that order has now been made, and I hope that those who use the registry's work will pay less for its services in the future.

As I have said, the Land Registry's work is of great importance to everyone. The substantial backlog, poor productivity, large accumulated surplus and higher than necessary fees were features of the session in which we took evidence from the chief land registrar and his colleagues, and I am glad to see that the position has been recognised in the Treasury minute. Alternative resource control measures have been introduced with effect from 1 April this year, and substantially more staff have been recruited to improve output and to reduce backlog.

We are told that a radical review is under way to establish what further activities can be moved from the south-east, and that plans for further transfer of responsibility for registration in certain London boroughs and south-eastern counties are being developed. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to tell us the extent of that development, what progress is being made and how much longer it will be before we hear about it. It is also encouraging to learn that the fees order has been approved and that that will reduce the ad valorem fees for most applications.

Paragraph 27 of the report bears quotation. It says:

"In giving evidence to us, the Land Registry seemed to assume that the current level of activity, with its pressures on the Registry's performance and efficiency, is only temporary and that the level of transactions will return to 'normal' in two years or so. We do not think it is safe to assume this will happen, since changes in the pattern and volume of business could persist. If the present level of activity continues, we believe that planning and management will need to be strengthened to enable the Registry to respond much more quickly to increasing demands . . . We accordingly recommend that the position be reviewed and further consideration given, as necessary, to the management structure, organisation and location of the Land Registry."

I emphasise my belief that an urgent review of the registry's management is needed, and if ever there was a case for a change in the way in which it is run, it is made in the report. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to say whether the Government have yet reached a preliminary conclusion on whether the registry is to become an agency. It was established by Act of Parliament in 1862 and I believe that the time has now come to change the way in which it operates—to turn it into an agency and to ensure that it has the resources, the management, the modern business methods and the proper supervision that will provide a first-class service for all our constituents, so that they no longer have to put up with the delays and backlogs of recent years.

6.17 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): There have been several references to the unanimity that usually, indeed always, surrounds PAC reports; but it would be a careless observer who concluded that the unanimity of our reports reflected identical views. The speech by the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) illustrates my point: although we may agree about the report on the Land Registry, we certainly differ on the conclusions that we would draw as party politicians. I shall not, however, pursue the hon. Gentleman's point, because I wish to touch on several other reports.

As one of the newer members of the Committee, I associate myself with all that has been said about our Chairman. I had been a member of the Committee some years ago, in 1979, and I thought that I knew my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) quite well before I returned to the Committee a year ago. I can only say that the respect in which I held him before my return has been greatly enhanced—if that were possible—in the last 12 months. I have become a great admirer of the deft way in which he chairs our proceedings. The highest compliment that I can pay my right hon. Friend is to say that, although I thought his predecessor Lord Barnett very good, he is even better.

Just before my return to the Committee, there was a change in the appointment of the Comptroller and Auditor General. The House debated the appointment. I had some reservations about Mr. John Bourn's appointment as Comptroller and Auditor General, although I was not one of those who voted against the recommendation of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne. All members of the Committee have, during the past year, come to respect the work of Mr. John Bourn. I have also formed a very high opinion of the work done by his deputy, Mr. David Myland, and all the other National Audit Office staff. We sometimes forget that it is the more junior members of the NAO staff who really do the work. I am sure that Mr. John Bourn agrees with that view, and I must tell the House that I have formed a very high opinion of the NAO's reports and the work on which they are based.

The shortage of hon. Members present to debate these matters has been commented on. I think that it would be much better if, instead of one all-inclusive debate involving 38 reports, there were several perhaps shorter debates on individual reports. Almost all of these reports are important. That is not surprising because there is a sifting process. It must be noted that not every investigation by the NAO results in a report, so reports are done only on matters which it considers significant. There is a second sifting because the PAC does not take evidence on every NAO report. It follows, therefore, that if we have taken evidence on an NAO report and produced a report of our own, there must be some significance to the subject.

It is obviously impossible to deal with more than a handful of the 38 reports before us. It might be better if we had debates by Department, and included PAC reports in debates on the reports of departmental Select Committees. That is a personal suggestion—I am not speaking for my colleagues.

During the past year, I have several times wished that we had more time for our work by being able sometimes to return to a subject because there have been times when accounting officers have not been able to satisfy us. Some have not come properly prepared and have been unable to answer all our questions. They are always willing to send information later, but that is quite different from being able to ask questions about that information at the time. Because the Committee meets twice a week, and because we have such a busy timetable, it is not practicable to recall witnesses very often. We have done it only once or twice during the past year. I appreciate that asking an accounting officer to return is a sort of sanction and that we do not want to do it too often, but I sometimes wish that it was possible to take evidence on a memorandum which we have received afterwards.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne said that fraud is rare. I agree. We have come across few examples of proven fraud during the past 12 months. My right hon. Friend mentioned the expenses paid by the Ministry of Defence to some of its staff. There are questions to be asked about decisions that were taken then and the Ministry apparently doing so little, or nothing, about it. There were no prosecutions and no disciplinary action.

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) referred to VAT frauds, which were the subject of our discussion with the chairman of Customs and Excise, and my hon. Friend rightly said that several decisions have been taken to compound those frauds. I disagree slightly with his assertion that the frauds were committed by small firms rather than large ones. My understanding of the evidence was that the frauds subject to investigation by the investigation division—which is supposed to be the elite—of Customs and Excise were frequently committed by large firms. Indeed, we were told that some were committed by large-scale criminal organisations. The decision to compound the fraud is therefore all the more surprising.

We should contrast the treatment of such significant fraud with that of small business men who make mistakes. I drew the Committee's attention to a self-employed newsagent in my constituency who had recently set up in business. Although the newsagency belonged to a large

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business, he was on self-employed terms. The man made a mistake with VAT, and it was agreed to be a mistake by Customs and Excise. Nevertheless, he had to pay the VAT and a penalty. There was no doubt about the man's integrity, and when I compare the treatment he received with that given to large companies which commit VAT frauds involving many thousands of pounds, I am surprised by what appears to be public policy.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My information, which I repeated, that small companies are more likely to be involved came from the person who told me about the £65,000 threshold. He went to some length to tell me that, in his experience, large companies are not involved.

Mr. Davis: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Perhaps we are quibbling about the definition of large and small. I am talking about self-employed business men and he is talking about small companies. I was comparing one-man business with large companies. I suspect that my hon. Friend is talking about something in between.

Several examples of what I can only describe as fiddling came before the PAC. It would not be too strong to describe some of them as cheating. I refer to our evidence about "Financial Support for the Fishing Industry in Great Britain". The Government operated a Common Market scheme for the decommissioning of some fishing vessels. I am not questioning the motivation of the policy. It was decided that there was excess capacity, and that decommissioning grants should be paid. But the Marr company received £591,000 in grant as a result of returning a ship to fishing solely to qualify for grant. The vessel was doing seismic work at the time of the application. It returned to fishing for exactly 100 days and then went back to survey work. Members of the PAC will remember that, to qualify for grant, a ship had to fish for 100 days during a certain time. It was clear to me and, I think, other members of the Committee that that company had fiddled. It returned a ship to fishing for just as long as it was necessary to qualify for £591,000 worth of grant.

There are several small examples of cheating, and the Committee is right to draw attention to them. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington mentioned Ministry of Defence contractors, who often work on an even bigger scale. My hon. Friend's pursuit of those people, who are fiddling the taxpayer, should be admired.

The hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) intervened in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne to call into question our enthusiasm for value-for-money studies done by the NAO, and the hon. Gentleman referred specifically to the National Health Service. He has done that before. His concern for value for money in the Health Service takes on the appearance of a vendetta against it. Our experience in the PAC during the past 12 months suggests that there is a great deal of inefficiency and much money-wasting in many other Departments, not least the Ministry of Defence.

If I were to part company from my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, it would be in respect of his regard for some of the accounting officers who come before us. It would be easier to single out those accounting officers who have impressed the Committee rather than those who have not impressed us.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Chairman could not say that.

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend says, in effect, that the Chairman could not be so blunt.

Some of the civil servants who come before us appear to regard their role as being to defend the indefensible. Those who come before us and admit that mistakes have been made and that matters could have been better administered receive much kinder treatment and more sympathy from Committee members than those who pretend that everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

My right hon. Friend referred to the fraud involving subsistence allowances and expenses at the Ministry of Defence. It is important to note that the permanent under-secretary at the Ministry of Defence told us that

> "After going into it now with great thoroughness I think that the decision that was taken not to pursue disciplinary action against these men was on balance the right one."

I give that as one example of senior civil servants who are accounting officers and appear to take a much more relaxed view about inefficiency than Members of the House of Commons.

It is fair to say that there is far too much complacency among some senior civil servants. Hon. Members have referred to the National Audit Office report on community care developments and the report from the Public Accounts Committee. My right hon. Friend referred to the unrealistic attitude taken by the second permanent secretary at the Department of Health and Social Security, as it used to be. He appeared to think that the question of value for money, given the substantial amounts being paid through income support or, as it was formerly, supplementary benefit, to people who run private residential homes, should be decided by people resident in the homes. In practice, it is simply unrealistic to think that such elderly people can judge whether they are receiving value for money.

I asked the accounting officer what could be done to ensure value for money. He replied:

> "We would say that profiteering in private homes, if it exists, is something that we would look to the market to rectify. If they charge too much then one would expect . . . people to be able to go elsewhere."

That is not the real world. If accounting officers take that attitude, we must question whether we are ever going to obtain value for money.

Similarly when the accounting officer was asked whether it was more cost-effective for taxpayers and ratepayers to provide for people to live in private residential homes or, alternatively, to provide for them to live in local authority homes, he was unable to tell us whether any study or comparison had been undertaken in any part of the country. That was a most unsatisfactory reply.

I refer to those accounting officers only as examples, but the complacency sometimes exhibited in the evidence that we took can also be seen in other respects. The National Audit Office report on community care developments referred to the shortage of district nurses and occupational therapists. It stated that there would be a shortage by 1994 if current recruitment and training patterns remained unchanged. The Committee asked a few questions about that and concluded that it was concerned that the shortages in nursing and therapy professions would adversely affect the implementation of plans and the

standards of care provided. In new sums then we may also have been complacent to some extent because we underestimated the facts, based on the information given to us. Only this week, I was told that, in east Birmingham, 700 people are waiting to be assessed by occupational therapists. People whose condition is classed as urgent have been waiting four months to be assessed. The social services department says that the reason that those people are waiting in the most dreadful circumstances can only be attributed to the lack of occupational therapists.

There is, therefore, not only a need for the Committee of Public Accounts to maintain the work that it undertakes, but to be a little more questioning, within the limits of time—the Chairman is always anxious that we should bear in mind time constraints—than we have been, even in the past 12 months.

6.35 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): It is a matter of deep regret to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, as it is to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis), that our debate has been deprived of any representative of the Liberal party, but, although it is a matter of regret, it is not a surprise, either to the hon. Gentleman or to me.

This is the first occasion on which I have spoken in a debate on the reports of the Committee of Public Accounts since I became a member of the Committee. I was pleased to become a Committee member for three reasons. First, it has given me the opportunity to serve under the chairmanship of the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). I join Opposition Members and my hon. Friends in paying tribute to his chairmanship. Anyone who wishes to be instructed in the art of chairmanship would do well to come to our Committee when it is in public session and take a few lessons from the right hon. Gentleman.

Secondly, I was pleased to become a member of the Committee because I have always believed that one of the areas of highest priority of the House is to scrutinise public expenditure. I have always believed, and still believe, that there is a greater duty on those who spend other people's money to take care of that money than there is on us to take care of our own money. This place is a trustee for the proper spending of other people's money.

Thirdly, I was pleased to become a member of the Committee because I believe that it carries out effectively its task of scrutinising properly the spending of public money. That is why our debate is important.

There is another truth. The need for scrutiny of public expenditure will not diminish as the years go by. Only this week, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer told us that the Government had in mind to spend £167 billion in the coming year. That is a greater sum in real terms than any Government have ever spent in this country, in war or in peace. Hence, although one might have believed that, as the proportion of public expenditure to total national wealth falls, there might be a diminished need for scrutiny of public expenditure, precisely the opposite is the case.

Further, whether our time in the House is long or short, I hope that there will always be those willing to serve on the Committee of Public Accounts, who will be vigilant in the defence of the proposition that other people's money requires continuing protection.

I wish to devote my remarks to only two reports. The first is the 16th report which deals with the Charity Commission. I agree with the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne that sometimes the complacency and even self-satisfaction of the accounting officers who come before the Committee is a matter of the deepest regret. I shall illustrate that general proposition by reminding the House of the evidence given to the Committee by the former Chief Charity Commissioner. First, I shall remind the House of the Committee's unanimous findings. Secondly, I shall contrast the findings with the words of the former Chief Charity Commissioner. The Committee found that

"the Commission's register of charities is seriously out of date and unreliable and is ineffective . . . The Commission has adopted . . . a passive attitude to its registration responsibilities . . . We are disturbed at the . . . failure of the Commission to obtain annual accounts from charities . . . We feel that the Commission is too complacent . . . We regard it as unsatisfactory that the Commission has not devoted greater resources to monitoring and investigation work."

My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade is right to be in his place, and I am extremely glad that he should be there. It is not only he who has entered the Chamber, for sitting next to him is my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken). Mercifully, both my hon. Friends are vigilant when it comes to public expenditure. They might be worthy successors to myself on the Committee of Public Accounts one day. However, I do not wish to be diverted.

I move to another finding of the Committee, which reads:

"we are astonished that the Commission has no qualified accountants on its staff."

A devastating exchange took place between a member of the Committee and the Chief Charity Commissioner, and we are able to read the precise words which were used. The hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) was in her place, as usual, during the cross-examination. First, let the House be in no doubt about the name of the former Chief Charity Commissioner. His name is Mr. Peach. He is a Commander of the Bath, no less. This is the exchange which took place:

"After five years as Chief Charity Commissioner do you think it would be unfair to describe this report as a massive indictment of the Charity Commission?"

Those were the words of the hon. Member for Eastbourne on 28 October 1987. The reply was as follows:

"It would be indeed unfair."

The hon. Member for Redcar, whom I almost describe as my hon. Friend, is being reminded of the very words that she heard on that day. I say to my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who is to reply to the debate, that anyone in his old regiment or mine who gave that reply when an indictment of that sort had been read out and found proved by jury would have been the subject of the most harsh disciplinary action.

It has always been a matter of consternation to me that ministerial responsibility for the Charity Commission should rest with the Home Office. Legion are the merits of the Home Office—there is no dispute about that—and my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South will be the first to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. Nevertheless, it is difficult to understand what can be the logic in having ministerial responsibility for the Charity Commission falling with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and, unless I am mistaken, with my noble Friend Lord Ferrers. Am I right in thinking that Lord Ferrers is Minister of State, Home Office? I believe that I am. There

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is no need to have anything but praise for my noble Friend and my right hon. Friend, but I suggest to my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary that logic requires that responsibility for the administration of the Charity Commission should be transferred at the earliest possible date from the Home Office to the Treasury. That is where the responsibility belongs.

In the report which was published in May 1987, the Comptroller and Auditor General stated:

"Charities"—

it was the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne who reminded us of this—

"are big business."

Yes, they are. That was said in April 1987, and even the Home Office would agree that we are now in November 1988. In that interval, charities have become even bigger business. The tax relief from which charities benefit is not one which diminishes as the years pass, save, of course, when the rates of taxation are reduced. Substantial benefit is still given—in my view, rightly—to charities. My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary has no need to consult my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. When he replies, I ask him merely to agree with the excellent suggestion that responsibility for the Charity Commission should be transferred with effect from 6 April next year to the Treasury.

A matter of deep concern was recognised in part of the Treasury's response. We must have confidence in the proper administration of charities or we shall have some awful scandal, as a result of which those who currently give generously to charity will be sceptical about continuing their donations. It is a matter of great urgency that we should do all that we can—we cannot do everything—to prevent improper conduct by charities, and we can do much more than we have been doing. What I am about to say is a criticism of the Home Office, not of my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary, who stated in the Treasury response:

"The Commissioners share the Committee's concern that in certain important respects the Central Register of Charities is deficient."

The next sentence reads:

"They"—

that is the Charity Commissioners—

"have long recognised that an up-to-date computerised Central Register would provide a much-improved source of basic information about registered charities to the public."

This is all elementary stuff. Fairly modest businesses in Britain have computers. These are businesses that are not responsible for £10 billion for which the Charity Commission is responsible. If relatively modest businesses —I have no doubt that some of them are run by Labour Members in the new entrepreneurial spirit of the age, with others being run, no doubt less efficiently, by Liberal Members—can have computers, why cannot the Charity Commission? Why should the commission be such a hopelessly inefficient body? I welcome the undertaking that has been given by my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary that we shall have legislation before the end of this Parliament to deal with these matters. When we come to the Gracious Speech in three weeks' time, I hope that we shall find that there will be a measure to reform the law of charity that will give greater powers to the commission.

I know that my right hon. Friend will tell the House that he cannot anticipate the Gracious Speech. Well, if it is not in the Gracious Speech now, he has three weeks in which to include a commitment to reform the law on charity in the coming Session. If he were to do so, I assure him that there would be widespread support from both sides of the House—even from the Social and Liberal Democrats—for an urgent measure to update the law on charities and to give greater power to the Charity Commission.

We are fortunate to have in the Chamber my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces. We are happy about the arrival of Ministers of the Crown. My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade is one of the most distinguished military historians ever to serve in this place. It is, therefore, timely to deal with matters relating to the Ministry of Defence.

We have heard a really amazing story. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne rightly referred to the episode of the 90 civilians employed by the MOD, whose task in life was to journey all over the kingdom—even to Wales and Scotland. I think that only Northern Ireland was spared such a visit. They sometimes travelled by motor car, sometimes by train, sometimes apparently by both—occasionally on the same journey at the same time —and sometimes, no doubt, by air. They made those journeys over some considerable time. Hon. Members need not take my word for that—harken not to me but to the Comptroller and Auditor General. So that this may be preserved for all time, what that gentleman said can be found in his report, which is available in the Vote Office. He said:

"The losses statement"—

that is, the losses in the MOD—

"on page 11 includes a sum of £203,416 relating to the falsification of travel and subsistence claims by certain MOD staff. In 1984 MOD Management Information highlighted the fact"—

my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) will wish to pay particular attention to this—

"that the searchers unit was absorbing 10 per cent. of the Army's total civilian travel and subsistence expenditure."

So 10 per cent. of all the costs of travelling, for example, all the way to the Falkland Islands and the whole of the subsistence and travel costs of the Ministry of Defence —the Army, the Navy, the RAF, the Royal Marines, the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve—was being absorbed by those 90 people, not in some banana republic in central America but in this United Kingdom. What on earth is happening?

What did the MOD do when that astonishing saga came to light? Hold on to your seat, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is what it did—nothing. It was to that absence of action that the Committee drew particular attention. The hon. Member for Redcar was at my side when that great saga unfolded before the Committee.

To say that I am looking forward to my right hon. Friend the Minister's reply—he used to serve in the MOD and is therefore especially well qualified to comment upon such doings—is an understatement. I must say a word of praise for my right hon. Friend. I have a deep affection for the Treasury—a Department in which, for 10 glorious weeks, I served. I very much welcome my right hon. Friend's prompt decisions. I even offer one word of praise for the MOD. However, the decision not to prosecute any of those involved was not taken by Ministers. That was disgraceful. A decision not to prosecute in such a serious case of fraud should always be taken by Ministers. They were not consulted, which was quite wrong.

I very much welcome the assertion in paragraph 55 of the Treasury response:

"The MOD accepts that in future Ministers should be consulted before disciplinary action is ruled out in any case of serious fraud."

I congratulate the Government on that decision. I welcome the reminder that the Treasury has sent to all Departments about the PAC's concern with fraud of any sort and its belief—which, I am pleased to say, is also the Government's—in the importance of maintaining effective controls to prevent fraud.

If we seek evidence for the belief that the PAC has an important influence on good government, we can find it in the reports that we are debating. It should be a matter of pride in the House that the Committee can be effective and vigilant, and it is a matter of pride to the Committee that it has the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne as its Chairman.

6.57 pm

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): I echo the last words of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), paying tribute to the Chair of the Committee. New members of the Committee find it a little forbidding to learn its regulations and my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) has been incredibly helpful. It is certainly forbidding to be faced with accounting officers or permanent secretaries who are doing their utmost—and in the most complacent way—to avoid answering the question. I have to admit that it gives me some degree of pleasure to ask them over and over again a question that, first, they do not want to answer and, secondly, they do not think they should be asked, anyway. That is one of the few pleasures of serving on the Committee.

My right hon. Friend referred to value for money. It has been made clear to new Members that we serve on the Committee not in any party-political sense but to evulate Government policy in terms of value for money. We have to evaluate whether Government policy works effectively, whether it is being implemented economically and efficiently. Those are the criterion for evaluating the policies before us.

My difficulty with many of the reports is that in considering value for money as defined in the reports it tends to mean the lowest common denominator of cheapness. It tends to be volume or quantity, because they are easy to measure. As the Committee Chairman pointed out, we tend to evaluate policy on the basis of economic effectiveness and cost benefit and value per head, rather than look at the much more difficult to measure, but essential, criterion of effectiveness. We must ask, "Is the policy effective in terms of the Government's objectives?"

I readily acknowledge that that is a difficult thing to measure, but some of the reports that came before us came to terms with that test and others did not. One report that has been referred to by many hon. Members which does not come to terms with measuring qualitatively the effectiveness of the Government's objectives is the report on community care policy. If we examine that report, we see that the policy objective we are evaluating is whether the Government—it is odd that the Government should have such an aim—have provided a better service, so that the patients' interests come first. We are told that that is the community care objective that we are evaluating. The problem that appears when we try to evaulate that policy objective is that it is not defined in a way that allows us to do it. For example, if, as the report clearly shows, we want to determine whether community care has been properly implemented, we must know what community care means.

Perhaps it seems a simple, naive question, but, in Committee, I asked the accounting officer whether I was correct

"in understanding when you defined community care that you talked about the quality of service and in that you were including such things as nightline services, counsellors for the caring, covering for counsellors"—

that is, when they are off duty or 24-hour cover—

"would you include laundry services, would you include meals, would you include training, . . . would you include warden services?"

The answer that we got from the civil servant was:

"I do not want to go right through that list but I would not accept all the width of that list".

After several questions, we did not get from the accounting officer a clear definition of community care. Without a clear definition, we cannot evaluate whether the Government's policy is properly implemented. Our job is difficult, and as a result we cannot evaluate the effectiveness of the community care programme. We are told that community care is working for the 8 million people concerned—the mentally handicapped, the mentally ill and the elderly—but, if there is no agreement betwen the NAO, the Department and the PAC as to what the policy objective is, we shall have great difficulty in doing our job properly.

Another report that came before the Committee was much more constructive in defining the policy objectives that we were examining. I refer to the report on the efficiency of DHSS front desks. We were trying to work out whether they served their clientele well. The NAO decided to have a public opinion poll of clients to see what is happening and whether clients consider that the service is meeting their needs—that is, whether the objective is being met—and whether they consider that they are getting the service that they demand. Clients were asked "How long do you have to wait at the counter and how long do you have to wait for a letter?" The Committee got some frightening results in relation to the five to six hours that many people sit waiting in DHSS offices, but we were able to do our job properly because we had a clear measure of the effectiveness of Government policy.

When we look at the reports that were presented today and those that will be presented in years to come, unless we clearly define effectiveness, not just economically or in terms of a cost benefit analysis, quality will be a much more difficult thing to measure. Unless the PAC and the NSO come to terms with that, we shall not clearly evaluate the policy objectives of whatever Government are in power.

I wish to highlight one report, and that is the 28th report on matters relating to Northern Ireland. It focuses on the DHSS fraud investigation branch in Northern Ireland. It considers how efficiently the fraud investigation branch works in Northern Ireland. When we are considering the Government's objectives for benefit fraud investigation branches, it is useful to see what their purpose and functions should be. In non-party terms, the Government's policy objectives are to maximise the efficient use of taxpayers' money, to be sure that they correctly label people benefit scroungers, and to judge the public sector by the kind of results tht it produces. We shall see whether the Department works in that way.

[Ms. Marjorie Mowlam]

According to the PAC's 28th report, such policy objectives are clearly not being met, bearing in mind what is happening on the ground in the DHSS in Northern Ireland.

The first problem that we face—it greatly concerned the PAC—was the DHSS ratio, set out in 1984, between benefits saved and administrative costs. We discovered that, for every pound it spent, it got £6 back in benefit saved. A 6:1 ratio is good and, we assume, efficient for the fraud investigation branch. However, we find that the potential value of the fraud investigation branch in performing its service is severely hampered by staffing. The number of staff in that DHSS branch in Northern Ireland is 10 per cent. below what is expected, and that has been the case since 1986. When the Committee asked why the figure was as poor as that, we were told that the Department has to be cash-limited and that, therefore, it must prioritise. In the Committee, it was not clear whether the Department is spending money efficiently in terms of getting the same ratio in the fraud investigation branch. There was no evidence to suggest that it would get better returns than 1:6 if it had proper staffing.

There is another problem in the DHSS in Northern Ireland, and it is repeated in many other Departments. I refer to the difficulty in knowing how to measure a Department's efficiency. A good example is the fraud investigation branch. If we want to know whether it is functioning efficiently—that is, if benefit scroungers, as they are labelled, are being caught by the fraud investigation branch—the obvious measure would be the total amount of benefit saved. That seems to be quite clear. However, the DHSS in Northern Ireland records only the number of what it defines as effective cases—that is, cases in which it has discovered or prevented fraud. We have no base line or no clear measure, since it defines as its policy objectives what it succeeds in achieving. Hon. Members will accept that that is not a fair measure of whether that Department is functioning efficiently.

The Department also faces great difficulty in knowing the exact number of people whose benefit is saved. Even though there has been an increase in the number of cases being dealt with by the Department, many cases do not involve prosecution and do not go before the Director of Public Prosecutions. In fact, 58 per cent. of cases that the fraud investigation branch discovers never go to the DPP. Apparently, such cases are too weak to stand up in court.

There is clearly a strong case for an inspectorate randomly to examine cases not taken to court to ensure that they are prepared properly and that the fraud investigation branch figures for non-effective cases are accurate and not exaggerated in any way.

In the short time that I have served on the Public Accounts Committee, it has discovered some serious problems which I hope that I have illustrated with the cases that I have brought to the attention of the House. It is difficult to ascertain value for money solely in economic terms. The National Audit Office is considering developing measures so that we can begin to ascertain quality much more effectively.

7.10 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): As a relatively new member of the Public Accounts Committee, I shall be brief. Serving on the Committee is refreshing, in that we have no party political bickering, which is unusual for the House, and all members of the Committee work as a team with one aim: to ensure that the taxpayer gets value for money. They do so even though some members may not agree with the policies that are being implemented.

There is an old story about the four ways of spending money. First, when one spends money on oneself, one is desperately worried about quality and cost. Secondly, if one spends money on someone else, one is worried about cost but not too worried about quality. Thirdly, if someone spends money on me, I am worried about quality but I could not care less about cost. Fourthly, if someone spends someone else's money on someone else, quality and cost go out of the window. The latter method of spending money reminds me of some of the accounting officers and some of the reports that appeared before the Committee.

Like everyone else, I pay tribute to the excellent Chairman of our Committee. I do so from the heart, not because I hope that he will call me earlier in some of our investigations. I also express my appreciation of the National Audit Office which so lovingly presents its reports to us.

One worrying aspect of the reports has been mentioned in Committee, and I have no reservations about mentioning it here. That is the requirement that the National Audit Office must agree a report with the Department under investigation before it can be published. That could be viewed in the same light as a criminal having to agree the charges on which he is arraigned before the trial can begin. The National Audit Office should be able to highlight—perhaps in a different colour or underlined—the areas of disagreement and should not be tied down by the processs of plea bargaining. That processs may weaken the report and the advice given to members on how to direct their questions.

The fact that the Land Registry and the Charity Commission have been the subject of many speeches shows the anxiety felt in the Committee about the appalling state of both bodies. On the 32nd report, almost all hon. Members will have had examples of the tardiness of the Land Registry. Its operations are a growth activity. We are told that, during the past three years, there has been a 66 per cent. increase in operations. That must have been expected by the Land Registry, but its representatives seemed to be surprised by the increase and thought that it was unfair. May I counter that with some simple arguments?

First, several years ago, about 1 million council houses were sold. The figure has increased considerably, and it cannot be a surprise that some of those people will now wish to move home. It has not come out of the blue. That, together with the Treasury forecast of great economic activity, means that the Land Registry will have much more work, and it should have been more alert to the demand.

The minutes of evidence show our dismay with the progress being made, with productivity struggling to creep back up—despite computerisation—to the 1982-83 level. The Committee was worried that the Land Registry was not effectively tackling the staggering backlog. We were told that the Plymouth office had managed to attain 2·48

units of work per person per day by January 1988. In an appendix to the report, we see that for 1993-94, when the great majority of titles will be on computer, the target is 3·05 units per person per day. I do not know whether the House regards that as satisfactory. It means that during the next six years that office will try to improve its efficiency by less than 4 per cent. a year. One wonders whether it will ever catch up with the staggering backlog.

We derive some comfort from the reaction of the Treasury. It states:

"The Registry has taken steps to set even more demanding targets as part of the improved resource control measures referred to above."

I hope that those targets are more demanding than the figures quoted by the accounting officers who appeared before us. If they are not, I have no confidence in the backlog being tackled effectively.

I refer to the Committee's 16th report, on the Charity Commission, with some diffidence. I was unable to attend the hearings as I was stricken in bed. I was doubly upset not to be present because I am the national treasurer of a well-known charity and I am glad to announce that its administration expenses are under 6 per cent. Any donations to that charity will be effectively and expeditiously applied. But it would be wrong of me to promote the Leukaemia Research Fund.

I shall not discuss the report in too much detail, because many right hon. and hon. Members have mentioned it. It highlights an almost staggering indifference among charities—with one exception—to the Charity Commission. One member of the Committee asked whether it was not deplorable that

"only 23 per cent. of the sample of the NAO had submitted any accounts to the Commission within the previous five years and only 9 per cent. of those who had not submitted accounts had been sent any reminder by the Commission."

That is unbelievable; it makes the commission a laughing stock. Although I welcome the Government's response, of establishing a computerised register of charities, I find it incredible—as my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) said in relation to the delayed computerisation in the Land Registry—that in 1988 a file of more than 150,000 charities is not already computerised. I wonder, because of the billions of pounds involved in charities, whether that is a sufficient response to discharge the burden of trust that is put upon the Commission. I find it incredible that today we are told that they should think it should be computerised. It is almost being held up as a dramatic and tremendous advance. I must say that I find that especially shameful.

The last point which I want to emphasise in this report is that of the investigation and the quality of the investigators. There is something especially wrong when fraud and abuse are perpetrated on charities—funded as they are by the goodness and generosity of people. We should be seen to be vigilant in the protection of that trust. Again, I express surprise that the Charity Commission does not have one qualified accountant. I am delighted to read in the Treasury's report that an accountant has been appointed to identify those types of charity which most need scrutiny so that available resources can be deployed with greatest effect.

It is encouraging that there will now be 14 officers able to investigate the cases. I understand from the report that they will investigate some 1,000 cases a year. I work that out to mean that in a fairly normal working week each of those 14 investigating officers will investigate a case every three days. I am not qualified to comment on whether three days is the average time needed to investigate a charity account, but it is obvious that the Charity Commission is relying on whistle blowers to initiate an investigation. The process is reactive and not proactive.

I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), who raised doubts about the suitability of the funding and of the structure to handle the monitoring of this vast area of public generosity. I must say that the Treasury minute is a sticking plaster and not the major operation that is needed to resolve the problem. I have no doubt that the activities of the commission will come before the House time and time again until matters are satisfactory.

I say with great deference and respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), whose skill, knowledge and wisdom are renowned in all corners of the House, if not the land—certainly in Eastbourne—that it will not matter a row of beans whether the commission is taken out of the Home Office and put into the Treasury until the restructuring has taken place, because it has at present all the ingredients of a major disaster. The Government ignore that danger at their peril.

Mr. Gow: And ours.

Mr. Page: Hon. Members can see that the opportunities for debate in the Public Accounts Committee are endless, and it is with restraint, and almost tact, that I do not stretch my few words even further to tackle some of the 30 other reports. I would like to believe that the sample put before the House tonight is indicative of the work that the Committee has done and the value that the Public Accounts Committee offers both Parliament and the country.

7.24 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The House will be grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) for his presentation of these reports. On behalf of the Opposition, I say that we wish to be associated with the kind comments made about my right hon. Friend and wish to express our thanks for the sustained hard work that both he and the Public Accounts Committee have put in during the past year.

The hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) referred to the Chairman's personal approach to the Committee and the way in which he involved all members and contributed to the good working atmosphere. The hon. Members for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) associated themselves with those kind and bipartisan remarks. As I said this time last year when we were debating PAC reports, the bipartisan way in which the Committee carries on its business is important to the authority that it lends to the reports when published and, of course, when they come to the House.

It is not possible to deal with all the Committee's reports tonight, but the Committee has highlighted matters that it wishes to draw to Parliament's attention. There are three themes to which I shall make special reference. The first is the frequency with which the Ministry of Defence features in Public Accounts Committee investigations and the second is the

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Government's privatisation programme. I shall also spend a little time considering the resources that are devoted to the prosecution of fraud across a range of Departments.

Before dealing with those matters, I offer a word of encouragement to my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). I know that there are Conservative Members, and perhaps one or two Opposition Members, who feel that my hon. Friend does not need too much encouragement, but I offer it to him anyway. I strongly welcome the remarks that he made about urban development corporations being an appropriate subject for investigation by the Committee. I am convinced that there is cause for concern in the way in which some of those bodies are operating, and the public good would benefit from a long hard look at those bodies by the Public Accounts Committee.

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington referred to the issuing of contracts which I believe is a serious matter. In local government and in most public authorities, the authority decides what it wishes to tender for, and the tender is issued to people who are interested in bidding. The body issuing the tender then chooses which bid is the most suitable. That practice has always pertained in public authorities to avoid corruption. But some urban development corporations are doing it the other way round—choose the developer first and then discuss with him what is to be developed. There are obvious causes for misgivings in adopting such a policy, and a long hard look by the Public Accounts Committee would be timely.

I pay compliments to the speeches of other hon. Members on the three themes that I have chosen to discuss. The Ministry of Defence features in five reports covering the school of music, service hospitals, fraudulent expense claims, naval warships and weapons procurement and procurement irregularities. I presumed that the report on procurement irregularities would be about the auxiliary oiler replenishment ships and Harland and Wolff, but on closer investigation I found that it was not, and that was disappointing.

The 31st report draws the attention of the House to the need for the Ministry of Defence to draw a balance between preserving competition in naval procurement and securing the lowest possible price. So far, the Ministry of Defence's response to the reasonable point made by the Public Accounts Committee has been unsatisfactory. Almost at the same moment as the Committee was issuing its 31st report, the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement came to the Dispatch Box to announce that the entire frigate programme for the year would be placed with one yard—and one yard only—thus denying orders to all the others. That decision is the exact reverse of the statement that the PAC has attributed to the Ministry of Defence.

The Ministry of Defence has not responded in a measured and open way to the Committee's request and that failure to respond, particularly about setting out its future procurement programme, is not only damaging to the warship building industry but may have disastrous long-term consequences for our national defence capability. The PAC was right to single out that report for debate and I hope that the points that it made go home.

The second report and theme with which I wish to deal is the Government's privatisation programme. Those matters are referred to in the Committee's 34th report. That expresses some doubt—a modest way of putting it—about whether the Department of Trade and Industry will be able fully to recover the £382 million of taxpayers' money that it sunk into Rolls-Royce before privatisation. The Committee makes a nice point about the value of sales incentives, which I hope that the Government will take on board. It says:

"departments should ensure that the taxpayer's interests are protected as effectively as future shareholders' interests."

That is important.

I should have thought that that point, regardless of political arguments about the rights and wrongs of privatisation, goes to the heart of such exercises. It is particularly important in the case of Rolls-Royce, because, as the Government have admitted, in that case there was no intention to secure a wider and deeper share ownership, which is the intention that has sat alongside some other parts of the Government's privatisation programme. Indeed, the Committee also has some points to make about wider share ownership, in particular about setting objectives before the exercise is embarked on rather than waiting until the exercise is halfway through and seeing where it is taking the Government.

Because the report is now some months old and was widely commented on when it came out, one would hope that the Government, and in particular the Treasury, had had a chance to consider the points made and, in the context of privatisation, to respond. But we know that next year we shall, among other things, be debating the 48th report which deals with the Ministry of Defence's sale of the royal ordnance factories. That report clearly says that the Treasury has learned little from previous PAC reports. It says:

"the Ministry of Defence did not themselves explore the possibility of redevelopment at Waltham Abbey and Enfield or obtain an alternative valuation of these sites based on the assumption that their redevelopment might be approved in the future. We note that BAe could make a substantial gain on their sale or development without benefits accruing to the taxpayer beyond the sale price paid by BAe."

That is the very point that was made in the context of Rolls-Royce some months before.

The Committee goes on to recommend, absolutely properly, that

"in any similar sales in the future, any feasible planning permissions likely to increase property values should be obtained before offers are invited."

Let us face it; if we were dealing with our own property, not that of the state, each and every one of us would make sure that we knew the real value of what we were selling before we sold it. It is a pity that the Government have not done the same with public property.

My third point relates to the resources devoted to the prosecution of fraud, not just financial resources, but energy and commitment. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne referred to the difficulties that the Committee occasionally comes up against in that area.

Five reports seem to have some bearing on that matter—the 28th report on Northern Ireland, the 33rd report on Customs and Excise investigations of fraud and smuggling, the 16th report on charities and two reports relating to the Ministry of Defence, one on fraudulent expenses claims and one on procurement irregularities. A common theme which runs through each of those reports, even though they relate to different areas of public

endeavour, is that all of them, to different degrees, say either that there are insufficient resources or that there is insufficient vigour in the pursuit of fraud.

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington referred to specific cases of fraud by defence contractors. I want to add to what he said, but to put it in a slightly different context, although I agree wholeheartedly with his comments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam), who has special responsibilities for Northern Ireland, rightly referred to the report on the work of the fraud investigation branch and made some pointed comments. The PAC says:

"We do not accept the argument put forward by DHSS for leaving staffing vacancies in FIB unfilled for almost two years".

The report adds:

"We are firmly of the opinion that such additional staff as are considered necessary for fraud investigation work should be appointed without delay."

Having made that point about resources for social security frauds in Northern Ireland, the Committee goes on to make an even more worrying point:

"We strongly recommend that special exercises should be mounted from time to time to ensure that social security offices and other benefit branches are not closing cases which should be submitted for prosecution."

The House should consider the circumstances that lie behind such statements and the nature of fraud investigation work in social security benefits in a community such as Northern Ireland which is riven with problems. The Chairman of the PAC rightly referred to the special difficulties that pertain in Northern Ireland.

When the PAC makes the case for extra resources, they should be allocated. I should have thought that the Government would willingly respond to that. I suspect that they may be less enthusiastic in responding to some of the other points that I intend to make about the pursuit of fraud. The Government have always been enthusiastic about pursuing poor communities and working-class fraud.

Let me move on to a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) about big companies being treated in one way and smaller organisations being treated in another. That relates directly to the 33rd report dealing with Customs and Excise issues. The report makes two points strongly. It says:

"We are concerned that staff shortfalls are a continuing feature, especially in London and the South East."

There are two conclusions to be drawn from that. The first is that the case is made out for resourcing, as it should be, and the second is that it could be argued, as the report does, that there is a need to relocate to somewhere such as Newcastle upon Tyne——

Ms. Mowlam: Or Redcar.

Mr. Brown: At least in the northern region—and to ensure that proper resources are allocated.

The report also expresses concern on the subject of scale and the fact that it is easier to pursue smaller matters than larger ones. I am sure that we do not want that situation to continue.

Many Members have referred to the 16th report, which deals with the Charity Commission and was also highlighted for debate. I strongly agree with the key conclusions of that report. I am especially concerned to note that the Public Accounts Committee, given the very moderate language that it uses when presenting its views, felt the need to state so boldly:

"We are gravely concerned at the risk of fraud, abuse and maladministration involved in the massive and increasing resources devoted to charities."

That is a very strong way to put it. As has been pointed out by Conservative Members, the report says:

"We regard it as unsatisfactory that the Commission has not devoted greater resources to monitoring and investigation work and has never established a system of positive inspection of selected charities";

and:

"Given the need for expert analysis of accounts and financial information, we are astonished that the Commission has no qualified accountants on its staff and apparently sees little need to recruit any."

We understand that there has been a response to that, but it is an extremely serious state of affairs and it is impossible for any of us who care about the role of charities in our national life to leave things in their current state. It is a question not just of the resources to pursue fraud but of willingness to pursue these matters and to carry out the proper monitoring function that many of us believed that the Charity Commission exercised. I am convinced that if this issue is not addressed at once the House will wish to return to it, perhaps through the Public Accounts Committee.

That brings me to the two reports concerning the Ministry of Defence. The report dealing with fraudulent expenses claims is as clear cut as one could ever expect to see. The disgusting thing is not just the fraud, which is disgusting enough, but the failure to follow it up properly when it was discovered and, as the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee pointed out, the involvement of Army officers. The affair does not reflect well on the services and the Committee was right to highlight the report for debate.

That leads me on—I was going to say "nicely", but that is probably the wrong word—to the 35th report, which also deals with fraud in the Ministry of Defence although in a slightly different way. The report stresses the need to keep the matter in proportion in terms of the Ministry's total budget—a nice point and properly made—but states:

"We note that all the prosecutions undertaken arose from relatively straightforward cases of employee misbehaviour rather than from complex corporate fraud; that several prosecutions were either not undertaken or were unsuccessful because of the insufficiency of the evidence; and that the strength of the MoD Serious Crime Squad is only 28."

That brings us back to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hodge Hill about the tendency of those responsible for prosecutions to go for the type of case that can at least be brought to a conclusion and not to embark on cases which might be more complex and difficult, most likely through lack of resources to see the case through to a satisfactory conclusion. Despite the comment about keeping things in proportion, the Public Accounts Committee has issued a clear warning to which the Government must respond.

Having set the issues in the various reports about the prosecution of fraud in their context, I wish to refer briefly to the way in which fraud is dealt with elsewhere. The establishment of the serious fraud office earlier this year was carried out in such a way that it can handle only about 60 of the most serious and complex cases at any one time. The criteria for selection are therefore bound to be fairly

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narrowly defined—they will be cases in which the facts are very complex or the sum at risk very substantial or in which there is great public interest or concern.

In my view, that is not satisfactory. The best way to prevent fraud must be to ensure that such massive resources are devoted to its detection and subsequent prosecution that the incentive to undertake the crime is dramatically diminished. While staffing levels in organisations such as the serious fraud office and the other bodies that I have mentioned still oblige them to choose priorities, preventing them from pursuing all the cases that they would wish, crimes of fraud will continue. It is not just a question of the serious fraud office—there is also justifiable concern about staffing levels in the fraud division of the Crown Prosecution Service.

In conclusion, I repeat on behalf of the Opposition our thanks to all hon. Members on both sides of the political divide who do such good work for the whole House in the Public Accounts Committee.

7.46 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): There was a slightly mean article in *The Guardian* today referring to last year's debate as an exercise in self-congratulation. Given that such debates are not attended by many non-members of the Public Accounts Committee, I am not sure who else could do the congratulation, but I am certainly prepared to join in, as I believe that the congratulations are extremely well deserved. The Public Accounts Committee does a most valuable job. It spends a great deal of time on subjects such as external trade measures for agricultural produce, prison service farms, repayment arrangements for works expenditure of United States forces and other matters which do not often hit the newspaper headlines but in which the Committee rightly takes an interest as they often raise considerable issues in terms of efficiency and finance.

I join the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) in his remarks about the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). I particularly appreciated his opinion that the right hon. Gentleman had been an even better Chairman than his predecessor the noble Lord Barnett—I only hope that the remark will not spoil a long-standing and beautiful friendship.

Mr. Gow: For the avoidance of doubt, will my right hon. Friend reassure us that he does not read *The Guardian* from choice?

Mr. Lamont: I have to confess that I knew that the mean article had been written not because I read *The Guardian* but because I happened to have lunch with the man who wrote the article. When he drew my attention to it, I made it clear that I did not regard it as the most welcome of comments.

The Public Accounts Committee has come a long way since it was first appointed in 1861. Not very much has escaped its eagle eye since then. In its second report in 1872, the Committee expressed its agreement with the Comptroller and Auditor General in his criticism of the Army for exchanging a consignment of surplus bricks for blasting powder when the bricks should have been sold and the proceeds paid into the Exchequer. That episode is paralleled by some of the reports that we have been debating tonight.

I notice that the severity of the Committee could also be tempered with mercy. In its 1882 report, it concluded that the sum of £14.16s.2d paid in connection with the Dundrum lunatic asylum, Ireland, was not properly chargeable against the Vote, but since the officers responsible admitted the error, the Committee was disposed to agree that they should not be personally charged. We have had rather more severe judgments tonight and in some cases that is quite right.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne reminds me, if I needed reminding, that I am not just the person who has to reply to the debate annually, but a member of the Committee. I am aware of that, because I receive not only the working documents, but letters inquiring whether I am the source of leaks. I can reply to the right hon. Gentleman's latest letter by saying that I assure him that I was not the source of the leak on the report about which he was worried, and, although I know that motive is not necessarily good evidence in deciding who committed the crime, I cannot think of anybody who would have had less motive for leaking that report.

The right hon. Gentleman said that there are rather fewer reports being considered today than there were this time last year, because of the intervention of the election, among other things. None the less, we are considering a staggering 38 reports, and that poses quite a problem for me, even though the Committee has kindly starred five of them. I feel a little like the fielder in a cricket match who is told to go to a boundary and when he asks the captain which part of the boundary he should field on is told, "All of it.".

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne and my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), among others, have commented on the 16th report. I must correct my hon. Friend on one point. I was never a member of a regiment, which may account for my very short stay in the Ministry of Defence. Extremely serious issues were raised to do with the monitoring and control of charities, as a number of hon. Members have pointed out. Charities enjoy considerable tax privileges in law. They play a vital role in our society, in arts, social welfare, housing, education and, as the right hon. Member pointed out, huge sums of money are involved. Like him, I could hardly believe the figures when I looked at them. The total income of charities is some £12 billion and there are about 160,000 of them. Therefore, it is vital that the integrity of the charitable sector is secured and protected.

I share the concern that in certain respects the arrangements for preventing, protecting and dealing with the abuse of charities has been seriously defective, and is in need of reform. That is why my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced in January the acceptance of the recommendations made by Sir Philip Woodfield in his scrutiny report on the supervision of charities, and the Government committed themselves to legislation. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) said that the Treasury minute is merely a sticking plaster when what we need is surgery. Although I cannot agree that a Treasury minute is mere sticking plaster, I assure him that we shall be introducing comprehensive legislation which will deal with many of these problems and implement many of the recommendations in Sir Philip's report.

The report had recommendations directed to the realisations of the responsibility of trustees, reducing correspondingly the responsibility of the commissioners, but increasing the scale of their activities in respect of malpractice and detecting inefficiency. Sir Philip made recommendations for the clarification and strengthening of the commission's powers of investigation and intervention when there has been maladministration.

On the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) about audited accounts, Sir Philip recommended that all the accounts of charities other than the very smallest should be audited and that they should be available to the public. He also made recommendations enforcing their submission to the commission. He recommended the tightening of controls on fund-raising, particularly when there may be manipulation of expenses or excessive remuneration—a point made by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne.

The result of these recommendations will be that, as the Committee very much wants to see, greater resources will be devoted to monitoring and investigative work, the register will be computerised and accounts will be more frequently examined and action taken. Some of the recommendations require legislation. Our detailed proposals will be set out in a White Paper to be published early next year. Meanwhile, many of the recommendations not requiring legislation are being implemented, and these changes will mean that the commission is on course to become much more effective both in supervising and monitoring charities. This is already apparent in the increased scrutiny of accounts, from 4 per cent. at the time that the report was made to 20 per cent. by the end of the year.

We share the Committee's concern that the register is deficient. It recognised that an effective register is essential to the strategy of providing information relevant to monitoring and investigation. We need to develop a database of information about charities as a whole. For this reason, as the right hon. Gentleman acknowledged, consultants are conducting a study into the method of setting up a computerised charity data base.

I agree with the Committee that the risk of abuse of charitable status under the present supervisory system is unacceptable. I understand that the commissioners are taking urgent measures to improve the monitoring and supervising of the charities in advance of the legislation. The staffing allocated to monitoring is to be increased further. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West referred to a figure of 14 and this is to go to 39 by the end of this financial year. I share the concern that the poor level of submission of charity accounts prevents this exercise of monitoring. I also share the view that the accountability of trustees for the stewardship of funds for which they are responsible would be enhanced by the regular submission of accounts that have been professionally audited.

In short, the Government back the reforms, and agree with what the Committee has said. That is why, this week, we have invited Parliament to approve a winter supplementary to raise the money available to the commission to carry forward the proposals arising from the scrutiny study and to put them into effect.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne spoke about the relationship between the Public Accounts Committee and the agencies and he has written to the Government recently about this, setting out the Committee's views. The Government entirely agree with the Committee about the importance of proper arrangements for ensuring that these agencies are accountable to the PAC and the House, and we are considering what the right hon. Gentleman said. By and large, we agree with it, and we shall reply in detail fairly soon.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who has apologised for not being able to be here for the end of the debate, asked several questions, and perhaps it would be for the convenience of the House if I replied to them by letter. He raised a point that was also touched on by the hon. Member for Hodge Hill, who commented on the practice of compounding by Customs, and the decisions about when to prosecute. This is a difficult problem, and I shall draw it to the attention of my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury. Customs always prosecute professional criminals, fraudsters, second offenders, those who have committed substantial fraud and offenders in special positions of trust. Experience shows, however, that comparatively small-time fraudsters are rarely, if ever, sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. They tend to be given suspended sentences or fines which can be considerably less than those imposed in out-of-court settlements. From the Exchequers' point of view, the current practice is more in the public and taxpayers' interests. More substantial penalties are obtained and taxpayers do not have to pay the costs of trials. That is the guiding principle behind the practice.

I shall reply by letter to what the hon. Member for Workington said about whistle blowers.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) remarked on some of the comments made by the PAC about privatisations. He particularly referred to the capital injection before the flotation of Rolls-Royce. That injection was given on the basis of professional banking advice and was consistent with successful flotation. The advice we had was that the health of the company and the flotation would be endangered, and the market's view of it would be bad, if we had not given the injection. We recovered the full proceeds through the flotation——

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the implication—although it was nicely put—of the PAC report at the time was that the chairman of Rolls-Royce twisted the Government's arm pretty far up their back for an extra cash injection before privatisation, without which he said he would not have felt able to privatise at all?

Mr. Lamont: The negotiations were tough: I was the person involved. I remember them extremely well, and neither side got exactly what it wanted.

Several hon. Members referred to the 26th report on community care developments. It is an extremely comprehensive report with myriad recommendations for joint projects between local and area health authorities. The report covers joint financing, monitoring and the effectiveness of community care, and makes certain pointed comments about the fees charged in residential care.

The Government are fully committed to promoting the development of high quality community services so that people do not have to stay in hospital longer than

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necessary and are helped to live as independently as possible in the community. That is not a cheap policy, which is why we share the Committee's view that one of the key objectives must be value for money. It is all the more necessary because resources for community care have expanded considerably, having had, as the Committee emphasises, a significant contribution from social security funds.

It was in this connection that Sir Roy Griffiths was asked to review community care and Lady Wagner carried out her independent review of residential care. The Government are considering the recommendations in both reports. I appreciate that our conclusions have been long and are anxiously awaited, but these are difficult issues. Our conclusions relate to some of the points made by the Committee.

My hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) touched on joint projects and financing between local and area health authorities. The Government are firmly of the view that there is scope within existing structures for health and local authorities to continue to improve ways in which they plan and work together. There are many examples of successful and innovative projects of this sort. We agree with the Committee that we need fully effective joint planning arrangements; they do not exist in all parts of the country. We need to get the rest up to the standards of the best.

The Department of Health shares the Committee's view of the importance of improving control over the financing of these joint finance schemes. The Department has written to the regional and district health authorities asking them to ensure that the procedures comply with the Department's guidelines. The Department of Health also recognises the need to improve information and monitoring systems and the performance of local authorities with them. I very much agree with the point that the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne is reported to have made in Committee about how one cannot rely only on the consumer to evaluate value for money. Resources must be put into independent assessment of how effective and up to standard these institutions are.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne also commented on the rapid growth in residential care for elderly people. Hon. Members may be interested to hear that in 1986, the latest date for which statistics are available, almost half the people living in residential care and nursing homes claimed no income support payments to meet their fees. They paid them from their own resources. Decisions about how financial support should be given to people in residential care and nursing homes cannot be made in isolation. The present system of setting national limits, which the Committee examined, is under consideration as part of the Griffiths report. Research carried out for the DHSS showed that basic charges for residential care homes were considered reasonable in more than 80 per cent. of cases that registration officers were asked to assess. Had the limits been set for homes at the levels recommended by registration officers, expenditure would have been somewhat higher.

I turn now to the point made by the Committee and repeated by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne about clinical assessment of the need to put people into accommodation, some of whom could carry on their lives in the community. I am advised that the research quoted by the Committee and which formed part of its report shows that more than 90 per cent. of a sample of elderly people claiming income support in homes in four areas were assessed as needing residential care on admission and up to two years later. The 23 per cent. of claimants referred to by the Committee who could remain in their own homes were not from the whole sample, but from the group of people who had come in from the comunity rather than from hospital or from other forms of care. By the time of the study, only 7 per cent. of those people were assessed as being capable of managing at home.

As the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne acknowledged, we have acted swiftly to deal with a number of specific points. There is now a requirement for a record to be kept of social security payments received on behalf of residents by the proprietors of nursing homes. I believe that that is a necessary step and I therefore welcome it. Although we are awaiting the Griffiths report, there is much that local authorities and other providers of care can do to improve standards. I hope that they will realise that and not wait for the report's conclusions.

Several hon. Members referred to the 20th report, which deals with fraud among Royal Engineers Regiment ordinance searchers. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne said that he was agog while waiting for my answer. I hope that his rapture will not be modified when he hears my reply. Perhaps I should not joke about the matter as I agree that this fraud was a sorry business. I share the anxieties that the Committee expressed and I agree with much of what has been said today.

The hon. Member for Workington alleged that action was never taken in cases of fraud. That is going too far. In a recent case at the Clyde submarine base, which caused some anxiety to several hon. Members, a number of people received prison sentences as a result of action brought by the Ministry of Defence.

In any case with which one is dealing, the key point is the availability of clear evidence. In the case of the Royal Engineers Regiment, the Director of Public Prosecutions decided that the evidence was insufficient to justify a prosecution, bearing in mind that the trial would have been lengthy, complex and expensive. Greater confidence in obtaining conviction would have been needed to justify proceedings. The Ministry of Defence similarly concluded that the evidence would not sustain disciplinary action.

The commanding officer, who called in the Ministry of Defence police, had been in the post for only two months, so no criticism could be made of his actions. Of the other officers in the unit, the most immediate supervisors were two troop commanders. Evidence against one troop commander was put to the Director of Public Prosecutions who concluded that the evidence, which did not suggest personal gain, was unlikely to secure a conviction. By the time that the decision was made, the individual concerned had retired from the Army.

No evidence was put to the Director of Public Prosecutions about the other troop commander. Any disciplinary action has to rely on the available evidence and not on speculation or supposition. After considering the evidence, the military authorities took the view that such action was not merited. One must remember that the supervisors were not the instigators of the abuses in the unit, which were of long standing. Strong views were

expressed about the matter in Committee. Frankly, it is debatable whether the decision was correct. The standard of management fell short of the level that one would expect of public officials and the supervisors took insufficient action to check what was happening.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under Lyne asked whether action was being taken to recover the outstanding money. I cannot tell a cheerful story about that. The Ministry of Defence has written twice to those concerned, seeking repayment. The Ministry of Defence has no powers to enforce repayment against the 42 searchers who are implicated in the case, or against those who have left, without recourse to civil law. As it is clear that the individuals will not repay the sums voluntarily, civil action is now being considered. The Ministry of Defence will have to weigh in the balance the legal advice that it has received on the evidence and the prospects of success in the case.

I agree that it is a profoundly disturbing case. The Treasury has reminded all Departments of the seriousness with which the PAC rightly views fraud and it has reminded them of the role of the serious fraud office, which can take over investigations from Departments. The Treasury circulates information about fraud that has been discovered so that Departments can apply the lessons to be learnt. Finally, we shall shortly issue further guidance to all Departments, making it clear that in cases of serious fraud Ministers should be consulted before disciplinary action is ruled out.

I should also have added that travel and subsistence procedures have been tightened up. All staff in the Ministry of Defence have been made aware of the requirements for handling the disciplinary aspects of serious fraud cases. When evidence of fraud is clear, steps will be taken to secure prosecution or disciplinary action. Any recurrence of fraud will be made more difficult as a result of the steps that we have taken, although I do not dissent from some of the points that have been made on the matter this afternoon.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East and the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne touched on the 31st report, which deals with defence and warships. The hon. Member, in whose constituency Swan Hunter is situated and who always stoutly advances the case for his constituency in the House, made several comments about procurement policy, competition and batch ordering, particularly as applied to the type 23. I appreciate his constituency vantage point, but I must say that competition and batch ordering have saved the taxpayer considerable sums.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne referred to the Trident programme. Most of the points that he made are covered in the Treasury minute. He also referred to the capital works at Aldermaston—the advanced weapons establishment programme—which were a source of anxiety to the Committee. The works are an extremely important aspect of the Trident programme and the Ministry of Defence, in concert with the Property Services Agency, has already taken a number of measures to improve management and control, the main one being the introduction of a single experienced contractor working on an incentive basis to provide comprehensive co-ordination of the remaining stages of construction and fitting out. The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Trident programme as a whole—and he is right to zero in on particular aspects of it—remains on course to enter service in the mid-1990s on the due in-service date.

A number of hon. Members raised the question of the Land Registry, such as my hon. Friends the Members for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) and Hertfordshire, South-West. I share the concern that has been expressed. The steady growth in owner-occupation, the right-to-buy provisions and the increasing frequency with which people move home have all contributed to the problems at the Land Registry.

In July last year we authorised additional resources for the Land Registry. As the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne acknowledged, from April this year we exempted the registry from gross running costs control which, as the Committee wanted, enables the registry to draw more readily on its fee receipts to finance the resources it requires.

To meet the rapid growth and to take the pressure away from its offices in the south-east where recruitment and retention have been difficult and where conveyancing has been especially active, the registry has opened four new offices, in Telford, Coventry, Hull and Leicester, in the past two years. Two further offices are planned for 1989. A further 1,000 staff—mainly local additional recruits—are now working in the new locations.

The registry has continued to give priority to pre-contract and pre-completion applications. It is the post-completion applications for substantive registration of new owners and mortgagees where the turnround times have been extended. However, the additional staff who are now being recruited and the new work initiatives which are directed to increasing productivity will lead to reductions in the backlog in the near future. Provided that there is not an unexpected increase in the work load, the changes that have been made should have considerable effect. My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge asked about agency status for the registry. We believe that it is right that the registry should remain in the public sector, but we regard it as a potential candidate for agency status, and that is now under review. Agency status could provide the further management and financial freedoms that are necessary to promote improved performance.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, apparently in order, referred to Royal Ordnance and the report——

Mr. Nicholas Brown *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: I am sorry, that remark did not imply anything. None the less, the hon. Gentleman surprised me by referring to the report on the disposal of the Royal Ordnance factories. The Government will reply on that in detail and I believe it would be a discourtesy to the Public Accounts Committee if I were to go into that matter in detail now. I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman did a great service in raising the matter at this stage. However, I can assure him that his arguments will prove to be ill-founded.

The price received for the sale of Royal Ordnance was the outcome of a keenly fought competition in the latter stages of which no fewer than six firms were involved. The price achieved was considered to be a good price by the merchant bank advising the Ministry of Defence, and was regarded by the Government as representing a satisfactory return to the taxpayer. Any talk about sales of sites is speculative and dependent upon planning permission being received—it has already been turned down. In any case, any property gains must be balanced against the costs

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of relocation and of decommissioning and against the fact that the buyer of Royal Ordnance may have taken on loss-making parts of the business and loss-making contracts. The price achieved for the business of Royal Ordnance as a whole was achieved for a going concern, to be managed and developed by British Aerospace, in the best long-term interests of Royal Ordnance and its work force. We shall reply fully in a Treasury minute to the Committee.

Finally, I should like to join the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East in thanking again the members of the Committee and those who have participated in the debate. The Treasury, of all Departments, very much appreciates the work of the Committee, which underpins our own objectives.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the 1st to 36th and 41st Reports and First Special Report from the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1987-88 and of the Treasury Minutes on those reports (Cm. 307, 323, 367, 410, 502 and 509), with particular reference to the following Reports:—

Sixteenth, Monitoring and Control of Charities in England and Wales;

Twentieth, Ministry of Defence: Fraudulent expenses claims; Meteorological Services;

Twenty-sixth, Community care developments;

Thirty-first, Naval warship and weapons procurement; and

Thirty-second, Review of the operations of the Land Registry.

Mid-Downs Health Authority (Recruitment)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

8.24 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Not long ago, I received a letter from 20 doctors in the Horsham and Crawley area telling me that 60 beds were out of action in the Horsham and Crawley hospitals; that the theatre operating lists had been cut by a quarter; and that most waiting lists had grown by over 20 per cent. The main reason for the shortfall in performance was the nursing shortage, which itself was due, in part, to the cost of housing but also to the lack of employees because of the full employment in our area.

The hospitals are short not only of nursing staff but also of ancillary and office staff—perhaps even more than they are short of nursing and midwifery staff. Furthermore, although the number of people aged over 75 is rising throughout the country, the number of school leavers is falling. That represents a severe challenge in the future—indeed, in the immediate future. There are now fewer young nurses to look after an increasing number of elderly and sick people. That is the reality.

The letter from those doctors in Horsham told me that Horsham hospital is frequently full and closed to admissions. When I received the letter I made some inquiries of the Mid-Downs health authority, which sent me a full reply. I found that the rolls were short in the following ways: administrative and clerical staff by 12·5 per cent.; ancillary staff by 21·8 per cent.; nursing and midwifery staff by 7·6 per cent.; and works and maintenance staff by 25·8 per cent.

The district has 125 beds temporarily closed in the acute sectors, largely due to those staffing shortages. The situation is particularly acute at Crawley hospital, where waiting lists have risen by an average of 15 to 20 per cent.

I know that my hon Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) is keenly interested in this debate and he has asked me to mention those facts because, like me, he is waiting for the Minister's reply, which I know he will study with great interest in *Hansard*.

The acute shortage of staff in virtually every area of hospital staffing is made worse by the rapid turnover in labour. I am told that the turnover of administrative and clerical staff is 23·5 per cent.; for ancillary staff it is over 50 per cent.; for nursing and midwifery it is 19·8 per cent.; and for works and maintenance staff 20 per cent. Not only is turnover expensive—I believe that an additional £2,500 to £3,500 has to be paid for each additional employee; it is also disruptive in terms of the training that needs to be carried out.

In Crawley—my constituency is in the same travel-to-work area—vacancies exceed the number of unemployed people at the moment. Of course, that is a happy position to be in but when it comes to recruiting extra staff for the Health Service, real difficulties must be resolved. The effect of such competition in employment has been to increase pay rates. The Mid-Downs health authority is now adrift in comparison with the local employment market by as much as 50 per cent. in some

categories. I do not know which categories are the worst, but I would expect that they are the ancillary and clerical departments.

Another factor which must be taken into account is the cost of property for nurses and ancillary workers. In my area a two-bedroomed flat costs over £70,000. The minimum salary to support a mortgage of that level would be about £15,000, which is well beyond the reach of single staff in nursing and other professions.

What can be done about that situation? The Mid-Downs health authority has an innovative scheme for providing low-cost accommodation for single staff with a housing association on its own land. That proposition is being studied by both the Department and the Treasury. If the health authority is to be able to recruit, it must offer accommodation in addition to the necessary level of pay.

In other areas of employment, such as in business, it is the custom to recruit people and then provide them with a form of tied accommodation. Some time ago it was the Government's policy to permit tenants to purchase their own accommodation within the health authority. In so far as that arrangement worked, it tended to exacerbate an already difficult situation. When one considers that health authorities are exempt from normal planning procedures, one sees that, if they are successfully to recruit the necessary staff, they must be able to offer suitable accommodation within their own grounds. I know that the matter is being looked at by my hon. Friend the Minister and her Department, and by the Treasury. It needs their sympathetic consideration, if health authorities are to have a realistic chance of recruiting the staff they require.

One must not forget, either, the reduction in the number of school leavers and the multiplicity of jobs available to them. I refer to a particularly favoured part of the country; the same situation is not true of others. However, there is no reason why the Mid-Downs health authority or my part of Sussex should be any less well treated than other areas. Regional pay variations are absolutely necessary, in addition to any special efforts that might be made to provide residential accommodation. Pay variations are essential if we are to solve the problem. That applies not only to nurses but to ancillary workers, technicians and other staff.

Yesterday, by coincidence, I received a copy of a letter from Worthing district health authority, as part of my constituency is in its area. That authority is almost as badly off in respect of recruiting as Mid-Downs. The letter was directed at my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health. Worthing is going through an extremely difficult time in trying to recruit the number of people that it needs. As to pay variations, I believe that my hon. Friend and the Government accept in principle that there should be regional variations according to supply and demand. Pay variations are accepted in the Civil Service in the form of the London weighting allowance, and in other parts of south-east England, in business and industry.

In Sussex, there are rent allowances for the police. The payment of such allowances and compensatory grants to Sussex police officers now exceeds £4 million per annum, and about 80 per cent. of all officers now live in their own homes and therefore are entitled to a rent allowance. If that can be done for one part of the public sector, it can be done for another. Careful consideration should be given to any scheme that can be arranged to overcome the severe shortage of nurses and other trained people required in the Health Service. The police scheme appears to be a good one. In Sussex, we are not short of the number of police we are permitted to recruit; we are short of the establishment of police required. I commend that system of allowances in the police force as an example of what might be done in the Health Service.

It is not enough to say that there can be regional pay variations for people who work for the Mid-Downs or Worthing health authority, but that they must expect the extra cost to come out of budgets granted by the regional health authority. It must be recognised that pay differential costs should be included in the regional health authorities' budgets. Even so, the case for that would not be made unless one could plainly show a relative disadvantage in manning in the Mid-Downs area compared with other parts of the country.

I have the advantage, because I have two letters written to me by my hon. Friend the Minister—one more than a year ago, the other much more recently. In these matters, it is important to be sure of the statistics. I must admit at once that I have run into considerable difficulty. I regret to say that the Health Service—this has been the subject of many PAC reports—is not very good at providing up-to-date statistics.

When my hon. Friend wrote to me on 1 December 1987, she stated:

> "I accept, however, that there is concern about the need for differential pay increases to reflect differing recruitment patterns in different parts of the country. I would certainly not rule out that possibility. But it would be important to target accurately any local premiums and to adopt a selective approach based on a full and up-to-date picture of the staffing position."

How very right she is. Just over a year ago, I put down a question to establish what was the relative staffing for nurses and midwifery staff. The figures I received were for the period at 30 September 1986—a year previously. Those figures concerned me because they showed that the South West Thames regional health authority's figure for nursing and midwifery staff was 8·21 per thousand population—the fifth lowest of the 14 regional health authorities.

However, as the Minister says, it is important to have up-to-date information. Imagine my surprise when my hon. Friend told me the other day:

> "Detailed staffing information is collected from the NHS annually on 30 September. Because of the necessity for detailed checking and validating of this data, the final figures are not normally available until some 11 months after the situation date."

I dare say that checking and validation are all very well, but what I have wanted to know for a long time is how it is that those manning level figures are so out of date. I agree with my hon. Friend's comment in her earlier letter that it is necessary to have up-to-date information, but how can it be up to date when the fully checked and validated statistics are already 11 months out of date?

The need for a proper system of calculating accurate manpower statistics in the National Health Service is as great now as it ever was. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to do something about that. I may add that the latest figures, which are really one year out of date, show that the South West Thames health authority had an even lower manning ratio of 7·9 per 1,000 population, which makes it the fourth lowest out of the 14 health authorities.

If the resource allocation working party system, which is designed to even out services throughout the country, means anything, those figures show that the south-east of England, and Mid-Downs health authority in particular,

[Sir Peter Hordern]

needs more nurses—and that attention needs to be paid to the acute shortage of ancillary and secretarial staff as well. It cannot be counted as a satisfactory policy if our region is so very far behind other parts of the country.

I want to emphasise the outstanding improvement in the National Health Service from the extra pay award. I devoutly hope that the increase, which will come through soon, will have a marked impact. I also welcome the huge increase in resources for the Health Service as a whole. That does not, however, invalidate the case for a regional pay policy: without such a policy, we shall not have equality of health treatment throughout the country. It is essential that a district health authority is not treated unfavourably because it happens to be in a regional health authority that has a London teaching hospital in its area.

This is a particularly vexed question. I have not been able to have a conversation with the regional health authority about it recently as the directors were not available, so I shall have to deal with it without their guidance. The truth as seen by the district health authorities is that the regional health authority has to spend a good deal on the teaching hospital—in the South West Thames authority it is St. George's—because it is new and very expensive. I believe—I hope that the Health Service review will accommodate this—that there is a strong case for taking all the London teaching hospitals together and not extending them so that they have a marked influence on the position in other parts of the country, as is the case in our region.

What we have found so unsatisfactory in the cases of both the Mid-Downs and Worthing health authorities is that money that should have been transferred to those health authorities has been extended to St. George's because it happens to be in our region. I dare say that it is all to do with not handing over resources too quickly, but my authority and Worthing have suffered because money has been handed over very tardily, if at all.

We have been accustomed to regional health authorities for some time. They draw up their own budgets and work out their capital expenditure and spending programmes, and I know that it is all done very carefully. To an outsider, however, it is extraordinary that a health authority should contemplate building a major hospital within two miles of an existing one. A visitor from abroad, if told that it was the policy of a regional health authority to take no notice of the presence of a satisfactory hospital in the neighbouring region which could be extended and to put up a brand new one within two or three miles, would conclude that we must be mad—as indeed we must be. But there is a proposal, which I believe is still under study, to construct a brand new hospital at Hove, within three miles of the existing Worthing hospital.

If there were no RHAs to compete with one another—if initiatives came from the ground—that could never happen. Alternatives could be provided. RHAs could say, "We wish to improve the facilities in other hospitals in our region now that we know that there is an existing general hospital within two or three miles of this one."

This affects my constituents particularly. We shall not have the facilities that we would have had if people had not taken leave of their senses in a peculiarly important matter. It is no small sum that the South-West Thames regional health authority proposes to spend. If only the two regions would talk to each other, things would go much more merrily, but what looks likely is a considerable waste of money.

I have given notice to no one, but this is not the first time that I have taken the matter up with the Department, and I shall continue to do so. As a matter of interest, I have sent the correspondence to the Comptroller and Auditor General, whose excellent report we have just been discussing. I hope that, if the RHA is seriously proposing to build the new hospital at Hove, it is aware that the CAG will be observing any transaction with the greatest interest, because it can only be concluded that it is a significant waste of public money, and the sooner it is turned down the better.

I must apologise in advance to my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) for not informing him that I was going to say this, and I shall draw his attention to it in *Hansard* tomorrow. Nevertheless, he and I both know what is involved, and I think it absolutely necessary that we make the best and most economic use of our resources. These matters are much too important for rivalries to be allowed between one RHA and another. We must not only practise economy but devise a sensible system that will allow satisfactory facilities and increased pay on a regional basis in the way that I have described.

8.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Edwina Currie): Let me start by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) on his success in the ballot. He is a doughty fighter for his consituents, and I commend his example to other, newer colleagues. They could do no better than follow his unfailingly courteous, thoughtful and constructive approach. I say that with some feeling, having listened to one or two other speeches from the Back Benches on health issues this week.

I note with pleasure what my hon. Friend said about the support given to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), who also makes representations on Health Service matters in his constituency. I also note the presence of my hon. Friends the Members for Stevenage (Mr. Wood) and for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe)—whose own areas face similar problems—and my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack). I do not think that the manpower problem has hit Blackpool yet, but no doubt it will.

It is a delight to see my very dear friend the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) who always graces the Chamber, and with such pleasure, when I am around. He is the only Member of the House who has offered me a personal compliment when I have been answering questions from the Dispatch Box. I am eternaly in his debt for that, and I shall not allow him to forget it either.

My hon. Friend the Member for Horsham has given the House the opportunity to discuss an important aspect of Health Service management, namely the need to recruit and retain staff in an increasingly competitive environment. The greatest asset of the NHS is its staff, and our ability to recruit and retain staff is crucial to the delivery of high-quality care. It is a measure of my hon. Friend's dedicated care for his constituents that he recognises that. He has, as he said, been in contact with Ministers in recent months about nurse staffing in the South West Thames

region and the important points that he has raised about our pattern of knowledge of employment in the Health Service in general.

I am sure that my hon. Friend is looking to the near future, when the brand new 300-bed district general hospital will open at Haywards Heath. It will be known as the Mid-Sussex hospital. Of course there are considerable implications for staffing it: I am told that 30 extra trained nurses will probably be needed, partly because although this is a replacement hospital there will be more beds and partly because the design—as it is no longer Nightingale ward—will require more staff.

My hon. Friend spoke about employment data. It is worth remembering—this is no reproach to my hon. Friend—that the Health Service is the largest employer in western Europe, and that some 1·25 million names appear on its payroll. Any employment data that we might collect are bound to take some time to sort out. It is not simply a question of pushing a button on the computer and finding out how many staff we have. However, the computers are now in place, and—as I said in my correspondence with my hon. Friend—opportunities are arising to produce the information far more accurately and rapidly in future. Our slight difficulty at present is that the very process of generating for the first time the new data known as the Korner data is taking up an enormous amount of time and in itself is producing a delay, and I can only apologise to my hon. Friend.

Worldwide, we stand as one of the great employers. I understand that only the Indian railways and the Red Army are larger employers than the NHS, and if General Secretary Gorbachev is successful in some of the things that he is getting up to, the Red Army will end up smaller than the NHS—certainly if we continue to recruit at the rate of the recent past.

My hon. Friend asked about the review of the Health Service led by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I am sure that he realises that I cannot say much about it, but he has made some sensible points and I shall ensure that they are drawn to the attention of the members of that review group.

My hon. Friend also asked about resource allocation working party money and how it is allocated among the districts. We agree that it is not allocated fast enough and that we need better systems to ensure that the allocation reflects the pattern of care that has developed in the neighbourhood, perhaps without freezing for ever that pattern of care. I am told that most RAWP money is out of Wandsworth as a result of changes at St. George's and that about £500,000 is to come out next year, starting in April. Mid-Downs health authority is set to gain significantly.

My hon. Friend mentioned district general hospitals at Worthing, Southlands and Hove. I should like to stress that no decision has been taken although, like him, I hope that one will not be too long delayed. The proposal is receiving careful study and the arguments that my hon. Friend advanced are foremost in our mind. The content of the proposed new hospital will be studied carefully to ensure that there is no duplication.

It is worth remembering that, on the south coast, in several health authority areas, more than one quarter of the population is now over 65, and their number is set to rise. They are heavy users of hospital services. We must take account of the fact that the pattern of care will have to respond to the pattern of need. I noticed that when I visited Eastbourne yesterday, where about 27 per cent. of the population is elderly. Some of the advice that I tried to give was that we must try to gear services to the people the service is looking after now and those it is likely to look after in future, although when the Health Service was established there were relatively few elderly people. The pattern of care 40 years ago was very different.

South West Thames regional health authority, in common with other Thames regions, faces pressure on recruitment and retention. One would expect that from their geographical position. The nurse staffing ratios show that South West Thames is in a relatively poor position. That is why, in my review in February this year of the region's performance, the subject was a major item on the agenda. The discussion that we had then gave rise to a number of specific pieces of action to which the regional health authority has given attention since. For example, we asked it to report to us on wastage rates and on intakes of nurse learners to ensure that the pattern of the most basic education is integrated properly with manpower requirements and financial resources. It is no good planning to train people if one has neither the money to train them nor the money to employ them at some stage. We asked it to make reports to us by 30 September on its mechanisms for identifying and correcting problems and to ensure that the pattern of nurse training schools is in line with recommendations of its education strategy. We have just received that report.

So far, what we have got is an excellent analysis of the region's nursing situation. An analysis is one thing—it is substantial: there are pages and pages of it—action is another. We have therefore put the subject on the agenda again for this year's review of the regional health authority and my Department will monitor progress closely.

It is no longer good enough for us to say that such and such a region or health authority needs more nurses. The pattern of demography is such that, in the south-east, we may be employing virtually everyone that is available. There may not be a pool of people from which we can draw additional nurses, physiotherapists, operating department assistants or any other group.

We are already the largest employer in the country. We are almost certainly the largest employer in most districts. It follows, therefore, that it will not be enough simply to say, "We need more nurses." I have put this point strongly in every regional review that I have done recently—we must consider retaining the staff we have and managing the career break much more effectively, particularly as the majority of staff are women, many of them young women, and many of them married with young children. We must look much more closely at the skill mix to ensure that the staff we can recruit are able to take up as much of the work as is appropriate for their level of training.

Even more important, we must ensure that we get some upskilling. In other words, if we have dedicated staff who have not for various reasons been able to train, we may have to develop schemes to enable them to do that. Many of those whom we employ are women and women traditionally have not taken up their education opportunities when they had the chance. I feel quite strongly that we should follow up, as far as we can, the opportunities to enable our staff to improve themselves and therefore the employment position of health authorities.

The Mid-Downs health authority, which covers my hon. Friend's constituency, operates in an employment

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

market which is about as competitive as any in the country. It shares its pool of labour with other employers such as Gatwick airport. There is full employment. Crawley and the surrounding travel-to-work area has the lowest rate of unemployment in the country, at 2·1 per cent. That puts pressure on all sorts of things including wage and housing costs.

I am extremely interested in this topic and I have done some homework on it. The next lowest level of unemployment—2·5 per cent.—is to be found at Winchester and Eastleigh. That puts Crawley in some difficulty. I asked the Department of Employment to give me an age analysis of unemployed people. I have the figures for 14 July 1988, which covers the Crawley travel-to-work area, which is not quite the same as Crawley town, but it covers the health authority area pretty well. It is a depressing picture for anybody hoping to recruit more staff.

The total number of people aged 18 and under unemployed for one year or more and who might therefore be regarded as available was 10. Aged 19 and under, that figure increased to 21. There were fewer than 4,000 people on the entire register. The total number of people aged 19 or under from whom we might expect to recruit was 110, of whom more than half had been unemployed for eight weeks or less, and were presumably between jobs. There is no pool of labour in that area. We should not, therefore, be surprised to find vacancies in the health authority.

I should like to give my hon. Friend a flavour of the health authority's vacancies as they are not as bad as in other areas, which suggests that Mid-Downs is a good employer and doing a good job at retaining staff, but nor are they entirely consistent, which is rather curious. The establishment for nurses and midwives is 1,872, and the number in post at 30 September 1988 was 1,730. That means that 142 posts are unfilled, which gives a vacancy rate of 8 per cent. The main gaps are in qualifed staff, especially in orthopaedics, registered sick children's nurses, intensive care units, theatres—including operative department assistants—and premature baby units.

The Mid-Downs health authority shares this problem with many other health authorities in the south-east, although, according to some indicators, the nurse employment pattern is not too bad. For example, the turnover and wastage rates for nurses are both better than the regional average. In 1987-88, the authority's wastage rate for qualified nursing midwifery staff was 17 per cent. of total staff in post. In Worthing and south-west Surrey, it was 23 per cent., so Mid-Downs is obviously losing fewer people. The number of long-stay staff who have been with the authority for more than a year is 88 per cent. of total staff in post. That is far higher than, for example, in south-west Surrey, where the figure is 74 per cent. The authority is therefore managing to keep its staff.

Nurses are not the most problematic staff group in Mid-Downs. At the end of September, the health authority had a shortfall of almost 22 per cent. in ancillary staff, 12·5 per cent. in administrative and clerical staff and 25 per cent. in works and maintenance staff, compared with 8 per cent. in nursing. Perhaps its establishments for some of these other types of activity are too high. I find it hard to believe that a health authority can function properly when it is down by a quarter on its maintenance staff and by almost the same figure on its ancillary staff, but it may be coping reasonably well on that.

It is interesting to note that medical and dental staff are well over establishment. I too saw the letter written by GPs and want to put on record the fact that the health authority believes it needs 193 medical and dental staff. It has almost 203 staff—that is, in whole-time equivalents—which means that it has 9·52 more people, again in whole-time equivalents, than it has 9·52 more people, again in whole-time equivalents, than it needs. That is 5 per cent. over establishment. At a rough guess, that is probably worth about £200,000 a year. If it is not, I stand to be corrected, but that is rather a lot of money for the recruitment of new doctors when the authority needs more nurses.

Sir Peter Hordern: My hon. Friend is right. I suspect that my figures come from the same source. However, my information goes on to state that the extra people are explained by an addition of directly employed locum staff to cover sickness, holiday and maternity leave. My hon. Friend is right in saying that the authority might save £200,000 by not having those staff, but are they to have no holiday, sickness or maternity leave?

Mrs. Currie: So far as I understand it, the data are collected in roughly the same way for all staff and I therefore wonder whether the shortfall in the other staff includes those staff mentioned by my hon. Friend. I merely put that on the record as I know that this debate will be read with great interest by Mid-Downs health authority tomorrow. The letter that the GPs sent to the local newspaper stated:

"Surgeons and anaesthetists are finding spare time on their hands because over 25 per cent. of the operating sessions are cancelled, again largely due to nurse shortages."

I wonder why, therefore, the authority is employing locums. I simply put that fact on the record; I do not criticise the authority. However, it does not seem quite right that it has more doctors than it needs but does not have as many other staff that it needs. If those figures are accurate, as I am led to believe, I hope that it will try to put that matter right.

The authority has taken the sad step of closing beds because of nurse shortages. That has a general effect on activity levels. I caution my hon. Friend about using performance indicators which are available in the Library because they refer to 1986-87. They show that the total nursing staff in the acute sector is, at 1·13 per bed, closer to the national average of 1·15. However, those figures are probably now out of date and I promise my hon. Friend that the latest data will be available as soon as possible.

I am told that the authority is dependent upon bank and agency nurses. At 30 September, it was employing 87 agency staff and bank staff out of a total nursing establishment of 1,100 qualified staff. It spends between 5 per cent. and 8 per cent. of its £17 million nursing services budget on agency and bank staff.

The health authority had to make some efforts to find those figures. I cannot tell my hon. Friend exactly how much it spends on agency staff alone, but it does not appear to be very much if the total amount that it spends on bank and agency staff is between 5 and 8 per cent. I am not as troubled about the use of bank nurses because they

are Health Service staff and using one's own bank is a sensible way of enabling staff who do not want to work full time to come in when they are available.

However, I wish to put on record my dissatisfaction that senior officers of the authority did not have this information easily to hand when I asked them for it this afternoon. They did not know how many agency staff they employed or how much they spent on agency staff and were not able to give me the figures. The figures that I was given were for agency and bank staff and they are not the same thing. I met Mrs. Tovey, the district nurse adviser, and Mr. Peter Catchpole, the district general manager, today. I asked them a string of questions to which they should have had the answers, but they did not. I put that on record because it is appropriate for those managers to be asking those questions and to have those answers.

There is some evidence of an imaginative management response from the district. It has recently produced, as required by the region, a strategy for the recruitment and retention of staff. My officials tell me that this is a comprehensive and, in many ways, imaginative document. So far, it is still a document. It proposes action, much of which is already under way, and there are about 30 points in total. These include improvements in working conditions, including the provision of a creche, which I understand is already running. Another point is the improving of arrangements for collecting information on manpower. As my hon. Friend will realise, there is some feeling of soreness about that. Another point is recruitment campaigns, including job fairs and the reviewing of recruitment literature. Some of the literature is good. The health authority is discussing preferential mortgage terms. I understand that it has been recruiting in other countries. I understand also that one of the proposals before it is to revert to having matrons. I am sure that my hon. Friend will have a view on whether that is desirable.

I have collected a good deal of other data on the Mid-Downs health authority, and I shall be glad to share it with my hon. Friend. It occurs to me that it might be more helpful if I were to include some of it in a letter. Having been critical about the health authority, I am aware that there may be further discussions during the next day or two on how it will come to terms with the criticism and cope with it.

In my judgment, it is not good enough that the authority should divert the resources that it had for nurse training to other things and then be surprised that the English national board should stop its nurse training altogether. It is not good enough that it should not know how many staff it employs, nor how the balancing of the budget is worked out between its own staff and agency staff, overtime and so forth. There is a great deal that the Government are doing, and I am sure that my hon. Friend will be aware of it. This includes a central recruitment campaign for nursing, which was successful during August. We may well run the campaign during the winter.

Sir Peter Hordern: My hon. Friend will recall that I spoke of a scheme that the health authority would like to put into effect. It involves the development on its own land of quarters for its nursing staff. Could she give that scheme a fair wind?

Mrs. Currie: I must apologise to my hon. Friend for overlooking that issue. It was discussed this afternoon. As the scheme stands, it involves unconventional finance. I advised the staff that a different approach should be taken so that it involves conventional finance, and then the authority will be able to get on with it. I have asked my officials to visit the staff of the authority to discuss with them exactly how that might be done. Rather than wasting a great deal of time arguing with colleagues about bending or changing the rules, it might well be done within the rules. I hope that that satisfies my hon. Friend.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seven minutes past Nine o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 4 November 1988

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Pedestrian Safety (Stoke-on-Trent)

9.35 am

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I have a petition from residents in my constituency of Stoke-on-Trent, North who are very concerned about pedestrian safety. They feel most strongly that greater priority should be given by the Government to street lighting and to financial support for it. Their petition concludes:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House does consider how the general deterioration in standards of street lighting can be arrested and pedestrian safety be given a far higher priority, and provision be made within the Transport Supplementary Grant for expenditure on street lighting and the grant restored to its 1985-86 status of being a contribution to both capital and current expenditure on transport, including highways.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Sea and River Pollution

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Relevant documents: Third Report from the Environment Committee of Session 1986-87 on pollution of rivers and estuaries (HC 183), third special report of Session 1987-88 incorporating the Government's response (HC 543), first report of Session 1985-86 on radioactive waste (HC 191), the Government's second stage response (Cmnd. 9852), the ministerial declaration from the second international conference on the protection of the North sea, and the guidance note thereon.

9.36 am

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): I am most grateful for this opportunity to discuss the Environment Committee's third report for the Session 1986-87 on the pollution of rivers and estuaries. The House will have noted the date of publication of the report—13 May 1987—which was the very eve of the Dissolution of Parliament for the general election. Much burning of midnight oil was required to ensure the publication of the report before the Dissolution of Parliament and of the Committee, which otherwise might have meant that months of inquiry and research would never have seen the light of day.

I am indebted to the members of the Committe at that time for their co-operation and I am glad to see that a number of them are in their places today. I am also indebted to the staff of the Committee, who prepared and retyped revised draft after revised draft to make possible this publication, albeit originally in typescript without photographs or illustrations. The timing of the publication meant that the report was subsumed by the general election campaign in terms of media interest, although favourable comment was received from the specialist press.

After re-reading the report some 18 months later, I do not think that, even with the advantage of hindsight, I would wish to alter its thrust nor any of its 32 recommendations. If I may make this criticism, the Government have taken an inordinate time in which to reply to the report—just over 13 months—whereas the requirements of this House are a maximum of six months. However, the long interval has enabled the Government to put in hand or to announce a number of initiatives that suggest that the major recommendations in the report have been accepted.

The changes or announcements have included, for example, the proposal that there should be a National Rivers Authority to act as a regulatory and pollution control authority and to take such control away from the water authorities. That would be the implementation in due course of recommendation No. 8. Another proposal is for a "red list" of substances for which strict environmental water quality is to be established. In recommendation 35, we suggest that there should be a list of substances which should be subject to the strictest control against their discharge into rivers. Also, there are various measures relating to sea dumping of sewage sludge and contaminates, to which the Government agreed at the second international conference for the protection of the North sea in November 1987.

The Committee should not complain that the Government have required so much time to study our conclusions. It is clear that they have studied them seriously. It has been the experience of this Committee that the moment that it announces a subject for inquiry, there is immediately a reaction—an internal inquiry—within the Department of the Environment. The opening of cupboards and the falling out of skeletons is audible from Marsham street to this place.

It is inevitable that in an inquiry and report of this kind, the Committee focuses attention where things seem to be wrong and where correction and improvements are needed. However, in emphasising these matters, it would be quite wrong to lose sight of the fact that the record of the United Kingdom in the care of the quality of its waters is the best in Europe and possibly in the world.

I draw the attention of the House in particular to paragraph 6 of the report, in which the Committee says: "it is important to stress that river and estuary quality in this country is generally very high. Of . . .(18,750 miles) of river length in England and Wales over 90 per cent. is classed by the DOE as 'good' and 'fair', and a similar picture applies too to our . . . (1,875) miles of estuary length."

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): The Department of Environment measurements are based on water authority tests, which in turn are based on the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that test does not include grade 1 chemical pollutants that might be in rivers?

Sir Hugh Rossi: There is an element of that, but the great test is the presence of oxygen and the ability of natural life to exist in those rivers, and it is on this basis that the tests are taken.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Does my hon. Friend agree that the appointment of David Renshaw as the chief executive of the National Rivers Authority is a most

[Mr. Barry Field]

inspired choice? Has my hon. Friend had time to consider the Salmon Advisory Council's report, published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which shows that in 1985, the latest year for which figures are available, the catches of salmon exceeded those of 1952, 1955, 1976, 1979 and 1982? That shows that that most sensitive of fish is thriving because of the much clearer waters in our rivers?

Sir Hugh Rossi: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that information. As the Committee said in paragraph 4, the United Kingdom has a strong tradition of tackling water pollution and a good record to prove it. Even though the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) tends to denigrate the efforts made by this country in comparison with the rest of the world, it is generally recognised that the Thames estuary restoration is the great success story of the post-war period. That is repeated elsewhere—for example, the Trent, the Tees and the Tyne. Therefore, I ask the hon. Member for Bootle not to sell this country short.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Last week, the hon. Gentleman was attacking the Government for not accepting the recommendations of his report, and the Labour party for accepting them. Now, he is pre-empting or presupposing what I shall say in my speech. I assure him that I shall be telling the real truth about the condition of our rivers and their deterioration since the Government came into power.

Sir Hugh Rossi: The hon. Gentleman should not change his spots. He was a useful member of the Committee and made a helpful contribution, but, unfortunately, when he speaks from the Dispatch Box, he seems to lose all sense of proportion.

In the course of its inquiry, the Committee noted, from the river survey of 1985, that after 25 years of continuous improvement, there had been a slippage of some 2 per cent. in water quality compared with five years previously. This is partly due to spasmodic pollution incidents, because of agriculture, and—significantly and disturbingly—partly due to the water authorities themselves. Paragraph 25 of the report says:

"in 1986, of the 4,355 numerical discharge consents issued by the DOE to water authority sewage treatment works, no less than 22 per cent. were breached or in the WAA's own words were, 'unsatisfactory'. That is, in 1986, 22 per cent. of all sewage works failed to meet the requirements to comply with their discharge consents for 95 per cent. of the time. This is not an acceptable state of affairs."

In their response, the Government agreed that it was not an acceptable state of affairs, and informed us that they would be discussing with the water authorities

"the implications of bringing all works into full compliance by 1991."

Therefore, I ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to inform the House what progress has been made in these promised discussions and whether there has been any improvement in the level of compliance since those discussions took place.

The Committee had considerable sympathy with the water authorities over this unacceptable state of affairs, because, as we say in paragraph 27—I draw the attention of the hon. Member for Bootle to the political implications of this statement—

"from the mid-1970s until the early 1980s there was a steady drop in investment by the water authorities in sewerage and sewage disposal. This is now making itself felt in the overloading of existing sewage works and operational failure. Since 1981 . . . there has once more been a modest increase in water authority investment in sewage treatment".

Therefore, if the hon. Gentleman is to make great play of the fact that rivers have slipped in quality because of the water authorities' failure to maintain their sewage treatment systems in a satisfactory operating manner, he should pay close attention to the dates in that paragraph, which show when they were most under-capitalised.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Earlier, the hon. Gentleman said that river quality had improved. Now he is saying that it has deteriorated. Which is right?

Sir Hugh Rossi: I do not think that I should give way to the hon. Gentleman any more. Quite clearly he has not listened to what I have said. I will not spend any more time on him. I suggest that he reads *Hansard*, when he will see what I have said. There is nothing inconsistent in my statements today.

Mr. Roberts *rose*——

Sir Hugh Rossi: No, I am not giving way again.

The problems about historic pollution are more difficult. One of the witnesses at the Select Committee told us that the Victorians had a great saying, "Where there's muck there's brass." The Victorians took the brass and left us with the muck. Many water authorities face problems with historic pollution, a problem which is particularly acute in the Mersey basin.

Enormous sums are needed to correct that historic source of poor quality water in some rivers and estuaries. The Select Committee report states that about £3·6 billion is needed over 15 years simply to remove all the class 4 bad waters and some class 3 poor waters. Such a sum clearly cannot be found out of revenue. The impact on water charges would be enormous. The water authorities are against the Treasury conventions of annuality in relation to their borrowing. The authorities are virtually bound hand and foot when it comes to raising money. It is no surprise that some water authorities have asked the Government to privatise them so that they can be free to go out on the open market to borrow money to bring their clapped-out systems up to date and so make them satisfactory.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Is it not true that freedom could have been given to the authorities to borrow commercially and the present financial arrangements could have been relaxed while keeping the authorities in the public sector? It is not necessary to privatise them.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I am afraid that the dead hand of the Treasury has affected the Department of the Environment under Labour and Conservative Administrations. I agree that it need not. I am not a believer in annuality, because it leads us into terrible difficulties wherever public investment is required. However, that is another argument. Perhaps the Committee can consider the problem of annuality as it affects the construction industry. Much bad policy from both Administrations resulted from certain accounting conventions insisted upon by the Treasury, when no distinction was made between capital investment and revenue expenditure within a given 12-month period of a particular Budget.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The hon. Gentleman mentioned the Thames. Does he agree that,

about 30 years ago, the London county council—of which I believe he was a member at the time—borrowed enormous sums from the Public Works Loan Board for the purification of the Thames, including the great purification works at Beckton in my constituency? That money attracted interest, but was kept within a public authority. Why does he claim that such investment elsewhere must perforce come from private sources and that regional water authorities must be privatised? He may believe that for other reasons, but that cannot hold up for the reasons that he has just advanced.

Sir Hugh Rossi: The local authorities used their rights to expend 2 per cent. of their money in whatever way they wanted, and Waterloo bridge is an example of that. That is how much of the expenditure was incurred. Much of the expenditure has been incurred more recently than the hon. Member for Newham, South implied. I remember the great drive made by Horace Cutler to clean up the Thames when he was leader of the Greater London council.

Another problem which has militated against the improvement of water quality is the fact that water authorities are both poachers and gamekeepers. They discharge into the rivers and they are responsible for ensuring that others discharge only to certain standards. It is clear that, because they have that dual role, they have been inhibited from being as rigorous in prosecution as they should be.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I entirely agree that the water authorities—the watchdogs—are far too closely identified with the burglars. The authorities are often responsible for pollution. However, the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) illustrated his argument by referring to the Mersey basin and the need for more than £3 billion investment. He was referring to the regional discrepancies. The Mersey is really a communal sewer which requires so much investment to correct. Does he believe that the capacity is available within the private sector to provide that kind of money to one authority alone to carry out such extensive work?

Sir Hugh Rossi: A sum of about £2·5 billion over 25 years to clean up the Mersey means a forward debt of a kind that might deter investors if the authority were privatised. Others will have to consider that problem; it is not a matter for the Committee.

The argument that I am trying to adduce is that the Treasury convention on water authorities restricting their ability to borrow under successive Administrations has meant that the modernisation of our sewage treatment works has not carried on to the extent that it should have; that has caused the slippage in recent years. The water authorities believe that privatisation is one way out of that problem, as it would provide freedom to borrow on the market to the extent that they think necessary to run their operations efficiently and correctly. Whether potential shareholders will share their enthusiasm is something that only time will show.

I have allowed myself to digress from the theme that I was trying to pursue; I want to return to the lack of sufficient prosecutions by water authorities. That is partly due to the inhibition that authorities feel because they are serious polluters. It is also due to the difficulty of going to court to prosecute someone when the authority is equally at fault. Therefore, we welcome the fact that the Government have agreed to set up a National Rivers Authority which will take away the functions of regulation, control and prosecution from water authorities.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that one reason why water authorities may have been reluctant to prosecute—their reluctance has been almost dramatic—is that the courts have inflicted such pathetically small fines that the authorities might have felt that the exercise was counter-productive?

Sir Hugh Rossi: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman: that was one of the Committee's findings recorded in the report. I would go further: the problem is not simply the fines, but the costs awarded by the courts. The exercise of proving beyond all reasonable doubt that pollution in a particular stretch of river was caused by a discharge from a particular factory or farmer and by nothing else requires a great deal of collation of evidence and scientific and chemical testing of water above and below the point of discharge, possibly over many months. When the court awards nominal costs on a successful prosecution, a water authority might think that the exercise really is not worth its while. The House cannot tell the courts what to do, so our recommendation was that the Magistrates Association should review its policy for this sort of offence.

The National Rivers Authority will take over responsibility from the water authorities, for regulation and control, and in recommendation 10, we recommend that the regulation by this authority must be both vigorous and seen to be so. Next, will my right hon. Friend assure the House that water authorities will be treated by the National Rivers Authority the same as farming and industry for pollution offences, especially after privatisation.

I am glad to see that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is in his place because I have some criticisms to make of that Ministry. The Committee found that the attitude of the Ministry was disappointing. It was relaxed and complacent. It was clear to the Committee that the major incidents of accidental pollution came from farmers. It is true that a relatively small number of farmers are involved, but slurry and silage are damaging to water quality. The Committee must express its disappointment that its recommendations for a unified conservation and pollution division in the Ministry has not been accepted.

We feel that such a division within the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is necessary to focus greater attention on the harm that some farming activities can have on our general environment. We felt, too, and regretted, that the code of good agricultural practice is not to be enforceable by statute. We are disappointed that trial protection zones in selected sensitive catchment areas, and the control of land use around boreholes, have not found acceptance by the Government to the extent that we would want.

Mr. Sydney Chapman (Chipping Barnet): In iterating his criticisms of MAFF, would my hon. Friend feel it appropriate to stress that silage liquor, as I believe it is called, is 200 times more polluting than untreated sewage? Unfortunately, the incidents of the former increased by, I believe, 60 per cent. in 1987. That gives a double-edged sword to the way in which we believe MAFF should take immediate priority measures.

Sir Hugh Rossi: My hon. Friend is right. It is because of the serious pollutant nature of effluents from farms, if they are not properly controlled, that we were so critical of the apparent complacency that we detected within the Ministry on those matters.

We know from the Government response that the code of good practice is to be redesigned, that initial advice to farmers will be free, and that protection zones are to be placed under review. However, I ask my right hon. Friend again to tell us how far he has reached in the review of those protection zones in especially sensitive areas, because the nitrates that are used in fertilisers are working their way down to the aquifers and could seriously affect the quality of the water. Therefore, I hope that my right hon. Friend can tell us how the Government intend to tackle the problem of modifying agricultural practice to limit nitrate input to vulnerable aquifers. Paragraph 2.31 of the response promises that that will be done, and I would like more information about it.

While my right hon. Friend is dealing with agriculture, perhaps he can tell us of the time scale for discussions with the water industry and agriculture and fertiliser manufacturing interests, which are mentioned in paragraph 2.34 of the response, and what progress has been made on that since the Committee reported.

On the question of industry, the visit of the Committee to Sandoz and down the Rhine impressed upon us the importance of containment measures for anything that is likely to find its way into the river because of an accident; and the need for notification of the pollutants being used by a factory, so that, if an incident did occur, it would be possible to detect or to know within a short time the nature of the chemical that had been discharged into the river. That is not easy to do because of the infinitesimal quantities in terms of volume compared with the water in the river, which makes chemical analysis difficult. Therefore, corrective measures can be delayed beyond the point when protection of the environment can take place.

I would further ask my right hon. Friend what progress has been made in the promised EEC discussions on the classification and labelling of substances being used by industry that could harm the quality of rivers, and in the regulations under consideration to deal with the containment measures which the Committee has recommended.

We made only a passing reference to sea pollution in the report, because we regarded it basically as outside our remit—as it is not covered by the Department of the Environment—but we were worried about the practice of water authorities dumping treated sewage sludge into our seas. We received evidence from Holland that this was leading to contamination and possibly harm to fish life, especially because of the presence of heavy metals which are inevitably found in this sort of sludge. We took the view that incineration was possibly the most effective, although possibly the more expensive, way of dealing with treated sewage sludge. We note in the Government's response that they do not rule out incineration as a possible option, although they speak of expense and say that plans are under consideration for incineration. I would like more information on that matter if it is available.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I am worried about sewage sludge and what we do with it. I do not think that the North sea conference went half far enough in dealing with the matter. I believe that the Government have now said that containment to the 1987 level will be the important issue, but perhaps the Secretary of State will comment on the statement, after the North sea conference, by Lord Belstead, the Environment Minister, that the cost of all the measures would have to be absorbed by industry and the water boards. I believe that extra money should be available from the Government to pay for those measures.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend heard the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley), and that he will answer the question in his own time. The hon. Lady should bear in mind that the underlying principle in this matter is that the polluter pays.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. **Nicholas Ridley**): Perhaps my hon. Friend could help me by saying whether the next sewage sludge incineration plant should be placed in Stoke-on-Trent or Hornsey?

Sir Hugh Rossi: There is no room in Hornsey; I can say that with great confidence. I appreciate the difficulties that my right hon. Friend will encounter with the NIMBY—not in my backyard—syndrome, which he is extremely fond of quoting. I also appreciate that he might take refuge in NIMTOO—not in my term of office. I offered my right hon. Friend that new acronym last week.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The North-West water authority is building a sewage treatment plant in my constituency, which has a loading station where sewage sludge is placed on boats and taken out to the Irish sea. We believe that that practice is environmentally unsound. I would much prefer an incineration plant to be built in the docklands of my constituency instead of the Sandon dock complex.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I am sure that my right hon. Friend carefully read the remarks made in the House last week about possible disposal sites for radioactive waste and the suggested ways in which the problems of NIMBY might be met. He might have to find places for such incinerators when the Committee has reported on the problems of hazardous waste and the House discussed the disposal of waste.

In a previous report on radioactive waste, we decided that we should be extremely chary of the long-established principle of disposing of pollutants by "disperse and dilute". Given the way in which today's motion appears on the Order Paper, such dispersal is a matter for discussion. We found that the Irish sea has suffered quite a lot from discharges from Sellafield. Although British Nuclear Fuels plc has said today that the quantities of ruthenium and plutonium discharged are minute, they are nevertheless toxic metals, which do not disperse and dilute. Those metals tend to conglomerate and can find their way back to the human environment via the food chain. Similar difficulties are presented by the disposal of heavy metals, which are part of the sludge disposed of at sea.

At present, the short sewage pipes out to sea are leading to unacceptable pollution of our beaches. Even if those pipes were extended, however, and carried the sludge and raw sewage further out to sea, problems would remain. One cannot accept that the disperse and dilute method, which has been historically acceptable, is now so readily acceptable, given the growing knowledge of the consequences of putting certain matters into even the vast volumes of the ocean.

I wonder whether my right hon. Friend is satisfied that sea water kills viruses? There has been evidence that the polio virus can survive for some time in the sea. Therefore, there is a risk in sending out untreated sewage, even through long pipes, into the sea. We should consider this matter carefully and decide whether all sewage should be pre-treated before any discharge takes place.

I have detained the House longer than I had intended, but I have given way several times to allow other speeches to be made during the course of my own.

Progress has been made. The Government have responded positively to the main thrust of our report. We are gratified that, perhaps, the work that we undertook for several months has had some impact upon discussions of several serious matters that are causing growing public concern.

10.15 am

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I shall endeavour to be relatively concise; I do not wish to take up as much time as the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi). I am, however, in no way critical of the length of the hon. Gentleman's speech. He gave way on numerous occasions and it is right that, as Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment, he should make a substantial contribution. I shall make a shorter speech, but I hope that it will not lack pungency.

Ministers must enjoy the long recess. The press are not unduly critical of the Government, the House is not sitting, and, therefore, sometimes quite preposterous claims can be made. During the summer recess, many Labour Members and many people concerned about the environment were amazed and bewildered by the apparent greening of the Conservative party. I found it almost hilarious. When the Prime Minister announced her attachment to and affection for the hedgerows I was reminded that the Government have repeatedly blocked my own and other attempts to protect a skeleton of important hedgerows. I am delighted that the Prime Minister is now convinced that the hedgerow deserves our affectionate regard. I trust that when a Hedgerow Bill is presented in the next Session the Government will not block it yet again.

I have also been reminded of the rather dishonest approach that some Ministers have adopted to the environment. We sought to close a loophole in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The Government blocked my Bill to close that loophole, but promised to introduce legislation. They did not. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) was fortunate enough to be drawn in the ballot and his Bill contained six relatively modest proposals. The Government took out four of them, virtually cauterised the fifth and left only the part closing the section 28 loophole. I remember the Standing Committee on that Bill when the Government Whips allowed varous individual Conservative Back Benchers to abstain once in turn to demonstrate to conservationists that they had a residual conscience.

The House of Lords then reintroduced four of the original proposals to the Bill. The Government reluctantly accepted that my hon. Friend's Bill could go through. The day after that, the Department of the Environment issued a press statement proclaiming its virtues, and said that it was a Government Bill. Even though the Department was corrected then, similar claims have been made since. I walked out of one function in London when a Minister of the Crown claimed that my hon. Friend's Bill was a Government measure. I do not believe that he was deliberately lying; I believe that he did not know the truth. It is rather sad that a lot of people present applauded when they knew that was not an accurate statement.

In recent weeks, Government statements have been full of inaccuracies. I was grateful that the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green allowed me to intervene to suggest that water authorities may be reluctant to prosecute because such prosecution could involve waste of public money and could be utterly counter-productive, given that the fines inflicted are a fleabite in comparison to the profits that can be made from pollution. That problem has been with us for years, but the Government have done nothing about it.

I wish to refer to the campaign that some of us, led by the *Yorkshire Post* and its then reporter, Geoffrey Lean, waged in South Yorkshire in the early 1970s. You may remember that campaign, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It began in the early 1970s because the rivers of South Yorkshire were obscene, disgusting and foul sewers. As a result of the attention that we drew to the matter, the water authority pledged to me that the rivers of South Yorkshire would be brought up to class 2 recreational standard by the middle of the 1980s.

I raised the matter again last year. This time I was assured that the rivers of South Yorkshire would be brought to class 2 recreational standard by the year 2000. It seemed to me last year that we were as far from approaching decency for our rivers as we were in 1971, when I was told that the rivers would have approached decency by the mid-1980s—that is, two or three years ago.

The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green talked about the backlog of costs. As a result of the Government's approach to conservation, I have developed a rather suspicious mind. I believe, for example, that there is at least a possibility that the Government are allowing arrears of need to mount up, so that the water industry can be sold off more cheaply than it ought to be. My cynicism is compounded by the fact that the French, almost as a matter of national strategy, are queuing up to buy private water undertakings and are clearly preparing to launch themselves into the privatisation market, just as the Japanese are to be allowed to buy an excessive stake in the British steel industry under plans that are about to proceed.

Rivers in south Yorkshire remain grim. My hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) drew my attention to a broadcast—like many hon. Members, I have little opportunity to watch television—about some people who took a boat down the River Don. It also looked at the Rother and the Dearne and found that Aldworke sewage works was often exceeding the level of effluent that was supposed to be discharged. I understand that that problem will be resolved, but over the past three years I have drawn Yorkshire Water's attention to the pollution of Roundwood brook, which feeds into the river nearby, on at least 14 occasions, yet there has not been a single prosecution.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that, on almost 1,000 occasions last year water authorities were given consent to make significant and serious discharges into their own rivers? Perhaps it is because they themselves are polluters that they are hesitant about prosecuting others who pollute.

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

One case in Yorkshire last year caused me enormous concern. The operators of an opencast site were allowed to dig a little channel so that effluent from the site could be discharged straight into the river. The discharge was many times higher above toxicity levels than it ought to have been, but the fine for that highly profitable exercise was £200.

Another firm that enormously exceeded toxicity levels when it deposited chlorine into a south Yorkshire river was fined £300, despite the fact that the poisoning of that river was 50 times over permitted levels. There are examples of south Yorkshire rivers having received poison at 76 times the level for which constant was given, yet no prosecutions followed.

Before 1971, there was far less concern about the poisoning of rural rivers. We were accustomed, as part of the Victorian heritage to which the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green referred, to the sewer quality of rivers in industrial areas. By the early 1970s, some of us had become restive about that. However, since then we have seen an enormous increase in agricultural pollution, to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

A matter that I raised some time ago is that in the Yorkshire Water area—I do not believe that Yorkshire is any worse in this respect than other authorities—the number of incidents of agricultural poisoning of rivers increased by several hundred last year. However, the number of relevant prosecutions fell from 18 to 12. Perhaps the water authorities are reluctant to prosecute because they are frustrated by the low fines that are inflicted. It is unsatisfactory that, although hundreds of offences are committeed, the number of prosecutions has declined dramatically.

What does the Secretary of State think about that, given his frequently uttered and much vaunted policy that the polluter should pay?. The polluter is certainly not paying—the polluter is making profit. Meanwhile, there is anger and frustration about the neglect of need, just as there is astonishment at the Government's commitment to greening.

I know that efforts have been made. In south Yorkshire's streams and rivers, there are now sticklebacks and minnows where, a few years ago, there was no life at all, but the stretches that contain a minimum of life are a small proportion of the total. As you will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, last year a salmon was found in the area of Doncaster metropolitan authority. I believe that it was approaching the constituency that you represent. That salmon received considerable attention. I must point out that there may be manic-depressive fish, just as there are manic-depressive humans, because it is not yet possible for the river Don, the river Rother or the river Dearne to sustain salmon, trout or grayling. It may be many years before those rivers can accommodate them, but the sooner they contain any fish at all, the more delighted I shall be.

My area faces enormous economic need as a result of rapid economic change. We shall not secure the economic advance we need unless our environment is improved. It will not be improved—despite all the protestations of greening that Ministers have uttered in the past few weeks—unless resources are provided to allow the environment to improve, so giving us the chance of economic health. The environment and the economy are linked. If we have a sordid, ugly and poisoned environment, economic health is inevitably affected. I do not believe that either the economic or the environmental health of our islands is adequately served.

My other reason for speaking in the debate is that I am chairman of the Council of Europe Environment Committee. There has been a growing interest in these matters in Europe. The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green referred to the Sandoz plant. The Council of Europe appointed me as Rapporteur on the incident. The only welcome aspect of the incident was that it led to a growing awareness of the scale of horror that can follow such poisonous discharges. Europe was awoken to reality when, a week after the Sandoz discharge into the Rhine by the city of Basel, the Dutch had to stop taking drinking water out of the Rhine.

Europe is fortunate because, now that it is alert to the realities, if poison enters one country because of a discharge into a river by a neighbouring country, there is increased national awareness and a greater emphasis on the need for action. We have seen the effect of pollution of the River Rhine on the Nethelands and the effect of the Sandoz discharge on the entire enormous length of that river. That led to a call in the report that I presented for adequate commitment by each member state to international conventions.

Will the Government make it clear that the United Kingdom will fully subscribe to international conventions on the health of water courses——

Mr. Allan Roberts: For the first time ever.

Mr. Hardy: As the Government have become green, they must be consistent; if they are not willing to be consistent, I hope that, in the next long recess, Ministers will not spend their time proclaiming that they are greening.

The Council of Europe Environment Committee decided to undertake a sea-by-sea study of European seas. We have just completed our work on the North sea and are waiting for the Council of Ministers to express an opinion on it. An Irish colleague asked that the second sea that we should consider should be the Irish sea. I am waiting for that colleague to attend the next meeting of the committee so that we can consider the approach to be adopted. In the light of the comments made by the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green, I am a little worried about the embarrassment that will face Britain as a result of any detailed work on that part of our oceans.

I do not make these points to criticise the Government in the European context but because there is an obvious awareness that, if the Government are green, it is because they have perceived that there is now greater and continuing public interest in this subject. If that is true, it deserves a cautious welcome. We are entitled to a mature and proper response to questions such as these from a green Government.

The first sentence of Walter Scott's famous book "Ivanhoe" referred to

"that pleasant district of merry England which is watered by the river Don".

When that was written, that area was a pleasant part of merry England. It was green and fertile and the rivers were full of salmon, grayling and trout. Until that part of merry England is made green and pleasant again, there will be no

excuse for complacency on Benches which may be green in colour but which are occupied by people who are only green by pretence.

10.33 am

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): Perhaps I may be permitted to comment on the more manic-depressive elements in the speech by the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy). If the hon. Gentleman goes back to the works of Izaac Walton he will find that much of his fishing was done in the river Wandle; the hon. Gentleman would have a job finding that river if he looked for it today. He is not being entirely fair to himself, the House or past Governments by concentrating his attack on how green or otherwise this Government are. There have been some pretty ungreen Governments in the past, and some of them were Socialist.

In his capacity as a Council of Europe Rapporteur, the hon. Member for Wentworth did not attempt to deny the proposition of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), that the record of European countries in river and water pollution is a great deal worse than that of this country. The Rhine is a standing disgrace, and I sometimes wish the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) would go and jump in it——

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way? That is personal abuse.

Mr. Onslow: I shall not give way. I was only expressing a personal wish; if the hon. Gentleman will not gratify it, I can only regret it. I shall not refer to him any more, as I do not suppose the House would like me to.

I welcome the opportunity to debate this subject. Whereas the hon. Member for Wentworth was pessimistic, I am optimistic. Today's debate, and those which will doubtless follow on the water privatisation legislation in the new Session, mark a real turning point in the fight against river pollution. Minds are being concentrated, and that is no bad thing. The matter has now been studied with considerable care and the Bill will give us an opportunity to make up for years of under-funding during which, as a result, the chance to improve river quality has not been grasped as fully as it should have been. Public limited companies will not want to take on the liability that polluted rivers will present them with.

The machinery for pollution control is being greatly improved. The creation of the National Rivers Authority and its forerunner the National Rivers Advisory Council is extremely important. Lord Crickhowell's comments have given a great deal of encouragement to those of us who take an interest in these matters, especially his assurance that the plcs will not be given a privileged position with the NRA as abstractors or dischargers. That represents a considerable advance on the way in which the water authorities have been allowed to carry on, and is a major change for the good.

It is important, as my right hon. Friend knows, that the public should be reassured about the process upon which we have embarked. So should those who take a special interest in these matters, including the National Anglers Council, which represents all fishery bodies, some of which I belong to, and the Anglers Co-operative Association, on whose council I have sat for a number of years. For 40 years, the association has led the fight against the pollution of our rivers. If the hon. Member for Wentworth had been able to establish that damage had been done to fisheries in his constituency, the association might have been able to bring prosecutions in the courts for him in the same way as it has done in many other parts of the country for a long time. The ACA has a splendid record, to which Opposition Members have significantly contributed. I had the pleasure of persuading the husband of the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) to join the association council of which the noble Lord Mason of Barnsley is now chairman. There is no politics in the fight for anglers' rights; it does not and should not divide the House.

The ACA and NAC were concerned about an article that appeared in *The Independent* on 7 October, which was taken by some as suggesting that water quality and discharge control standards would be replaced in order to make privatisation easier. The NAC issued a press statement about that in which it affirmed its opposition to any proposals that effluent standards be relaxed to make the plcs more attractive on flotation.

I took this up with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I am glad to be able to read out a letter that he sent me a couple of days ago, which I hope deals with the subject comprehensively and satisfactorily:

> "As you know, some 20 per cent. of sewage treatment works at present breach conditions attached to their consents for the discharge of effluent into rivers and estuaries. As we told the Environment Committee earlier this year we consider it essential that this standard of performance should be improved. To bring these works up to the proper standard it is therefore planned to spend over £700 million in the next 4 years. This is one of a number of measures which we propose to take, either in the Water Bill itself or in conjunction with it, to ensure that water privatisation and the establishment of the National Rivers Authority lead to a clear and enduring improvement in the condition of the water environment."

Later in his letter, my right hon. Friend said:

> "As to the consequential arrangements, I emphasise two points. First, we do not intend to relax consents on a general or long-term basis: any variations will be temporary, will take account of the need to protect the receiving water, and will be limited to the period required to carry through the necessary improvement programmes. Second, and contrary to other press reports, we do not propose to restrict prosecution rights in respect of these or other effluent discharges. I know that the Anglers' Co-operative Association attaches importance to their right to mount prosecutions where fisheries are being damaged by pollution and we believe that right should continue."

I hope that the House will be encouraged by that clear statement of the position, and that in future the press will get it right.

I shall now deal with the importance of maintaining standards and of using the courts, if need be, to enforce them and to penalise those who are guilty of pollution. I shall illustrate what I mean by quoting from a case that was recently brought to the notice of the ACA by the City of London Piscatorial Society. The matter that it deals with is also of great concern to the local residents association which has sent me some briefing about it. It is about a case not in my constituency but in the constituency of Wokingham, with which my own is sometimes confused.

I can best summarise the matter by quoting from a letter sent by my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) to the chairman of the Thames water authority, of which, my hon. Friend kindly sent me a copy. The letter deals with what is probably one of the worst cases in the Thames area, but there is more than one

[Mr. Onslow]

instance of sewage treatment works in the Thames area not meeting the proper standards. My hon. Friend's letter deals with the case in Wargrave and says:

"I have been shown photographs indicating that discharges into the River Loddon contain an unacceptable amount of solid matter. I believe that one part of the recent regatta involved children and had to be cancelled because of the dirtiness of the discharges and I see from figures of readings taken over recent years that there has been a general tendency for the amount of suspended solids and ammoniacal nitrogen in the discharges to rise. Looking at the evidence it would seem that you must be in difficulties meeting the necessary legal consents, even on the laxer standards now set to control effluent discharges."

In his letter, my hon. Friend also points to the noise and smell nuisance created by sludge lorries going through the village and asks that action be taken to deal with all those matters. I am glad to say that my hon. Friend has now been able to send me a copy of the response he has had from Mr. Roy Watts, the chairman of the authority, and it seems clear from it that the Thames water authority is at last taking action to deal with these matters. I hope that it will be effective action.

I do not know whether the residents association and the ACA will still feel entitled to press their case on behalf of those concerned against the Thames water authority in the courts. If that happens it will not be the first time that we have taken such action. Not long ago we brought eight prosecutions against the Thames Water authority for breach of its own discharge consents. The authority pleaded guilty on all counts and was fined £1,000 on each. The same thing happened in the case of the Anglian Water authority where further prosecutions resulted in a similar finding.

It is not really satisfactory to take a water authority to court, have it plead guilty and see it fined. We need action to deal with the situation. I am not advocating massive litigation to deal with the problem; what I want is a mass of money. That would satisfy the need and the justified requests of everyone who wants to see water quality improved.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey) *rose——*

Mr. Onslow: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way; I am trying not to take too long.

We are told that money will be forthcoming. If, in the meantime, there is a temporary moratorium on law suits or if it is a possible defence in court to say that action is in hand to deal with the matter, these points can be pressed under the water privatisation Bill. However, we shall want to set clear and concise conditions, which will need to be met and be seen to be met. There can be no question of stretching deadlines or moving completion dates. If anything, we want to see things done even sooner. I am sure that much of the debate on the Bill will focus on that point.

The problem in Wargrave arises from a massive housing development. An enormous housing estate was built on the former airfield at Woodley just outside Reading, and quite clearly the capacity of the sewage treatment works was inadequate from the start. The water authority had to try to deal with sewage for which it simply did not have the plant. That may be typical of the situation on other massive housing developments, and I ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to address himself to the possibility that a condition of a successful planning application should be that adequate sewage capacity will be available before the houses are occupied. He should say that, unless that can be shown, it may be necessary to refuse the planning application. It is entirely unreasonable, in this as in other contexts, to build houses without the infrastructure that the people who live in them have every right to expect.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Under section 52, local planning authorities have power to reach agreement with developers under which a contribution could be made, or new sewerage works provided—if the development is extensive enough—in return for planning permission.

Mr. Onslow: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and hope that the power he mentioned will be more widely used by the plcs than it appears to have been by the water authorities. Such powers will have to be used if the plcs wish to protect themselves from prosecution by the National Rivers Authority, the pollution inspectorate and the interested parties who may bring civil actions. Here again there is an opportunity to tighten up the regulations and to bring the situation back under control. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to tell us something about that.

In introducing his report, my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green told the House that his Committee's deliberations were cut short by the 1987 election. I know that that is correct, because among the witnesses who were disappointed were the NAC and the ACA who had formed up to come in and give oral evidence that would have enabled the Committee to cover a little more ground.

I listened to what hon. Members said about the pollution caused by agriculture. It is unforgivable that farming should cause so much pollution. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food should take further steps to make farmers understand what serious pollution they can create. It is difficult to understand why there are not more prosecutions, and even more difficult to understand why the penalties in some cases seem so small. No doubt all those mysteries are clear to the Minister.

One factor about river pollution seems to have been missed by the Committee—the vital importance of river flow, the amount of water that flows naturally down a water course. That has a significant effect upon the extent to which pollution is diluted by clear water. If we discharge effluent into low water, it is bound to cause more pollution than if we discharge it into high water. The proportion of clean and dirty water is critical in that context. We need further study of the effects of such abstraction, particularly when it is used for irrigation. We need further study of the impact of land drainage works, which bring into cultivation land which is often surplus to requirements nowadays. That has had the effect of turning rivers into gutters down which storm water runs and which are left more or less as a trickle when the rain has stopped.

There is scope for further attention to be paid to the effects of forestry. Forestry often incorporates extensive drainage and carries the risks of acidification with which we are familiar. The opportunities offered by the change in agricultural practice for replanting low ground, instead of

concentrating plantations on high ground and around the headwaters of rivers, is an important factor and I hope that that will be considered in the future.

Finally, the extent to which fish farms are a primary cause of river pollution cannot continue to be ignored. I know at least one water authority which is likely to find itself prosecuted if it does not enforce much stricter standards on a large fish farm that has been operating for some years on a river in its area. Everyone who fishes below that fish farm believes that it has been polluting the river significantly. However, I do not want to say which water authority it is because it is important to keep them all on their toes and I hope that this debate will have served that purpose.

10.51 am

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): As the right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) will know, I am the match secretary for the Lords and Commons Fly Fishing Club and, as such, I will make no apologies to the House for confining my remarks to the interests of fishermen and fisherwomen. I also wish to confine my remarks to the views of the Anglers Co-operative Association, which has done so much work voicing concern about the state of our rivers and estuaries. There will be some dissenting voices from those views, but I am given to understand that they are the views of the majority of members.

First, let me put on record the appreciation for the work of the Anglers Co-operative Association and especially for the work of Allen Edwards, its dedicated secretary. This year, as some hon. Members will know, the ACA celebrates its 40th birthday. It was founded to fight those people who pollute our rivers and destroy our fish. As statutory law was ineffective, the ACA resorted to the common law to secure compensation for those whose fisheries had been destroyed because of the greed or wilful neglect of others. Its record in the courts has been superb. It has won hundreds of cases and lost only one and has gone on to take out successful statutory prosecutions in magistrates courts against water authority polluters.

For 40 years, the ACA has campaigned for cleaner rivers, not only on behalf of the 3 million to 4 million anglers and their clubs, but on behalf of the environment as a whole. It is no secret that, for most of that time, the ACA has felt very lonely indeed. Many organisations have expressed concern about the environment, but none have fought so tenaciously in the courts to bring about improvements. That is why it was so pleased about the decision of the Select Committee on the Environment to conduct an inquiry into the pollution of our rivers and estuaries. It was even more pleased to find that the Select Committee was reinforcing so strongly the ACA's message and giving it far wider publicity and strength than it had been able to achieve itself.

The Select Committee shared the ACA's concern that there has been a deterioration in our rivers over the past three years. It concluded that the Department of the Environment should draw up a national strategy to maintain and improve water quality with a clear timetable for its execution. The ACA agrees with the Select Committee's recognition that water authorities could not be excused for the pollution that they cause. It is certain that improvement in sewage work effluent is necessary, as I am sure many hon. Members will agree today.

One great problem facing the ACA has been that the bodies with the power to act against pollution—the water authorities—have themselves been the greatest polluters. The Select Committee was right to insist that there should be stricter controls. It is a disgrace that the public bodies reponsible for the control of pollution have been the greatest polluters, running totally inefficient sewage disposal plants. In 1987, 867, or 20·5 per cent., of the 4,226 works with numerical consents breached their discharge consent conditions. That is an absolute disgrace. Apparently, they have also turned a blind eye to pollution by agriculture and industry, and I am told that the prosecutions of farmers and fish farmers have been negligible. Overall, in 1985-86, only 254 prosecutions followed 19,892 incidents of pollution. That, too, is disgraceful.

The Anglers Co-operative Association was delighted to see that the Select Committee had concluded that the water authorities should seek to enforce the law and prosecute more frequently, and that magistrates reconsidered the fines and costs awarded. In turn, it was recommended that a Department of the Environment inspectorate should have the duty to prosecute those water authorities that pollute water courses.

The ACA welcomes the comments of the Select Committee on the question of agricultural and industrial pollution. The Government have gone some way to accepting the Committee's report. They agree that there should be a national water quality programme. They have conceded that the performance of water authorities requires urgent improvement and that the present position is unacceptable. They are looking to the water authorities to remedy that within three years. They also intend that the new rivers authority should be responsible for the control of water pollution.

On the face of it, the ACA should be well satisfied with what has been achieved, but, as the right hon. Member for Woking will know, it is a little edgy about it. It fears that, as it was let down badly by Governments failing to implement the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and is inclined to believe that that could happen yet again. It took 11 years for Governments to implement those provisions providing for public registers and the right to allow prosecutions on that basis.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the hon. Lady confirm that some parts of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 have still not been implemented? The fact that 14 years have passed without the implementation of those provisions, which I intend to mention in my speech, shows that Governments have not been resolute in practice, although the possibility of doing a great deal of good has existed for so long.

Mrs. Golding: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. The environment is a concern, not only for the Government, but for us all. It is not a political football.

Mr. Spearing: Would my hon. Friend care to modify what she has just said? Surely the proposals for the privatisation of water disposal, as distinct from supply, which the Government will anounce in the Queen's Speech in a few weeks' time, show that they consider the environment to be such a political football. They are not green at all.

Mrs. Golding: I am sure that the House hopes that the Government have learnt a lesson as a result of long delays.

[Mrs. Golding]

I am certain that the Government will listen to the views that are expressed during this debate by Members on both sides of the House in their concern for the environment.

The association is pleased that the public registers will continue. It believes, however, that it would be far better if the registers were kept in a uniform manner. I hope that the Secretary of State will consider that and respond to the issue when he replies. The association's worries centre mainly on the ability and willingness to prosecute in cases of breach of consent conditions. It has been disturbed by the existence of the so-called 95 per cent. rule, which means that water authorities are immune from prosecution if they behave themselves for 95 per cent. of the time in a period of 12 months. The association tells me that this rule is nonsense and that substantial damage can be caused by such tolerance. It would like the Minister to say today that the new water companies will be allowed no such loophole.

The association is concerned also about the arrangements that will apply to the new companies. Rumours are circulating that those buying will be guaranteed immunity from prosecution. Will the Minister scotch these rumours once and for all by telling us categorically that no open-ended immunity can or will be granted? The Minister must address himself to the prevalent fear that the Government will allow lower standards of consent for discharge from sewerage plants to assist privatisation. The association would like to know what the Government intend in this area. Will they allow a drop in standards to help the sell-off?

The association is adamant that none of our rivers should be allowed to suffer from privatisation. It believes that to protect both our rivers and estuaries we need a rigorous regime of prosecution where pollution occurs, as well as of high standards. The association would want the National Rivers Authority to prosecute whenever there was no excuse for pollution. It has discovered that water authorities dislike the publicity that attends a prosecution, and therefore avoid bringing them. The association believes that the Government's attitude to prosecution is too weak and wishy-washy. It is no good if polluters know that they can get away with being told off if they apologise or promise to do better. For the polluter, it is so much cheaper to be told off than to take active steps to avoid any embarrassing and possibly expensive prosecution.

The association wants the National Rivers Authority to be active in bringing prosecutions. At the same time, it wants it to maintain its right to initiate private prosecutions, as it is now doing. It will not be quite as serious then if the NRA turns out to be as half-hearted in prosecuting polluters as the Department of the Environment and the water authorities have been.

The association is determined that we change the present position, in which, apparently, the Government have acquiesced, whereby, far from the polluter paying, it often, regretfully, pays to pollute.

11.4 am

Mr. John Ward (Poole): As I represent a constituency overlooking Poole harbour, it would be surprising if I were not to intervene in the debate.

Poole has the second largest natural harbour in the world. The constituency sits on the edge of the largest onshore oilfield in the United Kingdom. The harbour is surrounded by conservation areas bird sanctuaries, sites of special scientific interest and the like. The beaches in the area are well up to EEC standards. Perhaps more importantly, there is a thriving fishing industry in the harbour. The constituency is on the migratory route for salmon and trout. It is a designated area under the EEC shelfish directive, and besides the usual lobster, crab, oysters and mussels, which are well-known exports, we keep to ourselves the greatest delicacy of all, Poole cockles. These are four times the size of the cockles in the other insignificant areas of the shell fishing industry. I am told that they have much to do with the long life of some of my constituents.

There is much to preserve and even the smallest concentration of toxic substances could ruin a successful area. The Poole harbour commisioners and Wessex Water, which have prime responsibility, do an excellent job in preserving the quality of the water. However, I still see the need for vigilance in the years to come.

I have referred to the largest onshore oilfield in the United Kingdom. To date, BP has been a model of how oil companies should behave in a sensitive area of their activities. Its recently retired development manager, Mr. Michael O'Sullivan, has done a marvellous job throughout the time that he has been in the area. He has co-operated with ecologists, environmentalists and the local authority. He has done much to make BP the acceptable face of the oil industry. Drilling is now taking place near the EEC-standard beaches to which I have referred. There will be the need for even greater care and I hope that the company and, perhaps more importantly, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary in his place—will ensure that no risks are taken while inshore drilling is taking place.

Poole has an expanding commercial port as well as a large leisure industry which offers almost every type of water sport. The harbour commissioners tell me that the 10,000 yachts that are seen in the harbour every summer represent almost as great a concern to them, because of the occasional irresponsible discharge, as do the commercial operators. An education programme is needed to make leisure sailors aware that their activities can be as significant as those of the large boats.

I am pleased to hear that, after privatisation, the National Rivers Authority will reinforce controls over pollution. I hope that the penalties available to the courts will be an efective deterent to the polluter. We in Poole must be worried by the increase of one third in the number of serious pollution incidents due to agricultural activities from 1986 to 1987. As far as I can trace, there was no serious incident in the area of Poole harbour.

The Water Authorities Association has told me—we have been reminded of this by hon. Members who have already spoken—that silage liquor is 200 times more toxic than untreated sewage. Given the impossibility of continuous checks at every silage pit, I ask again whether the penalties for this class of pollution are high enough. A much greater availability of fines would be an incentive to the courts.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Richard Ryder): I agree with my hon. Friend that pollution due to agricultural activities is far too high. The maximum penalty available to the courts for that sort of pollution is

£2,000, but the average fine that is meted out by the courts in the south-west of England is £140. I take the opportunity through my hon. Friend of reminding the Magistrates Association of the maximum fine that is available to its members. It is important that they take hold of this fact.

Mr. Ward: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I was about to make the point that the best incentive would be the availability of higher fines to the courts. There is a maximum fine of £2,000, but the maximum seems not to be applied. If our rivers are polluted as a result of carelessness or gross stupidity, those responsible should face a minimum fine of £2,000. Perhaps the polluter who continues to act irresponsibly after one warning should be forced out of business. His activities will affect many people and we have no protection other than the courts.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Minister that, although we cannot affect the courts' decisions, we can continue drawing their attention to the derisory fines being imposed. The blunt economic fact is that at the moment, it pays the polluter—if he can get away with a small fine of the kind my hon. Friend mentioned.

In recent years, we paid farmers to produce food that we could not use. That has changed and we are starting to pay them not to produce food that we are unable to use. Logic suggests that we could devise a system whereby farms will be used less intensively, with less incentive to apply excessive amounts of chemical fertilisers. In some areas, the higher level of nitrates already in the soil will take years to clear. I am attracted to the Water Authorities Association's plan to designate water protection zones where agricultural activity will be restricted.

Just as excessive land nutrients can upset the ecological balance, so can fish farms, as was mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow). If there is an inquiry, it should embrace not only inland fish farms but those on our coastal waters, because intensive fish farming, popular and necessary though it may be, should be checked to ensure that it does not have long-term harmful effects.

I welcome all that has been done by the Government to increase investment in sewage treatment. That unglamorous and neglected area of pollution control must be tackled, and if we are to achieve the water quality standards that are increasingly being expected we cannot ignore the fact that we, the consumers, must make available sufficient funds to bring all treatment works up to standard.

I confess to continuing concern about and dislike for the discharging of sewage and sludge at sea. I know that that is now dumped further out to sea, and that such discharges are now a smaller proportion of the whole. However, I hope that we shall continue to find ways of avoiding all such discharges. I am not reassured by the use of underwater cameras and so on. I strongly suspect that one of the problems we are laying down for the future is the presence of metal pollutants in sewage, to which reference has already been made.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Member has touched on an important aspect. As the Secretary of State for the Environment is present, I may point out that the Government's response to the report that we are debating made no satisfactory undertaking in respect of metals in dumped sludge. Will the Government tell the House why they have not taken any steps in that direction?

Mr. Ward: On the contrary, the Government have moved some way towards accepting the importance of that aspect. It is no use this country moving forward alone. The source of some of the worst discharges are countries on the continent. Nevertheless, I agree with the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) that it is a subject of immense importance. More important still, we should give even more consideration to industrial discharges generally around our coasts.

Despite my concerns, I was glad to hear of the Government's proposals to control the most dangerous substances. The red list will have a proper scientific basis rather than a basis of guess work, rumour or sensationalism. Nevertheless, we should always err on the side of caution and the environment. The principle that the polluter pays must always apply. As I said earlier, slaps on the wrist for persistent offenders are no use. Substantial financial punishment is the only deterrent that polluters will understand.

I do not wish to end on a complacent note, but I believe that we are moving in the right direction. Thanks to the Government's economic success, more cash is available to remedy the neglect of the past. We must keep up the pressure not only at home but on our European partners, some of whose contributions to North sea pollution remains a disgrace. I hope that by co-operating with other EC nations, and by encouraging the efforts of the 21-nation Council of Europe, we shall build on recent successes. I am much encouraged by what was said earlier by the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) about the Council of Europe's environmental activities. All that is part of the great environmental challenge that the Prime Minister has clearly accepted, and it is one in which I am sure she will prove to be the driving force in years to come.

11.15 am

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I shall be brief because I know that many other right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak.

Never before has public opinion been so concerned about environmental pollution, particularly in our rivers and in the North sea. We must place on record not only the Select Committee's important work in identifying the problems but that being done by organisations such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and the Consumers' Association.

About 13 months have elapsed since the Government's response to the Select Committee's report. If the Government really were committed to the protection of all things green, we might have expected a much speedier response, of the kind that was given after the survey undertaken by Greenpeace, when its research vessel went round the coasts of this country.

One of the fundamental points in the Select Committee's third report comes in paragraph 12:

"Importantly, there was no suggestion that water quality in our rivers or estuaries poses a serious risk to public health."

We must acknowledge that it is not just a matter of contracting gastro enteritis or some other illness from bathing in poluted sea water, of eating contaminated shrimps fished in some parts of the country, or contaminated eels from one of our freshwater rivers. I

[Ms. Joan Walley]

believe that the Select Committee was wrong to single out rivers. It should be recognised that the pollution that reaches our rivers from agricultural practices, from industry, and from human sewage and sludge has a consequential effect on the whole environment. It is a problem not just for our country but for all countries bordering the North sea.

I acknowledge that we secured further Government concessions from the North sea conference a year ago. However, I do not believe that the Government made half enough concessions. We now confront the urgent problem that 5 per cent. of our rivers are not as clean and as clear as they should be. It would be bad enough if we had a problem with existing environmental pollution, but matters will be made worse by the Government's privatisation of the water industry, which shifts the whole focus on to the political arguments. We cannot say that privatisation is not a political issue; there is nothing more political than our environment. That is why the Opposition place so much importance on these issues.

Under the Government's proposals, it will still be incumbent on local councils to guarantee the wholesomeness of their water supplies. I should like the Secretary of State for the Environment to concentrate on explaining how he intends that the whole area of integrated water control and monitoring will be brought to account.

The Secretary of State does not seem to be giving local authorities the wherewithal to provide for clean, healthy water supplies or for the control and monitoring of what is going on. I fear that the privatisation Bill poses a real danger that environmental priorities will become secondary to profit and issues connected with the economy. Everything will be subservient to clause 5 of the draft legislation which is soon to come before the House.

We have heard a good deal today about the Prime Minister's concern for "green" issues, but during the summer when we were presented with the spectacle of seals dying all around our coastline the Government did not respond by calling for a reconvening of the North sea conference.

Mr. Chapman: On the day of our return after the recess I put down an early-day motion on the protection of seals, which had all-party support. Within a fortnight the Government announced that they would activate, under section 3 of the Conservation of Seals Act 1970, an order forbidding the culling and killing of all common and grey seals for the next two years. Is that not a good example of speedy and effective reaction by the Government to parliamentary pressure?

Ms. Walley: That is indeed a good example of constructive action that can be taken. But it is clear that, because of pollution in the North sea, immune systems are breaking down, and we must see what we can do to prevent that from happening in the first place. We should also be concerned about otters dying in our rivers, which has been highlighted by the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Government do not believe that pollution is causing the death of the seals? The Secretary of State has said as much. Some scientists think that the virus may be caused by pollution. The Government are supposed to be in favour of the precautionary approach, but they say that the problem is that there is not enough food for the seals. Where has the food gone? Has it not disappeared because of pollution?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Will hon. Members who catch my eye reserve their comments for their speeches rather than adding to them with interventions?

Ms. Walley: Nothing is more important than providing funds for the necessary research, and that is what the Government must do.

We should be putting prevention at the heart of our policies. In my region, if the Severn-Trent water authority put water meters in every one of the 2·75 million households in the area, it would incur a total cost of £430 million—about half the authority's entire capital works programme for the next five years on mains, sewers, leakage and environmental work on, for instance, river quality. I want the money to be put into research or effective measures to stop us from polluting so many of our rivers.

11.25 am

Mr. Norman Miscampbell (Blackpool, North): I start my brief speech by apologising to those who will follow me. I shall not be able to stay for the whole debate because of engagements in the north of England this afternoon.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Swimming on Blackpool beach?

Mr. Miscampbell: Maybe a little swimming on Blackpool beach, yes.

We are debating a matter arising from the proceedings of a committee on which I was privileged to serve for many years, and I am hearing again the overtones that I heard last Friday. Again we are considering not only the best that we can do for our country and its environment but how we can take the public with us, for public awareness is pre-eminent in this context. Nowhere is that clearer than in the disposal of sewage, notably in my constituency—and the neighbouring constituencies of hon. Members who are present today—where the bathing beaches of the largest holiday resort in the country, and almost certainly the largest in western Europe, have been condemned as not being up to EEC standards. We are obviously keen to amend that position.

The problem faced by us on the Fylde coast encapsulates almost uniquely the problem of how to dispose of waste properly. The North-West water authority's proposal to clear up the beaches running from Fleetwood down to south Blackpool have my cautious approval. It raises some problems, but we must face up to them and not simply say that the only solution is an onshore solution. I once served on a local authority that had to make up its mind whether to adopt an onshore solution or a long outfall. The political position can be summed up—the Secretary of State has already referred to this—by saying that there was a clear majority for an onshore solution, and an overwhelming majority for its being nowhere near the houses of members of the authority.

None the less, the scheme for the north Fylde coast is a vast improvement on the present position. It is proposed to put out a three-mile outfall, which is necessary in any event, and the Government are beginning to consider whether the ordinary raw sewage that goes out should be

treated. If toxic waste and heavy metals are removed, long outfalls containing ordinary domestic waste are a perfectly acceptable solution which is not condemned by any EEC country. It has been done in this country, and we know that it will prove satisfactory. We know that a mixture of sun, wind and movement in sea water is an effective way of grading sewage.

There are two problems. First, we must ask ourselves whether at the end of this century or the beginning of the next the EEC will allow us to discharge sewage into the sea. That is a long-term political problem. Our unique advantage is our turbulent seas, which in many instances, are most suitable for the discharge of sewage. The other problem is what will happen about heavy metals, and I am glad that the Government seem to be showing concern about that.

I welcome the scheme proposed by the North-West water authority. I hope that if political pressure makes it necessary more screening and actual treatment can be done without vast extra cost. I also hope that we shall pay attention to the problem of extracting heavy metals, for which an onshore solution may ultimately be necessary. Much could be achieved by preventing heavy metals from getting into the sewerage system in the first place.

No matter what the solution, the Fylde coast from minimum to maximum discharge due to storm water going through the sewerage system can change between one and 40 times in volume. No seweregе works in the world could possibly cope with the really heavy storm outflows. We must have a system at the end if we must put it out. That is why it is not a choice between long sewers going out to sea and onshore treatment. We may need to have both, but the long outflow is necessary in any event and I welcome it in the north-west.

11.30 am

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): It may be for the convenience of the House if I intervene now. Our rivers, estuaries and seas are an absolutely vital part of our national heritage. Not only do we depend on them for sustaining life, but they are a vital source of relaxation and enjoyment for countless fishermen, boaters, ramblers, painters and poets. They are part of our cultural heritage, as is our beautiful countryside.

Our forebears allowed appalling damage to our rivers and estuaries. Thank goodness that in my lifetime so much of that damage has been repaired, as I intend to show. Nevertheless, I readily concede that there is much more to do. Today's debate allows us to discuss the important issues raised in the excellent report of the Select Committee on the Environment. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) and his colleagues on the Committee on a worthwhile document. Not only have we studied it, but we have acted on it—in some cases before he even wrote the report. We must get this into perspective.

The debate enables me to do three things. First, I shall set out the major programmes under way for improving sewage treatment and disposal, which are already bringing major improvements to our rivers and coastal waters. Secondly, I stress that our water privatisation proposals, which I expect shortly to introduce to the House, will do a great deal to strengthen pollution control, particularly through the establishment of the National Rivers Authority, to safeguard and improve our inland and coastal waters. The Bill will be the most major piece of environmental legislation that the House has ever had to consider. I say that to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley)—who I know has had to leave us—because she expressed concern.

Thirdly, I will tell the House of the progress that we are making on implementing the ministerial declaration of the second conference on the protection of the North sea, of which I was chairman last November. It was not that the Government made concessions at that conference. It was that they led the pack to get all nations surrounding the North sea to take the necessary action, with great success on that occasion.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ridley: No, I will not give way yet.

Mr. Roberts: On the North sea.

Mr. Ridley: I am coming to the North sea. First, I am describing the menu for the hon. Gentleman. When he reaches a particular course, I will give way to him, but not a great deal.

Before spelling out these policies, perhaps I can put the subject matter of the debate into perspective. To judge by some of the comments, even today, one could think that conditions were bad and getting worse. The pessimists glory in looking each day for new evidence to confirm their worst fears, so let us look at the facts.

First, the Select Committee's report says of the overall quality of our rivers and estuaries:

"It is important to stress that river and estuary quality in this counry is generally very high."

That is true. In the last survey, in 1985, over 90 per cent. of our total length of rivers in England and Wales was classified as being of good or fair quality. That means that the waters were suitable for drinking water abstraction, supported at least good coarse fisheries, and had some amenity value. I understand that the position in Scotland is even better.

It seems fashionable to denigrate ourselves as "the dirty man of Europe", but the facts do not support this. Only two countries in the European Community, the Netherlands and possibly Ireland, have higher proportions of good or fair quality rivers than the United Kingdom. Rather than "dirty man", I prefer to talk of dirty rivers: and there is no question but that it is the Rhine which is the dirty river of Europe.

Mr. Roberts: I accept that the Rhine is dirtier than the Thames, but does the Secretary of State accept that the Mersey is dirtier than both?

Mr. Ridley: I knew that it was a mistake to give way. I am coming to the Mersey. The hon. Gentleman is the best example of political pollution that we have in the House. Even within the Labour party he must be top of the red list of dangerous substances.

We can also be proud of the major improvements in our estuaries. Our estuaries used to be a disgrace. But over the past 20 years or so they have been a major success story. Their clean-up has been achieved mainly through large-scale investment in new interceptor sewers and sewage treatment facilities. The record speaks for itself.

The Thames has been transformed into what we believe to be the cleanest metropolitan estuary in the world. Over

[Mr. Ridley]

100 species of fish have been recorded since the 1970s. Salmon once more go past this House. That is a far cry from the Environment Select Committee's comment that we used to hang up window blinds impregnated with chloride of lime in Committee Rooms to overcome the stench from the river in Victorian times.

Thanks to a major clean-up programme by Northumbrian Water, the Tyne has once again become one of our best salmon rivers. No salmon went through it for 30 years. In 1987, the catches recorded on the Tyne were the highest for 60 years. The Wear now has large runs of sea trout. Major improvements on the industrial Tees will once again enable the passage of migratory fish. The Humber is steadily being improved through programmes to clean-up the Trent and rivers in west and south Yorkshire. I shall come to the particular south Yorkshire questions in a minute. In total, some £600 million has been spent on better sewerage and sewage treatment for these estuaries. In Scotland, I understand that salmon are returning to the Clyde in increasing numbers.

The biggest remaining challenge is now the Mersey. In recognition of this, we established in 1985 the Mersey basin campaign to co-ordinate a £4 billion programme of investment over the next 25 years. The North-West water authority, local authorities, private industry, the European regional development fund and voluntary agencies will all be involved. The aim is to clean over 1,700 km of river in the Mersey basin by the year 2010 and to bring them up to at least class 2 quality. It is a longstanding and effective commitment to improving this, perhaps the worst polluted of our rivers. It is properly funded and protected so that the North-West water authority can go into the private sector with that programme secure.

Our very success has caused new threats to water quality. My right hon. Friend rightly drew attention to many of these problems and I propose to respond to several of the points that the Committee raised to eradicate the main pollution threats to the aquatic environment. First, I shall deal with substances which, because of the inherent characteristics, pose the biggest threat. These are the red list substances. This is a provisional list of substances ranging from heavy metals to pesticides which, on the basis of their toxicity, persistence in water, capacity for bioaccumulation and prevalence, justify particularly stringent controls.

My right hon. Friend asked for progress. We consulted widely on the red list during the summer and are now studying the responses. We shall make firm proposals for legislation and implementation. We intend to minimise the amount of these substances entering the rivers and estuaries from all sources, which include sewage contamination. In part, this will be done by applying technology-based emission standards to all significant industrial discharges of these substances. In future, we shall be looking to relevant industrial processes to use the best available technology, having regard to reasonable costs, as well as satisfying strict environmental quality standards for these substances in receiving water. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will have an important role in developing this new approach with industry. It will tie in with the parallel proposals we have made for an integrated system of pollution control for major industrial processes, designed to minimise the overall impact of discharges to land, air and water.

Many of the substances on the red list do not come from industrial discharges. They come from the wider use of substances such as timber preservatives, pesticides and cleaning agents—so-called "diffuse sources of pollution." To minimise the amounts of these substances reaching our waters may require action to control their use, which in some cases might be an outright ban. In the last 18 months, in response to evidence, we have already banned the use of organo-tin anti-fouling paints on small boats and we have also announced that the remaining agricultural and timber treatment uses in this country of aldrin and dieldrin, two of the worst and most persistent pesticides, are to be phased out.

The declaration that followed last year's North sea conference called for substantial reductions by 1995 in dangerous substances reaching the North sea via rivers and estuaries. Our action to control red list substances will largely implement that undertaking. We hope that continental countries will do the same. All that dramatic action has been taking place during the last year or two. It is in no sense something new that I announce to the House today.

The main source of pollution, however, in most of our inland and coastal waters is pollution by sewage. I fear that the House must agree on one matter at least: that no way can be found of ending the problem at source. The problem will remain with us, so long as mankind survives. It is in that area where most of our efforts this century have been directed. As a result, we are ahead of many other European countries over sewage treatment, but three objectives in particular remain to be achieved.

First, we have to ensure that we continue to reduce unsatisfactory discharges from sewage treatment works, which still put river quality at risk in some areas. Secondly, we must devise satisfactory means of disposing of sewage from seaside resorts. Thirdly, we have to decide how best to dispose of the inert sewage sludge that is the inevitable consequence of sewage treatment processes.

The Environment Committee rightly pointed to the unacceptable state of affairs arising from the large number of sewage treatment works still breaching their legal limits. The Government fully accept that. The major reason for it, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green pointed out, was the massive cuts in water authority investment under the previous Administration.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Ridley: In a minute.

That has led to a large number of works being overloaded and more prone to operational failure. Investment in sewage and sewage treatment was halved between 1974-75 and 1980-81, as my right hon. Friend's report clearly shows. The Labour party, with the help of the man from the IMF, was the dirty party of Europe. Fortunately, we are now remedying that problem.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) was one of the sufferers. I acknowledge that there is much more still to be done to the rivers of south Yorkshire. The programme of spending by the Yorkshire water authority on those rivers is £24·8 million this year, £45·3 million next year, the year after that £48 million, and in the following year £70 million. That money is available and will be spent

on necessary works by the hon. Gentleman's water authority, but I have to tell him that the reason for that taking so long to happen was due to the halving of water investment under the Administration that he supported.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Although the Secretary of State is right about the lack of investment since 1976 when the IMF had to be brought in, will he confirm that his predecessors in the Department have come to the House regularly to announce restrictions on borrowing, on external financial limits and the rest, which meant that until this year the reduction in investment continued—against the wishes of the water authorities, who protested about it? They would have made the investment if they had been allowed to do so by this Government as well as by the previous Government.

Mr. Ridley: I am surprised by the hon Gentleman's statement. I think he supported the Government who brought upon themselves the IMF crisis. That was the cause of the trouble. I admit that I have delayed water privatisation by insisting on having the National Rivers Authority in place. It means that the water authorities have not had access to the private capital market, as part of the private sector. Until they are in the private sector, they will never be allowed, by Governments of any colour, to borrow from the private sector. That has never been allowed, even by a Labour Government, for any nationalised industry.

Mr. Hardy: I acknowledge that Secretary of State's point, although I must point out to him that his Government had been in office far longer than the Labour Administration before this improvement took place. Many of us believe that one reason why this capital commitment has been entered into is that the Government know full well that that will be reflected in a much lower price for the water industry when it is sold. However, the Secretary of State has not yet addressed the point that although there may have been improvements in the urban rivers—improvements that could not have been delayed much longer—rivers such as the Tamar, home of Tarka the otter, are no longer able to sustain life and will not be able to do so until there has been a dramatic improvement in ways of dealing with agricultural pollution.

Mr. Ridley: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to continue with my speech. I am coming to agricultural pollution. There is no point in repeating it.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning announced to the House on Tuesday that total investment in the water industry will increase by 20 per cent. next year, following steady growth since 1980-81. On sewerage and sewage treatment and disposal alone, water authorities will spend £560 million next year, which is more than their total investment under the Labour party—an increase of more than one third, in constant prices, since 1980-81.

I am pleased to say that we are close to confirming with the water authorities an accelerated programme of capital improvement for sewage treatment works that will involve expenditure of about £1 billion over the next four years. That will bring almost all these works into full compliance with their legal limits by March 1992. I hope to make a more detailed announcement to the House shortly before Christmas. However, even now I can confidently predict that the extra investment that is to be approved will be good news for water quality. We shall look to the new National Rivers Authority to ensure that agreed programmes of improvement are properly implemented.

There are some 400 bathing waters within the scope of the EEC bathing waters directive. About 60 per cent. of them now meet the quality standards on sewage bacteria. We must bring the remainder up to these standards as quickly as possible. The water authorities have done a good job in drawing up improvement programmes. They are currently spending £70 million annually on schemes to improve beaches. We have recently asked them to assess whether these programmes could be accelerated so that all our bathing standards will be up to EEC standards by 1995.

I am afraid that 1995 is the very earliest that the improvements could be completed. Some of the very large schemes involve complex engineering, design and construction work, and some of those contracts can take up to seven years to complete because of the need to catch the tides and the weather. Most improvement schemes involve the re-sewering of seaside towns and the construction of long sea outfalls. These discharge three or more kilometres out at sea, where dilution and the effects of the sea and sunlight rapidly break down the effluent and kill off the bacteria. The use of long sea outfalls was strongly endorsed by the Royal Commission on environmental pollution, which concluded in its 10th report that with well-designed outfalls discharge of sewage to the sea is not only acceptable but, in many cases, environmentally preferable to alternative methods of disposal. That is the best international scientific advice about this matter. It is not possible to question it, as the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) has been doing sotto voce and from a seated position.

There are still those who, like the hon. Member for Bootle, argue that sewage discharges into the sea are wrong in principle, but the alternatives that they suggest, such as conventional inland treatment or disinfection, also have great drawbacks. Conventional treatment by itself does not remove all the bacteria—we still require the sea to finish the job. As far as we know, the sea will destroy all viruses that have been identified. There are concerns about the effects of disinfecting agents on marine life. Moreover, we simply cannot escape the fact that sewage has to be disposed of somewhere. For example, even if we were to rule out the use of long sea outfalls, and rely instead on conventional inland treatment works, we would then have increased amounts of sewage sludge to dispose of.

The House must appreciate that the end product of sewage treatment is sludge which has to be disposed of in some way, somewhere. About half of what we produce is currently spread onto land as a soil conditioner, one fifth is put into landfill sites, and one third is disposed of at sea. A small amount is incinerated.

Our policy on sewage sludge disposal is straightforward—to choose in each instance that means of disposal that is the best practicable environmental option in the area and in the circumstances of the case. In those cases where we send sewage sludge to sea—mainly from the large conurbations round some of the estuaries—we do so because we believe that it represents the best option. It may be that putting it on the land or burning it close to the big cities would prove, quite conclusively, to be much worse options than taking it out to sea. I heard the interesting and constructive speech by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell), but I

[Mr. Ridley]

must not comment on the situation he described, because the application for works on the Fylde coast could be coming to me soon.

I recognise people's sensitivities about the sea and the strong emotions that something so elemental can involve, but there is nothing scientifically or intrinsically wrong with sea disposal of sewage sludge, provided that it is done in the right way. People can be equally sensitive to disposing of it on land. The risks arise not from the sewage sludge per se, but from the amounts of contaminants, such as heavy metals that it contains. This was the worry expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward). It is right that we should take action to minimise, even to eliminate, the levels of contaminants in sludges, through the sorts of measures that I have described for red list substances. That is what we are doing. Having done it, I am convinced that the best scientific evidence proves that it might be the right action to put the inert sludge out into the deep sea, where the currents stir it away.

Mrs. Golding: Will there be an independent report into the relationship between sludge dumping and fish disease.

Mr. Ridley: I do not know what the hon. Lady means by an independent report. A great many scientific investigations are made into these matters and when we receive advice from the best scientists in the country, the Government make it public and we can debate what action should be taken. The idea that there is some independent person who can provide better advice than that which the Government receive and publish is wrong.

I want to consider the North sea conference, which was referred to by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North. We correctly recognised the distinction at the conference, which calls for action to reduce the contamination of sludges by persistent, toxic and bioaccumulable materials so that they pose no harm to the marine environment. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is implementing that part of the declaration as part of his overall responsibilities for licensing sea disposal. His officials are involved in detailed discussions with the water industry on the implications. He also intends to publish the results of the monitoring studies at sea disposal sites. However, to those who are against sea disposal I ask: "What is your solution?" Agricultural land is often not readily available near major conurbations. We are short of landfill sites and I guess that the public would not accept large-scale incineration plants near urban areas.

We have heard a lot about the allegedly polluted state of the North sea. It has been described as a dying sea and even as a dead sea. The North sea is a national and international responsibility. Touching almost half of our coastline, it is bound to be of concern to us all. The most comprehensive and authoritative report on the state of the North sea was last year's quality status report—a consensus report produced by scientists from all North sea states.

That report drew attention to a number of issues of concern such as the build-up of pollutants in areas such as the Wadden sea and German bight and the accumulation of nutrients along the coastal belt of the Netherlands and Denmark. However, the report also showed that there was no evidence of damage away from those limited areas. Given the concentrations of population and industry around the North sea, I think that those results are broadly encouraging. Certainly they do not bear out claims that the North sea is dying, let alone dead. No doubt I shall next be accused of complacency by the hon. Member for Bootle, (Mr. Roberts). However, I believe that scientists know more about this than does the hon. Gentleman.

The exaggerated tales about the condition of the seas around these islands have led some to the assumption that that was the cause of the virus epidemic that has killed so many seals. However, no direct links have yet been established between the epidemic affecting the seals and pollution.

Sir Hugh Rossi: If it is a virus that is affecting the seals, how do viruses survive in the sea when he told us a few moments ago that he was satisfied that the sea destroyed viruses?

Mr. Ridley: I was talking about viruses that are a danger to human beings which come from the sewerage system. I am now talking about a virus that is quite common among a number of mammals. It might interest my hon. Friend to learn that seals in Lake Baikal in central Asia appear to have a very similar virus which has decimated the seal population in a very remote area away from any industrial pollution.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the right hon. Gentleman admit that every piece of scientific evidence shows that, whether or not pollution causes a virus, in relation to food that fish, seals or humans eat, pollution will lower the animal's resistance and cause the virus to get a hold?

Mr. Ridley: I am afraid that there is no evidence for that. I commend the excellent and fully researched, scientific article written by Dr. John Harwood, the director of the sea mammal research unit which appeared in the *New Scientist* recently about the lessons to be learned from the epidemic. He makes it absolutely clear that, although every sort of research is being done to try to determine any such possible connection, there is at present no conceivable evidence. That just shows the dangers of jumping to conclusions about things such as the seal virus, based on ignorance and prejudice—as the hon. Lady who raised that point has done—and why it would be better to discover the facts from scientific analyses and research.

Mrs. Golding: It was not my concern, but that of the Environment Committee in its report to the House of Commons. It was anxious to have an independent report on the relationship between sludge dumping and fish disease. The Committee had, in fact, studied all the evidence that had been submitted to it and was not satisfied.

Mr. Ridley: I was referring to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North who has now left. However, I believe that I have dealt with that point.

Our action to reduce red list substances reaching the North sea via our rivers and estuaries will contribute to improvement both directly and indirectly through the implications for contaminant levels in sewage sludge. Similar action is now needed by other North sea states, especially since about half of all river-borne contaminants reach the North sea from the Rhine-Meuse. Eighty per

cent. comes from continental rivers. We are also working to fulfil our North sea conference commitments on sea dumping.

The hon. Member for Wentworth mentioned the Irish sea. The most recent reports we have on the state of the Irish sea—produced by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas—also suggest that the general quality of its water are good, although there are localised historic problems in areas such as Liverpool bay. It is worth noting in this regard that over the past 10 years we have cut radioactive discharges from Sellafield by 90 per cent. and further reductions are planned. Man-made radioactivity in Britain accounts for only one part in 1,000 of the natural radioactivity on land and in the sea.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green and other hon. Members raised the question of agricultural pollution and especially nitrate. I assure the House, that the Government are fully aware of the increasing nitrate levels in some of the groundwater sources in parts of central and eastern England, and it is a serious problem. We are urgently seeking a way forward. But it is a complex matter and the solutions will vary from area to area. The mix of remedies to be applied—which include blending of contaminated water with purer water, water treatment, and protection of water sources—must depend on the precise local circumstances. That is why my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I commissioned a range of desk studies to examine in detail the various options for limiting nitrate concentrations in drinking water in a dozen or so localities, each with different geology, rainfall and farming patterns. We hope to publish the results of those desk studies soon. I believe that that would be the time to take the matter further. I must tell my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green that much thought has been given to this by my right hon. Friend and me. As I am sure my hon. Friend will accept, the problems are much more complex but by the time we take the Water Bill through the Committee stage I hope that the Government will be able to give a fully worked out plan on how to deal with the problem.

Other matters about agricultural pollution were raised today and we made it clear that we are worried about the rising tide of farm pollution. Many hon. Members have dwelt with the question of court cases and fines. To impose a fine for a single act of pollution, such as a farmer making a discharge, is the right way in which to deal with that sort of problem. We intend to leave the prosecution powers against water undertakings which pollute consistently. In those circumstances, fines, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green said, are not the right answer. The right answer is to have a programme of investment to bring water quality up to standard. For a particular offence the maximum fine is £2,000, but in the south-west—one of the worst areas—average fines amount to no more than £140. In common with my hon. Friend I hope that the courts will take care to ensure that appropriate penalties are imposed when a conviction is proved.

We are taking a number of further measures to tackle the problem. We have announced our intention to introduce regulations governing the construction of new or extended silage and slurry facilities on farms as well as governing the construction of oil installations of all kinds. In this context, it is worth mentioning that grant-aid payments to farmers building new waste storage and treatment facilities will continue at high levels. We also intend that the new National Rivers Authority should have powers to serve enforcement notices on farms and other sites where existing storage installations pose significant pollution risks. Of course, the powers to prosecute will remain against water companies whether statutory ones or, after privatisation, privatised water companies. That is what we are doing and I believe that we have a good record, but we shall not stop there. Further steps are needed to improve rivers and estuaries, which I have described at length. We shall press on and take those necessary measures.

I believe that the establishment of the National Rivers Authority will be a strongly beneficial environmental measure when it accompanies privatisation. It is perhaps, the most important step forward in the protection of the water environment that any hon. Member can recall.

The authority will be a strong pollution control agency responsible to Parliament for protecting the environment by regulating all discharges to water. At the moment, there is a conflict of interest inherent in our arrangements. Water authorities regulate industrial and other discharges, but at the same time, they are responsible for pollution, through discharges from their treatment works. As the Committee said, they are both poachers and gamekeepers. The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) should note that I believe that that has been one of the major troubles hitherto. It is an inherent and absolutely fundamental defect of public ownership that once an industry is publicly owned it is protected from arm's-length regulation. That is because the Government know full well that if they allow such regulations to be imposed, the bill will come back to the Exchequer and they are reluctant to see that. The biggest justification for privatisation is on environmental grounds.

Mr. Allan Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: No. We cannot have pollution of this sort.

Bringing the water industry to the private sector has enabled us to establish the National Rivers Authority as the publicly accountable guardian of environmental quality, which I believe is vital.

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: In this report the Environment Select Committee called for an:

"independent regulatory body with clear objectives and timescales for improvement"

We shall offer just that to the House. The National Rivers Authority will also be conducting a new river quality survey in England and Wales in 1990 to provide us with an up-to-date assessment of the condition of our rivers and estuaries.

Mr. Spearing: What the Secretary of State has just said is vital to the whole country. Does he not recall that when the original water authorities were established, the Labour party's policy was that the National Water Council should have enough powers to survey and impose the very standards—with which I agree—that he is now claiming for the National Rivers Authority?

Instead, the Conservative party abolished the National Water Council and did not give it the powers that it should have had from the beginning. To obtain the standards that we all want, surely there is no need for privatisation. The

[Mr. Spearing]

right hon. Gentleman needs to establish a national water and rivers authority with teeth to enforce standards in the public sector.

Mr. Ridley: I do not know what good that would do when we had a Labour Government who cut and cut again because of their inefficiency and economic illiteracy, resulting in the need to halve investment in water. That is the evil from which all Opposition Members still suffer. It is no good coming to the House and complaining about the lack of investment in the water system when Labour presided over a policy of cutting and cutting again. The time scale on this matter is very long.

The chairman of the National Rivers Authority advisory committee, which is already in place—he is a most distinguished former Member of the House—has already said how he sees the authority operating in the difficult area of enforcement. It will be for the authority to develop its own policy, and to decide in what circumstances to bring prosecutions. Its immediate aims will be to establish good working relationships with all dischargers—whether industry or the water utilities. But I am equally sure that it will want to take firm action to ensure that legal limits on discharge consents are met and that unauthorised discharges stop. That new pollution control agency to protect the water environment will, I repeat, be the result of a major piece of environmental legislation.

Environmental improvements are often costly; the measures that I have outlined today will add to water bills. So we cannot afford to take decisions that have no clear scientific rationale. Through our proposals for integrated pollution control, we have recognised that the environment has to be treated as a whole; we have to be sure that our measures to protect our rivers and our seas do not produce worse environmental problems on land or in the atmosphere.

Mrs. Golding: Will the right to initiate private prosecutions remain after the establishment of the National Rivers Authority?

Mr. Ridley: Yes.

What I have said underlines the importance that both I personally and the Government attach to the immensely necessary task of repairing the damage of past centuries, which our ancestors, including our political ancestors, have done to the river system and the cleanliness of the seas. This programme started several years back—it has not come about since the long recess. I do not believe that it can be criticised, except that it is sad that we have so much to do in such a short time. However, I commend to the House the dramatic and dynamic way in which the Government are seeking to clear up the dereliction that we have inherited.

12.13 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I welcome a debate on the rivers, estuaries and seas around our shores. I should not for one moment accuse the Secretary of State for the Environment of being complacent, as I did his Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley). He is not complacent; he knows exactly what he is doing. He knows what his free market policies mean. He is the buccaneering free marketeer of the Cabinet and he goes about his job with that in mind.

As a background to the debate, I look to three recent speeches. The first is the Prime Minister's speech to the Royal Society, where the blue was supposed to have turned green. The second is the Secretary of State's speech to the Conservative Bow Group on Tuesday 11 October, when, following the Prime Minister's speech, the Secretary of State sold out on the North sea declaration of Ministers. The third was the Prime Minister's speech to the Tory party conference, when she inspired the Secretary of State to announce two new environmental initiatives. The first was that he would make a series of speeches—which is perhaps why he, rather than the Under-Secretary, is speaking today—to be collected together in a pamphlet so that we can all read them.

The second major environmental initiative that resulted from the Government's conversion to the green cause was the announcement by the Secretary of State that everyone will have a nuclear power station in his or her back garden.

Today, we are discussing rivers, estuaries and sea pollution. Despite the Secretary of State's smoke—or acid rain—screen, no subject is better suited to exposing the Government's appalling record on the environment and the contradictions between the speeches made by the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues about that record.

Let us examine the Government's record on rivers, about which we heard again today from the Secretary of State. The Prime Minister told the Tory party conference:

> "The Thames is now the cleanest metropolitan estuary in the world and £4 billion is now being spent on the Mersey. . . . We have led Europe in banning the dumping of harmful industrial waste in the North sea."

Those statements are hardly consistent with the facts.

The right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) told me to go and jump in the Rhine. As I said earlier, I would rather do that than swim in the Mersey, but I would not like to jump in the Rhine or the Thames. The Thames is said to be clean, but many so-called grade 1 clean rivers are so classified on the basis of a test of dissolved oxygen, which is primarily a test of the absence or presence of sewage pollution. Seriously contaminated rivers are full of pesticides and chemicals but are still known as grade 1. Research shows high pesticide levels, PCBs and dieldrin in eels in more than 30 British rivers which are not taken into account in the Government's statistics. That includes the Thames, which is way over the safety limit for a so-called clean river.

Otters in Norfolk are dying from organochloride pollution in a so-called clean river. We are told that there are fish in the Thames. That is not surprising: they keep putting them in at one end so they can swim to the other. That is how the Thames water authority spends £60,000 a year. The hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) may laugh at that, but the river is being stocked with salmon because they cannot breed. They have to keep being replaced because their eggs are poisoned by chemical pollution. The Thames water authority is using oxygen bubbles to maintain artificial levels of oxygen when dissolved oxygen levels fall because of pollution.

This is the Government's record on rivers. Between 1980 and 1985, the condition of rivers in Britain deteriorated—the first such deterioration in 25 years.

Mr. Ridley: Nonsense.

Mr. Roberts: That is the evidence that the Department of the Environment gave the Select Committee, in those parts of the report that the Secretary of State was reluctant to quote. The quality of 903 km of rivers has deteriorated since the Tories came to power.

Reported pollution incidents in rivers have risen. In 1980-81 there were 12,500 pollution incidents; in 1986-87, there were 21,095; and up-to-date figures for 1987-88 are 23,253—almost a doubling since the beginning of the decade.

Of course, the Secretary of State does not want to hear the facts and statistics. Why has all this happened? It has been partly admitted that it is a result of the escalation of farm pollution—farm slurry and silage leakages. There has been a massive increase in silage production from animal manure. The Select Committee on the Environment went to Holland, which also suffers from this problem. The Common Market has not only a beef and butter mountain, but a manure mountain, which is causing terrible pollution. It is the result of intensive farming and of the Government's support for certain aspects of agricultural policy. There are rows between the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, but that would be true whichever Government were in power.

These incidents do not take account of breaches of consents by non-water authority discharges, but they do take account of an increase in industrial pollution, as well as farm pollution, so we cannot get away with saying that only agricultural pollution is causing the problems. The figures reveal otherwise.

The Government claim that they are in favour of the concept that the polluter must pay. That is a joke by the Government and the water authorities. In 1986-87 there were 215 prosecutions of polluters by water authorities. That is an enforcement rate of 1 per cent. The report from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Water Authorities Association in 1986 said that polluters would rather pay the fines than undertake the necessary work.

The problem is not just the level of fines. The Secretary of State said that the maximum fine in a magistrates court is £2,000. If the Government were serious, they could help the water authorities to take polluters to the Crown court where the maximum penalties are two years' imprisonment and an unlimited fine. There have been rare examples of Crown court prosecutions. In 1987 the North-West water authority took Express Dairies to court for polluting a river with ammonia and killing 20,000 fish. That resulted in a £25,000 fine. A few more such results perhaps in the 1 per cent. of cases that I mentioned, as well as more prosecutions in the magistrates courts, might be a deterrent.

The enforcement of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 is woefully inadequate. In 1986-87, a total of 4,121 km of our rivers were still class 3 and class 4. That means that those rivers are biologically dead, yet the Government say that they have a good record. That classification applies to 10 per cent. of our rivers. The Government might claim that that means that 90 per cent. of our rivers are clean, but they are not, because they contain dieldrin. In the river Avon herons are dying from pesticide pollution, yet the Avon is a class 1 river and is supposed to be clean.

As I have already tried to make clear, river classification works on the basis of dissolved oxygen and does not take account of chemical pollution. Matters are getting worse, and 31 rivers in Britain exceed the Department of Health guidelines on dieldrin, including the Ouse, the Severn and the Trent. In addition, the water authorities are breaching their sewage works consents. That is not because of cuts in capital expenditure by a Labour Government. This Government have been in power for nearly 10 years and have had plenty of time to restore any capital cuts in water authority expenditure. However, they have made further cuts. The Government preach cuts in public expenditure. One could accuse a Labour Government of not wanting to cut public expenditure, but this Government believe in cuts and put that belief into practice. In 1987 more than 20 per cent.——

Mr. Ridley: We have a new consensus. The Labour Government did not want to make cuts but had to, whereas the Tory Government want to make cuts but bring about increases.

Mr. Roberts: If the Government are increasing expenditure they are not keeping to their manifesto promises. They cannot have it both ways. The Government cannot claim to cut public expenditure and at the same time increase it. They claim that they cut public expenditure except where it matters, but that is not true, because it certainly matters in terms of river pollution and drinking water.

In 1987 more than 20 per cent. of sewage works in England and Wales were in breach of consents. We have had discharges from sewage works on top of the storm overflow that takes place after heavy rain. Raw sewage comes over the storm overflows and the sewers cannot cope with the water going into them.

In 1986-87, industry was responsible for 39 per cent. of river pollution incidents. It is not just a matter for the water authorities, because prior to 1985 the Government relaxed sewage works consents so that the breaches that were occurring would not be revealed. That is an example of the Government's hypocrisy. In a parliamentary answer just before the register of pollution incidents was made public and the coming into force of the Control of Pollution Act, the Secretary of State clearly outlined the position. He said that 1,800 out of 6,600 applications for relaxation of consents for pollution discharges by water authorities into rivers were granted. The consents were relaxed so that the breaches would not show up on the new register. The Secretary of State conspired with the water authorities to thwart the provisions of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 by relaxing those consents so that the pollution would not be revealed.

Industrial compliance with consent licences is regularly breached under this Government, but only irregularly prosecuted. The section 32 provisions of the 1974 Act are scarcely used for breaches of consent. Most of the prosecutions, few though they are, are made under the section 31 provisions, which relate to one-off incidents of pollution. My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) referred to pollution incidents in Yorkshire. In 1987, there were 2,325 pollution incidents and 763 breaches of consent. Over 20 per cent. of Yorkshire Water sewage works are breaking consents under this Government. The number of prosecutions was only 31, of which 20 were section 31 prosecutions for one-off breaches. That is an enforcement rate of less than 1 per cent. Only 11 of those prosecutions were section 32 prosecutions, an enfocement rate of 1·4 per cent.

[Mr. Roberts]

Before the public register was introduced in 1985, as a consequence of the 1984 Act, North-West Water relaxed its consent conditions to industry with the Government's permission, so further control under the 1984 Act was counter-productive. If anything, it led to more pollution rather than less.

The river Mersey is the so-called feather in the Government's cap. It is one of the slowest and most polluted river basins in the country. The concept of dilution, in which the Government still appear to believe, whereby we solve our pollution problems by diluting the poisons in the seas and rivers, does not work very well because the river is so slow moving. In the north-west, over the past 10 years, 628 kms of river have deteriorated. Only 220 kms have improved, yet that is where the Government say they are concentrating their efforts.

In 1978, 16 per cent. of grade 3 and grade 4 rivers in the north-west were biologically dead. That figure has now increased to 21 per cent.—a 5 per cent. increase during the past 10 years. The north-west has the greatest length of seriously polluted rivers, canals and estuaries in England and Wales. In 1986-87, North-West Water reported 2,480 pollution incidents, yet there were only 22 prosecutions. That does not include the figures for breaches of consent. ICI broke its consent discharge levels in the Mersey 120 times between June 1987 and June 1988, but, although it received a warning letter, there were no prosecutions. It is very friendly towards the Government.

North-West Water's industrial strategy plan for August 1988—a so-called confidential document, although I have not stolen it—spells out the extent of the problem. The river Mersey is the most polluted river basin in western Europe, but the Government say that North-West Water and others will spend £4 billion on a Mersey clean-up campaign, the Government's flagship of pollution control. However, only £2·5 billion—the Secretary of State fails to mention this; perhaps his parliamentary private secretary will tell him—is being spent on the pollution and water clean-up in the Mersey. The rest is being spent on the development of riverside sites for industrial recreation, commerce and housing, but development is not cleaning up or pollution control.

The £2·5 billion clean-up scheme is a cosmetic sham, and the Government know it, for two reasons. First, they are taking out only the raw sewage and leaving behind the chemical pollution—the lead, cadmium, mercury and all the other heavy metals. The dangerous PCBs, pesticides, nitrites and nitrates are left behind to pass into the Irish sea.

Secondly, it is a sham because of what will happen to the sewage when it has been removed. A 50 km pipeline is being built, and it will pick up all the outflows of sewage in the Mersey. The sewage will be taken to Sandon dock in my constituency. It will be converted into sewage sludge and then dumped in the area whence it came, in the Irish sea in Liverpool bay. It will still be full of heavy metals and chemicals, but it will be put back into the water. It is unbelievable that that should happen.

The sewage vessels will dump the sewage in Liverpool bay, which, in the words of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, is already a stressed environment. A few years ago the Mersey was being dredged to keep open the port of Liverpool. It was found that the mercury levels in the dredgings were extremely high and the port nearly lost its dredging licence. The levels of mercury in the fish were extremely high. It is licensed for 80,000 dry tonnes of sewage sludge a year, and it is clear that a vastly greater amount of sewage sludge will be created.

The Secretary of State has said—this was included in his speech to the Bow Group—that the Government do not think that there is a problem in dumping sewage sludge into the sea. In opposing the cautionary approach and attacking scientists and the declaration of the conference of North sea Ministers, which the Minister signed, he said:

" A third example is sewage sludge dumping in the sea. This material is inert. It consists of 95 per cent. water. We have been putting it into the sea for 100 years with no discernable ill effects. The alternative is putting it on the land, which may well be a worse alternative."

How can the Secretary of State say that we are short of landfill sites in which to put sewage sludge when plenty of sites can be found for imported toxic waste? I say that that importing should stop, but can we use landfill sites for sewage sludge? There is a problem because the sewage sludge is poisonous. It is polluted. It is full of the chemicals, PCBs and heavy metals that the Government claim do no harm when they are dumped into the North sea.

There are problems in Liverpool bay and at Garroch bay in Scotland, where sewage sludge is dumped. It seems that about 15 per cent. of the sludge remains there. The bay is smothered and the sludge is killing the sea and its environment. The Government have had to move to another dumping ground as a result. There are sewage sludge and dumping problems in the Thames estuary and these are causing great concern. As I have said, once the sewage has been collected and treated at Sandon dock, the port's licence provides that only 80,000 dry tonnes of sewage sludge can be dumped into the Irish sea. There has been a search for other dumping areas because that limit will be exceeded. Wales, the Isle of Man and Cumbria have all refused planning permission when applications have been made to dump off their shores. The vessels that are in service cannot dump very far out from the coast. North-West Water will have to consider other options. If the sludge were clean, it could be put on the land. That would be one of the best ways of treating the soil. It seems that the solution will be incineration, irrespective of whether the Secretary of State wants that. Never mind the not-in-my-backyard argument. The incinerator can be built in the Liverpool docks. It is clear that the proposed operation at Sandon dock would stink out the entire area.

The sludge is full of pollutants because of the discharge of chemicals into the sewers of north-west England. This pollution is the worst in the country. Sewage sludge in the north-west contains the highest volume of trade effluent in the country. However, in his Bow Group speech, the Secretary of State for the Environment, referring to criticism of sewage dumping in the North sea, made it clear that he was totally complacent about the problem—even though it is mentioned in the North sea declaration, which he signed, that the Government would do something to stop sewage sludge dumping.

The Prime Minister told the Tory party conference:

"We lead the world in stopping sea dumping of industrial waste into the North sea."

She must have got that from the Secretary of State, because nobody else believes it. Ours is the only North sea nation dumping sewage sludge into the sea; It is not a European problem but a British problem.

Consequently, 12 to 13 per cent. of people living in north-west England eat fish polluted by mercury in excess of the provisional tolerable intake determined by the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the World Health Organisation. ICI is one of the major dischargers of mercury. People are eating fish with mercury levels in excess of those that are good for health, and so are seals. Thus the whole fish and food chain is affected.

Unlike the Government, the Labour party and previous Labour Governments accepted scientific evidence and produced radical policies. We all used to believe—and the Government still do—that anything could be dumped into the sea or rivers and be safely dispersed. That is not true. Nuclear discharges from Sellafield remain in the sediment and accumulate. Subsequently, worms and other creatures digest the sediment, the fish eat the worms, and then we eat the fish. That is true of mercury, chemicals, heavy metals and sewage sludge dumped in the North sea.

Giving evidence to the Select Committee, the North-West water authority's chief scientist, Eric Harper, stated that the Control of Pollution Act 1974 has not resulted in any improvement in industrial pollution. Against the advice of the Select Committee and of the Nature Conservancy Council, the Government still refuse to implement section 46(1) and (3) of that Act to protect plant and animal life in rivers. That is a measure of how concerned the Government are about our rivers and river pollution.

There remains the myth, believed by the hon. and learned Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell) that anything can be dumped because the sea is so vast it can absorb almost anything. That is the hon. Gentleman's attitude to the dumping of waste, but there is terrific opposition to the Government's long outflow policy of sticking raw sewage sludge in the sea. Why bother turning sewage into sludge if there is nothing wrong with dumping it raw? Of course there is something wrong about dumping raw sewage; it is even worse than the sewage sludge.

There is a proposal, which is just one of many, for a three-mile pipe from Russell Point, Fleetwood, for dumping raw sewage, in addition to sewage sludge, straight into the Irish sea. I understand that the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) has written to the Secretary of State asking for a public inquiry. His right hon. Friend is reported as answering that the hon. Member for Wyre must await the pollution inspectorate's report.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) is mistaken. I wrote to my right hon. Friend asking for an independent assessment by the pollution inspectorate, not for a public inquiry.

Mr. Roberts: I did not say "public inquiry", I said "inquiry". My evidence comes from the hon. Gentleman's local press, in which I am sure he is keen to be reported. Obviously he is concerned—and if he is not, his constituents are—or he would not have written to the Secretary of State.

Let us consider the North sea in more detail. The Prime Minister says that we lead the field. The sayings of our Conservative elders and betters need to be examined. Our present Government generally govern by disaster. They wait for the King's Cross fire and then consider what they might do; they wait for the Piper Alpha disaster and then decide that they might do something about safety on oil rigs; they wait for Karin B and then think a bit more seriously about their policy of allowing massive imports of toxic waste. In the same way, they wait for seals to die before pretending to be concerned about North sea pollution—and later deny that pollution has anything to do with the deaths, although the eating of polluted fish obviously weakens the resistance to any virus.

The Secretary of State does not like the truth. He must be one of the most ill-tempered, insulting Members of the present Parliament, but he cannot take it himself. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) from a sedentary position, says, "Speak for yourself." I am speaking for myself and for the Labour party, and I have spent the first half of the debate being insulted by the Secretary of State and other hon. Members. I think that I have the right, without insulting other hon. Members, to make the position clear.

In his Bow Group speech on 11 October the Secretary of State attacked the cautionary approach, saying:

> "Another example is . . . 'some scientists think that it is possible that the virus affecting seals in the North sea is caused by pollution.' There is no evidence at present to support that assertion. The evidence, such as it is, is that the seals have a killer virus disease, that is typical of viruses that attack animals whose population begins to exceed the food supply necessary to sustain them".

I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that the seal population has not increased that much, so the food supply must have decreased. It can have done so only for one of two reasons, overfishing or pollution, both of which are the result of the Government policy.

Of course the Secretary of State does not want to accept the reality that pollution has anything to do with the problem because he might have to take action, not to avoid the North sea declaration of Ministers but to implement it. He has probably forgotten, but he said in his Bow Group speech:

> "This is a precautionary approach. But that is necessary much less often than is sometimes thought".

The idea is to act in advance of the problems caused by pollution on the basis that it may be the cause. But, says the Secretary of State, that is necessary much less often than is sometimes thought, and there is always the risk of taking the wrong action. Attacking the precautionary approach, the right hon. Gentleman says that the best approach will usually be to analyse the facts first and then take the appropriate science-based action. But he signed the declaration of North sea Ministers at a conference where he says that he took the lead, with the words:

> "Accepting that, in order to protect the North sea from possible damaging effects of the most dangerous substances, a precautionary approach is necessary which may require action to control inputs of substances even before a causal link has been established by absolutely clear scientific evidence".

What has changed since then? All that has changed is that the Prime Minister has made a speech in favour of the environment. Now the Secretary of State is repudiating the "precautionary approach" declaration that he signed.

Of course the right hon. Gentleman does not want to listen to what I am saying now. He is the most ignorant man in Parliament as well, and has turned up in place of his Under-Secretary. At least last week she had the courtesy to listen to what was being said by Opposition Members. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Crawley must be thick, or he would not have been the Secretary of State's PPS.

[Mr. Roberts]

Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman did not read the declaration before he signed it. This is what he said to the Bow Group about the problems in the North sea:

"The North Sea is generally in good health although there are some black spots on the continental side."

He repeated that today. Page 38 of the North sea scientific and technical working group report, which is the background to the declaration that the Secretary of State signed, states that the highest levels of contaminants were consistently found in United Kingdom coastal waters of the North sea. What has that to do with black spots on the continental side?

The results of the 1985 baseline study on contamination in fish and shellfish in the north Atlantic, which was conducted by ISIS in co-operation with the Oslo and Paris commissions, were available in summary form in June 1987. They confirm the previous information on the distribution of contaminants in fish and shellfish in the area studies. Areas were identified as being more contaminated than others where concentrations in samples were found to be above the upper quartile. In the North sea such areas include for cadmium, the Firth of Forth; for copper, the Humber estuary and the central North sea; for lead, the southern bight of the North sea, the German Bight, and the north-east coast of England; for zinc the Firth of Forth and the north-east coast of England; for mercury the Oslo fjord and the Humber estuary; for arsenic—not exactly a nice substance for fish which we then eat—the Belgian and Netherland coasts, the German Bight, the central North sea and the Firth of Forth; and for organochlorine pesticides, the German Bight, Oslo fjord and Humber estuary. Yet, according to the Secretary of State, the North sea is generally back "in good health, although there are some black spots on the continental side". What hypocrisy. The facts show that the opposite is true.

Britain pollutes the North sea with massive river inputs: 2 million tonnes of colliery waste—we are one of the few countries which dumps such waste there—5 million tonnes of sewage sludge—we are the only North sea country that dumps it—and toxic liquid waste—all countries but Britain will comply with the directive on toxic waste and waste from the titanium industry by 1999. What have the Government done? What about the long pipe outfall? What is the Government's answer to titanium pollution in the Humber estuary? They give permission to extend the pipeline so that it goes into the North sea instead of the estuary. Toxic waste from sewerage systems flows through our rivers to the North sea, and there is pesticide and fertiliser pollution of the North sea.

There is a big row between the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on nitrates and nitrites. The Department of the Environment wants some nitrate-free areas declared, as recommended by the Select Committee, but there is a row.

Mr. Ridley: Total rubbish.

Mr. Roberts: If there is not some conflict between MAFF and the DoE, why have these measures not been implemented? Why can the Secretary of State not declare areas where nitrates and nitrites are outlawed? It is because of the farmers' lobby and MAFF. If that is not the case, it must be because the Government do not care about the environment and are reneging on their commitment in the declaration of the North sea conference. The Secretary of State should announce the areas. He has had 12 months since signing the North sea report. Why is he not announcing those areas?

Nitrates and nitrites get into the ground water, rivers, our drinking water and the North sea and other seas around Britain. Because they are fertilisers the photoplankton overgrow, flower and take oxygen out of the sea, killing fish and animals. That is another reason why seals find it difficult to exist in that hostile environment.

We dump massive amounts of industrial waste by ship every year and we incinerate 6,000 tonnes at sea. We shall continue to do so until 1994—long after other countries stop incineration at sea.

Mr. Ridley: Absolute rot.

Mr. Roberts: That is not rubbish. Again today the Secretary of State argued that we must have absolute scientific proof before we can take action, despite the precautionary approach that he put his name to. He argued that about emissions causing acid rain and refused to take action on that. Atmospheric inputs of sulphur and lead are the biggest source of pollution in the North sea. That pollution comes from power stations and industry in the United Kingdom, because the Government refuse to adopt a precautionary approach by joining the 30 per cent. club and doing anything about pollution. Britain is the only country that dumps fly ash from power stations into the North sea. We are the worst polluters of the North sea yet, to quote from the Secretary of State's speech to the Bow Group:

"Our commitment"—

notice the audacity of the Secretary of State, who represents this Government—

"goes far beyond just protecting British interests in our own environment but, more importantly, taking the lead in getting the other Governments in the world to accept their responsibilities."

That is rich, coming from this lot. They want to preach to the Scandinavians and to the rest of Europe about pollution of the environment.

A reasoned opinion was sent to the United Kingdom because the quality of water at Blackpool fell below EEC standards. On 10 June 1987 the European Commission began infringement proceedings under article 169 of the Treaty of Rome against the United Kingdom in 22 cases. It was decided to send a formal letter in 16 cases. These may, and some will, eventually lead to proceedings in the European Court of Justice, but the Secretary of State says that the United Kingdom Government intends to ensure that the other Governments of the world accept their responsibilities.

A reasoned opinion was sent to the United Kingdom because the quality of water at Formby and Southport falls well below EEC standards. A formal letter has been sent to the United Kingdom because of beach pollution in Cornwall and failure to designate Cornish beaches. Another formal letter has been sent to the United Kingdom regarding the absence of binding national legislation on drinking water. Excessive concentrations of nitrates and lead are measured only in three out of 12 months. There is a long list of cases where the Government have contravened EEC directives and legislation. They are way behind other countries. However, the Government say that they intend to ensure that all other Governments in the world accept their responsibilities.

I referred to the fact that the Government have announced two new environmental initiatives. First, there are the speeches of the Secretary of State for the Environment, which we can all read. They may help the paper recycling industry. He tells us that there is to be a nuclear power station in everybody's back garden—probably over the dead body of the Secretary of State for Energy who does not seem to agree with his right hon. Friend.

The other major environmental initiative, which is not new, is the Government's proposed privatisation of water. Compulsory metering trials are already taking place. The metering of water is a tax on bath time. It represents a tax on large families. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members do not seem to realise that paying for water by meter will deter the elderly in particular from using water, in case they run up large bills. it will also deter large families from running up large bills. Conservative Members do not live in the real world, but that is the likely consequence of compulsory metering. It will be a tax on cleanliness and a tax on bath time.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): The average pensioner uses very little water in his home, whereas neighbours with children, several cars and other domestic appliances use a great deal of water. Therefore metering would be greatly to the advantage of most pensioners.

Mr. Roberts: Metering may save water but that does not mean that it will save money. The cost of installing pipes from reservoirs to houses is very high. Water is easy and cheap to supply, but it is expensive to distribute, unlike electricity which is expensive to produce but cheap to distribute. So if one uses twice as much water as someone else, it does not cost the water authority twice as much. It costs much the same, once the pipes have been laid and the taps put in. Therefore it would be wrong to charge people for water in the way that they are charged for electricity or gas, on the basis of how much they use. If people economise and stop using water to keep their bills low, it will not be long before, under this Government, there is a standing charge so that people can be got in the other way. We can be sure of that. There have been pilot schemes on metering in 11 areas and in only one area is there a Labour——

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is the imposition of water metering, which is to be debated in the next Session of Parliament, a proper subject for today's debate?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I must say I was looking at my notes. The answer is no, it is not the subject of today's debate.

Mr. Roberts: If it is not the subject of the debate now, it should not have been the subject of the debate when the Secretary of State was talking about proposals for water privatisation.

The Secretary of State spoke at great length about the National Rivers Authority. It is a company made by selling off water authorities—a move which will give the private sector a licence to print money, especially if we have compulsory metering as a result. What the Government have done, and they have heralded it as a great initiative, is to introduce a major proposal for nationalisation in order to facilitate a major proposal for privatisation. It is strange that Tory Back Benchers are accepting the National Rivers Authority, which is the equivalent of a water Property Services Agency, and a nationalised body and an organisation to control pollution and water undertakings—something that the Labour party has advocated for many years.

The Government have not acted for environmental reasons. I challenge the Secretary of State to deny that they could not have sold the water industry while the functions that are to be given to the National Rivers Authority were left with the water authorities. No capitalist or investor in his right mind would buy responsibility for cleaning up the Mersey or Blackpool beach, for flood and sea defences, or for navigation. All the environmentally necessary functions carried out by the water authorities and which do not make a profit have been hived off and nationalised so that the flotation of the water authorities—the right to print money and to meter—is an attractive proposition to the private sector.

Buying a water authority would not be an attractive proposition if the water authorities were too rigorously controlled by the National Rivers Authority. Having taken away the disincentive by setting up the authority, the Government will not reimpose it by giving the authority the powers and resources that it needs. In Committee, we shall be strengthening the National Rivers Authority to make sure that it does its job properly. That will mean that water privatisation is not as attractive a proposition as the Government imagine. The Government decided to set up the National Rivers Authority because they knew that they could not privatise water without taking that decision. It had nothing to do with their so-called concern for the environment.

12.58 pm

Mr. Sydney Chapman (Chipping Barnet): Whenever I am fortunate enough to catch the eye of the occupant of the Chair to make a contribution in a debate about the environment, I like to, and am usually able to, say a few words of appreciation to the Opposition Member who has spoken before me, because I know that there are Back Benchers on both sides of the Chamber who are deeply interested in matters environmental. It gives me no comfort to say this, but I would be overstraining my goodwill and overstretching my imagination if I could find one word of approbation to utter about the contribution from the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts).

It deeply saddens me to say this, because we were both members of the Select Committee on the Environment, which looked into this matter and prepared and delivered this report. During those discussions, there was all-party co-operation, and even the hon. Gentleman must realise that in our report we have made criticisms of Government and departmental policies, but we have also been balanced and recognised some of the great progress that has been made.

One of the most heartwarming things that we can all appreciate is that the public and politicians are taking a deeper interest and concern in our environment. When we are talking about the environment there can be no more important issue than pollution. Central to any Government's environment policies must be the containment, reduction and elimination of harmful pollutants. It was a privilege to be a member of the Select Committee on the Environment and I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) for

[Mr. Sydney Chapman]

bringing a combination of chairmanship skills and previous ministerial experience to the Committee. That Committee is fortunate to have him as Chairman.

There are three problems which must be faced when we discuss and determine policies to tackle pollution. First, it is essential to establish the indisputable facts and to get experts to agree on what is harmful. Even the experts disagree on that. While we should err on the side of caution and say that if the experts are undecided we should at least take precautionary measures, it may be easy for Opposition Members to say we should spend more money which might subsequently be wasted. That is not good enough. For example, disagreement has arisen over the discharge of sewage into the sea. Some experts claim that it is acceptable and environmentally preferable to discharge in that way.

Secondly, we have to agree what levels of pollution are acceptable. There again, experts disagree. For example, with regard to the European Community quality of drinking water directive, some experts claim that the level of 50 mg per litre standard for nitrate in drinking water is unnecessarily low. Subsequent research has shown that nitrates are not a possible cause of stomach cancer as was thought to be the case some years ago. I am not an expert, but I believe that politicians must consider those points.

The third problem is epitomised by the North sea. It is absolutely essential to get international agreement and co-ordination in plans to tackle pollution. Eight countries are particularly concerned about the quality of the North sea and they all have different perceptions. We must understand that the circulation of water in an anti-clockwise direction in a relatively shallow basin like the North sea means that we can export our pollution while pollution from continental countries largely remains in their part of the North sea. The British Government must understand why some continental countries are exercised by the problem. I was comforted by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's comments on that matter.

Since the Select Committee reported 18 months ago, events have moved on. There has been a general election, and last November there was the impetus of the second international conference on the protection of the North sea. We have also heard the Government's somewhat belated response to the Select Committee report and I share the view expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green about that. However, the conference and the Government's response are encouraging.

Of course, environmental groups outside the House claim that progress is too slow. Some people would say too little, too late. To say, "Well, they would wouldn't they?" would be a knee-jerk reaction. I want to pay tribute to some environmental groups which have helped us to give the environment a higher profile on the political stage. However, we must accept that some of the alarmist statements have proved to be unfounded at least so far as we can tell from the expert information available to us. For example, an international scientific and technical working group said that some of the criticisms were far too alarmist. However, there is a substantial difference in attitude between that of our country and that of the other continental countries, which are affected by the pollution in the North sea. We tend to advocate the environmental quality objective route in assessing the level of pollution but the other seven North sea states tend to go for the uniform emission standard. If we are to tackle those problems in a harmonious and effective way, we must try to reach a standard base from which we can monitor the various policies.

I believe that the Government policy and framework for international co-operation must be based upon three themes. First, we must ensure that there is adequate research and continuing monitoring of our rivers, estuaries and the seas around our isles. I welcome the announcement last Wednesday by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) that there will be further funds for research into matters relating to the North sea. I shall make several points to back up my first theme. We need more research to find out whether there is a relationship between pollution and fish disease or, to be more precise, at what level that pollution becomes harmful. We need to discover more exactly the effect of sewage and sludge that is put into the sea, because experts disagree on the effects. We need to continue to promote research into the possibility of converting the sludge into fuel oil, animal feedstuffs or into products for the building industry, although I accept that incineration would still appear to be the best option for disposal. We need to discover whether there is an overall build-up effect of pollutants in our rivers, estuaries and seas. More research needs to be carried out into the deleterious effects of the build-up of the enormous increase in nutrients—nitrogen and phosphorous—in our rivers. We certainly need better monitoring of and more accurage statistics on oil pollution from ships and oil rigs.

The second theme that must form the framework of our policies is unambiguous management plans. I welcome the action already taken on the Thames, which has undergone a considerable clean up. No one is saying that the water flowing through the Thames is absolutely pure, but there has been a dramatic improvement in our home estuary. We must continue with that policy in every river and estuary, as well as in the North sea. The hon. Member for Bootle is being churlish in condemning or criticising what I believe are imaginative and committed plans to spend £4 billion in cleaning up the Mersey basin on a rolling programme, which must inevitably take a number of years. I hope that at least in 20 years' time we shall see the benefits of that programme.

Mr. Allan Roberts: They are not spending £4 billion in cleaning up the Mersey, they are spending £2·5 billion. The remaining amount is being spent on various sorts of property development or environmental improvements. They are not spending it on cleaning up the Mersey, but on taking out the sewage. I welcome that, but it is being turned into sewage sludge and then dumped back from whence it came. That is not solving the problem at all.

Mr. Chapman: The hon Gentleman's intervention beggars belief. OK, £2·5 billion is being allocated, but what was the commitment of the previous Labour Government, if he wants to trade party political insults across the Floor?

Mr. Roberts: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Chapman: No, I shall not give way again.

I will correct the hon. Gentleman, too, on his other point, because some of the £1·5 billion that will be used for cleaning up the land—the hon. Gentleman talks about property development—will also have a beneficial effect. If taking sewage out of the Mersey basin will not make a contribution to cleaning it up, I frankly do not know what will. I cannot agree with him on that matter.

Mr. Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Chapman: No, I will not give way again.

In short, we need co-ordinated and publicly understood plans to conserve our marine environment and to improve river quality. In the past, legislation has been far too piecemeal. It was generally unknown to the public, if not to the authorities, and it was ineffective.

It would be churlish not to welcome the Government's response to the Committee's report published in June. Frankly, of all the reports that I have read and of all the Committees on which I have sat, I believe that the Government's response to the Environment Committee's report was one of their most positive and least defensive.

There must be a programme to tackle the increasing pollution from farms and sewage works. It is unsatisfactory that, in 1987, 20 per cent. of sewage treatment works breached their discharge consent conditions and incidents of agricultural pollution increased by 13 per cent.

To continue their programme the Government must ensure adequate funds to deal with sewage treatment. They will need to impose greater statutory controls on agricultural pollution. They must have more adequate regulations to control industrial discharge and oil and chemical storage. They must also encourage the designation of water protection zones to control nitrate leaching from farmland. I also believe that details of discharges from sewers should be entered on public registers.

I congratulate the Government on taking immediate action to deal with the decimation of the common seal population as a result of a virus. My mind has boggled as I have tried to discover how the Government could be expected to activate section 3 of the Conservation of Seals Act 1970 before the virus took hold. We did not know about it until it happened. Research must continue to understand why that virus occurred.

I am grateful for the opportunity of making what I hope was a modest, but constructive contribution to this debate concerning a most critical aspect of our environment.

1.11 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am grateful that we are having this debate and, before the hon. Gentleman for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) escapes, may I say that I am grateful to him and his Committee for their work, which was well done. The report has ensured that the environment is now on the political agenda. I agree that it was sad that we did not have this debate more quickly after the report was published.

As a constructive suggestion for the Minister to consider, I believe that it would be extremely good if, as a matter of practice, we had an annual day or series of days, in Government time, to debate environmental issues. We have a series of days of debate after the Queen's Speech and after the Budget. I believe that it would be helpful if the Government gave an annual statement on the condition of the national and international environment. During such a debate, we could also discuss the appropriate Select Committee reports. That would ensure that time does not pass by with matters being neglected and put on the shelf.

If we had such a specific debate, certain matters could be interlinked. Last week we debated nuclear waste and today we are debating the sea, estuarial and river pollution. What we do about regulatory authorities and pollution control inspectorates relates not only to marine and river matters, but to the land. I hope that the Under-Secrtary will consider that as a positive suggestion —she has heard me say similar things before. In conjuction with the Leader of the House, the Department of the Environment could arrange our business in such a way for the coming year.

Whatever the Secretary of State or Ministers may say, the background to the debate is our reputation as the environmentally dirty man of Europe. I trust that all hon. Members agree with me that that is an unfortunate reputation and one which we should not have. That description is not used only by the Opposition parties as an attack on the Government. The outgoing European environment commissioner, who is British, criticised Britain for dragging its feet in comparison with the other 11 Community states.

I am not over concerned about going over the past 10, 20 or 30 years, but I am concerned that we make the best of the political opportunities that we have and try to deal with what is still defective in our system of improving and regulating the environment.

I want to alert the House to some matters that I believe to be the most important items on the agenda. The first point, which is general, is that when we pass legislation, we must not fail to implement it year after year. The Control of Pollution Act was passed in 1974 but, as the Select Committee stated—the point has been made often—some of its provisions came into force belatedly. For example, the provisions on the regulation of water and the water environment came into force in 1985. Some provisions are still not in force. I ask the Minister to ensure that the remaining provisions of that Act are implemented.

I was in Southampton a week or two ago, discussing the environment of Southampton water, which is affected substantially in two ways. First, there is the discharge into the water of sewage from the boating, sailing and trade activities on the water. Secondly, there is the proposed building of Fawley B power station. The provisions in the Control of Pollution Act that allow control over the discharge of sewage from private sailing vessels have not been implemented. The result is that all the vessels moored in the marina in Southampton water—which is now called Ocean Village—are allowed to continue to pollute the water regularly. Great use is made of Southampton water, but the beaches along it cannot be used because they are filthy as a result of domestic sewage discharges—although that has been stopped recently by Southern Water—and discharges from vessels. We must ensure that legislation that we intend to be implemented does not remain unenforced.

Since the second world war, Governments of both parties have not considered environmental issues to be matters that need to be given prominence. We may be moving into a new age, as is happening elsewhere in Europe, and I welcome the possibility that environmental

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

matters may become prominent. However, there is anxiety when regulation is increasingly handed over to combinations of public and private agencies, rather than being left with the public sector. The thrust of the free market economic climate is that people who are out for profit will often seek to take short cuts to maximise profits. Enforcing environmental controls does not increase profit.

The Select Committee makes that clear in its conclusions and recommendations, of which I shall read one example, dealing with the control of polluters. Recommendation 11 states:

"It would give us cause for very real alarm if the present water pollution inspectorate (or a new unified and independent regulatory body) were not given adequate staffing, resources and the necessary powers to oversee the activities of a privatised water industry."

I shall read one more appropriate quotation on the same subject from a report given to the Department of the Environment in 1986 by Professor Littlechild. It says:

"the level of environmental standards prescribed will directly affect the prices charged and-or the proceeds of flotation."

The inevitable truth of privatisation is that as environmental standards become the responsibility of privatised companies, the cost of compliance becomes higher and it becomes more difficult to sell the product.

In our last debate on water pollution before we debate the water privatisation Bill I ask the Government not to go back and reduce the commitments that they want the privatised companies to make. I am opposed to privatising water—I make no bones about that—but I say to the Government that if they are determined to go ahead and to introduce legislation—and it is likely to succeed—we must ensure that the people running the water industry pay the cost of ensuring that it is run properly. It is not acceptable to allow them to make profits at the expense of our environment.

Examples of people making profit in the private sector and of the enforcement mechanisms not working are legion: the dumping of toxic waste at sea and the dumping of liquid industrial waste are prime instances. We dump 250,000 tonnes a year. We have discussed dumping on land in the past, too. Fly tipping is incredibly difficult to regulate; it is done by private companies that try to avoid enforcement. I have taken that up with the Department previously. On land and sea the private sector will often try to avoid control, and there is no point in merely appealing to it to be responsible. Often, it is not.

Like the hon. Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman), I pay tribute to the help we receive from international and European standard setting. One of the inconsistencies in the Prime Minister's approach is that although she spoke about climatological matters she maintained that we cannot have more directives from Brussels, yet the bathing waters directive and the directive on the amount of nitrate in water have helped us pull our socks up and improve our standards. Without the European Community and its legislation we would not have such good targets.

The same applies to intergovernmental activity, although it is not quite the same. We were all challenged by the North sea conference—London was the second; there is to be a third—to do better. That is good. We must not set our face against the imposition of standards from abroad. Other nations often have far higher standards than ours.

I want to say two things about the forthcoming privatisation of the water industry. Although it is better than nothing, I have always been sceptical about whether the National Rivers Authority will be the appropriate way of regulating that industry. I have always thought it better to strengthen the existing pollution inspectorate. The division of responsibility between the two agencies may contain a danger. Pollution control would be better off in the hands of one regulatory agency with all the necessary resources. We need to ensure that these agencies have the necessary resources and that all the other pollution control agencies do, too. Their numbers, facilities and opportunities to do their job properly must not be cut. We need a better-funded group of officials in all these agencies—however they are established—so that the standards that we set in law are observed in practice. It is no good falling short of what we say we shall do.

Our agricultural pollution is a good example of the deficiency; many instances of it have been given in the debate. There is clear, indisputable evidence of it. Sadly, our farming industry—for industry it is—has been increasingly guilty of pollution, especially of water pollution. I am sure that the Minister has read the evidence and accepted the failures pointed out by the Select Committee. Last year, after that Committee reported, farmers were responsible for 60 per cent. more serious pollution incidents than in the previous year, when the then Minister of State at the Ministry of Agriculture, the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) said that farmers would have to be brought to heel. Yet still there is not enough regulation, control, enforcement, inspection and monitoring. It is not good enough for farmers or industrialists to go on discharging liquid sludge, sewage or anything else directly or indirectly into our water. They must be held responsible for their actions.

There has been a tradition in Britain of expecting a good environment in certain parts of the country but going along with a less good environment in others. People in some parts of Britain have suffered bad environments, including marine ones, for too long. I refer to our industrial areas, some of the old traditional ports and some areas that are due to be developed.

I was brought up in south Wales and know the area well. When I was there a few weeks ago people complained to me that that was where the Karin B might have landed. The Minister is aware of that. There is still all sorts of unauthorised marine activity in the docks and harbours around Port Talbot. Much of that involves the discharging and loading of toxic material, some of which inevitably gets into the water of the harbours, ports and estuaries.

We must make sure that every area of Britain is entitled to the same good standards. That means enforcement by Customs and Excise and the provision of proper resources, and harbour commissioners must do their job properly. When I was in Teignmouth in Devon I saw a prospective development which would kill off mussel beds that are among the most productive on the south coast. It would also ruin some of the best fishing on the south coast. Commercial exploitation brings in its wake commercial degradation.

We must be careful not to spoil our marine environment by the current trend of exploiting every opportunity for a marina or a development site. We must guard against that, whether it is in Cardiff bay, the London docklands, a development corporation area elsewhere, or

at smaller harbours and ports. Such developments often have harmful effects on the marine environment and on its productivity.

Thirdly, sea pollution is still horrendous. Although we may now be getting to grips with the problem in the North sea, the Irish sea is severely polluted. In the summer I restrained myself from making any comment about the link between the seal deaths and pollution. I did not put out a statement during the summer recess, because I was not satisfied that pollution was the cause of the deaths. However, it is clear that the more polluted the water the more endangered are the species in the water. People have a great sympathy for creatures that live in our marine environment and they have a need for the fish. We have a duty to push forward speedily to improve the standard of our seas.

Just after the seal epidemic, the London dumping convention met and the Danes proposed a ban on toxic waste incineration at sea. They wanted that ban within a year but, sad to say, Britain and the United States argued that the ban should not come into force until 1994. We must not always argue for the longest time. We should argue for the shortest, and if industry has to adapt, so be it. Just after the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Environment made their speeches in Brighton, we read that water pollution rules are to be relaxed for privatisation. I do not know whether that is still the policy of the Department, but it was reported less than a month ago,

"that the Department of Environment intends to tackle the problem by introducing 'temporary variation consents' for the sewage works which are at fault. This will mean giving the offending works a dispensation from current performance standards, removing any liability to prosecution.

The reprieve is expected to stand until the end of 1991.".

It is not acceptable in the interests of a short-term gain to prejudice our maritime environment in the medium and long term. I hope that the Minister can assure us that there will be no such relaxation in order to gain a better price for the sale of the water industry.

Although in general we have clean and good quality rivers—that is clear from the report—in the last few years river quality has declined. It has declined not phenomenally but noticeably and clearly, and that is obvious from analytical assessment. River quality standards are well monitored and the figures are well known. Sadly, we have seen a slipping back in river quality over the country as a whole. That must be reversed, as must the damage to our beaches, which is often a consequence, as the Secretary of State rightly admitted, of inadequate control of the discharge of sewage. As he also said, the problem will not go away and, like nuclear waste, it must be dealt with.

We must first ensure that we comply with the best international standards and do not always seek to delay their implementation or seek derogations as we have done in the past. We must be seen to be up front and arguing for the best standards for this country. Secondly, the Government must provide the financial resources for research, monitoring, inspection and enforcement. Without those, our comments here and any legislation that we pass will be as nothing.

Thirdly, as the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) and other hon. Members have said, if people are given licences to carry on activities with the potential to pollute, we must ensure from the outset that they do not cause pollution. It is too late to pay when the damage is done.

I hope that this will be our last piecemeal debate about a belated Select Committee report. I hope, too, that the environment issue will be put in its proper central place in the business of the Government and the House. I hope that we can debate the state of the environment with the proper facts, up-to-date statistics and Government responses at our fingertips, and so do a better job for our environment in the future than, sad to say, the Government have done in the past.

1.31 pm

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): As one who made the environment one of the main topics of his maiden speech, in 1983 I am delighted to see it so firmly on the political agenda now, and not a moment too soon. In 1983, I said that

"our generation, with with the industrial processes and waste products that we have created, has in its power, as never before, either to preserve and enhance our environment for future generations, or, possibly, to ruin it beyond repair." —[*Official Report*, 4 November 1983; Vol. 47, c. 1120.]

We are all aware of the environmental deterioration that has occurred, ever since 1983, on so many fronts, and the present intiatives are welcome.

The environment is a huge subject and even the title of today's debate is quite wide-ranging, but I want to confine my remarks to our beaches and seas. I must declare an interest. Like many other hon. Members, I have a deep and abiding love of the sea, established during childhood, and, as a family, we holiday in Anglesey. I spend a great deal of time in the Irish sea. I spend time swimming in it and sailing on it, and, as I sail a small dinghy and am not a small man, I frequently find myself in it yet again. The Secretary of State did not mention swimming. Swimming is important because no other activity brings one into quite such close contact with the sea. It is a recreation enjoyed by all, both young and old, and is one of our great national traditions.

My contact with the sea has made me acutely conscious of the condition of our beaches and seas. In an ideal world, man would not put any of his waste products into the sea, but we must accept that, at least for the foreseeable future, much of our sewage will have to be disposed of in that way. However, we do not have to accept beaches contaminated with sewage simply because of the old Victorian systems involving outfalls which are too short and treatment which is inadequate. The Secretary of State said that outfalls were two or three kilometres in length. That is fine, but I am talking about those outfalls which I know well and which are at most 200 to 300 ms in length. I can assure hon. Members that they do not do their job adequately.

I look forward to the day when imaginative measures can be brought forward so that we do not have to put our sewage out to sea. It is immensely expensive and causes many difficulties if we keep our sewage on shore but, if we put our minds to it, I hope that the day will come when we can avoid putting our sewage into the sea. This should be given the highest possible priority. I welcome the Government's initiatives and I urge them to press on with them as hard as they can.

Certain problems beset the North sea and I wish to consider the solutions that are being proposed. One of the principal problems is the contamination that is being caused by heavy metals—including mercury, cadmium, lead, chromium, zinc, copper, nickel and arsenic—that are deposited in the North sea from a variety of sources.

[Mr. Michael Lord]

Rivers are the most important single source, but the metals come also from the atmosphere, direct discharge, dumped dredgings, industrial dumping and sewage sludge. To reduce the quantities of these metals in the North sea, a number of important measures were agreed upon at last year's North sea conference. I shall dwell on these measures for a short while because I wish to express some doubts and concerns about precisely how they will work and possible side effects. It is not my purpose to be critical of them.

It is proposed that there should be a reduction of about 50 per cent. in the dangerous substances entering the North sea through rivers by 1995. How do we control the dangerous substances that enter rivers in the first place? Some can be identified at source in, for example, a factory, and others can be removed at sewage treatment plants. However, many of them find their way into our rivers via a variety of routes, including domestic and agricultural ones, that are impossible to control.

Is it our intention to remove 50 per cent. of each metal or 50 per cent. overall? Some metals are more dangerous than others, and that is a most important consideration. Our difficulties are compounded when we find that only one eighth of cadmium, an especially nasty metal, comes to the North sea from rivers. The vast majority of it comes from the atmosphere. If we reduce the quantity which arrives from rivers, we reduce the total by one sixteenth. I am not saying that it is unimportant to do what we plan to achieve. I am merely trying to get things in perspective.

We plan to end the dumping in the North sea of harmful industrial waste by the end of 1989. That is excellent news for the North sea, but how and where do we plan to dispose of that which is now being dumped in the sea? Similarly, it is planned to end the dumping of incinerated waste in the North sea by 1994. This is welcome news, but what alternative routes and measures will be used? It has already been stressed by many of those who have contributed to the debate that an overall plan is needed. It is no good merely transferring a problem from one area to another.

A ceiling is being set at 1987 levels for contaminants in sewage sludge. Why is it being set at 1987 levels? Surely they are too high. Are we not authorising unacceptably high levels?

I am conscious that the questions I am posing may not be met by simple answers, and I do not expect them to be answered today. Other hon. Members have asked important questions and these need properly to be addressed if we are eventually to solve the problem satisfactorily. We need to know precisely what substances are polluting and in what quantities from precisely which sources. We need to know which sources can be controlled and which cannot. It is important that we should know which sources or industrial processes are vital and which are not. Are people prepared to change their life styles and purchases, if need be, to reduce pollution? That question leads us on to bans, for example.

I have mentioned already my relationship with the Irish sea. I shall be lighthearted for a moment, although this is a serious topic. I swim daily when on holiday, and I have heard the Irish sea described as the most radioactive sea in the world. I wondered for a while whether I was going to add a new meaning to the expression "a healthy glow".

Much has been done at Sellafield but much more needs to be done. I welcome the suggestion that a detailed report should be prepared on the condition of the Irish sea overall that identifies further action that may need to be taken. Above all, it is necessary that there should be a new spirit of determination—a mental leap—among all concerned not to consider the problem in terms only of how much our rivers and seas can tolerate before we do them too much harm, but, on the other side of the coin, how we can make them as fresh and clear as they were years ago. That is surely something at which, in this day and age, an affluent society such as ours should be able to aim.

I hope that I have not sounded critical of the Government's initiatives because that was not my intention. I greatly applaud them, and I am delighted and relieved that we are now addressing these crucial topics so vigorously. There is much still to do, and many of us will closely follow with great interest the progress made.

1.40 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I am glad that we are having a debate on the Select Committee's report. As a member of that Committee, I have said on a number of occasions that the report should be debated. I pressed the Government for an indication of when they would make the response that the Committee's chairman said today was taking rather longer than was wished.

When I commented that the report was good, the Secretary of State for the Environment, in his normal way, commented that he would determine whether or not it was a good report. I was glad that when he spoke today, he went further and called it excellent. As for the Secretary of State's performance, I have often advised him to take up painting, believing that he is a better painter than he is a Secretary of State. As yet, he has not taken my advice.

The report deals with many important matters, but the Select Committee deliberately avoided becoming involved in the privatisation issue, which we shall anyway debate at length when the new Session begins later this month. Nevertheless, some of the problems confronting water authorities could have been tackled without going in that direction. I welcome the establishment of the National Rivers Authority and the separation of responsibilities that it will bring, and which would have been necessary even if the water industry had remained in the public sector —which, as one totally opposed to privatisation, I should have preferred. One can argue about the NRA's functions and whether it will have sufficient powers and be adequately staffed, but the principle is sound and it will improve the situation.

Finance is at the root of the problems facing the water industry. I believe that that could be tackled by the industry remaining in the public sector. Chart 1 on page 17 of the third report shows, using constant 1985-86 prices, an expenditure peak of about £850 million in 1975-76, and thereafter a fall. One expected the Secretary of State to pounce on that aspect and to question why expenditure had dropped. In examining the period between 1974 and 1979, one must look back a little further to the previous four years and to some of the financial problems that the then Labour Government inherited, which had been stoked up by the immediately preceding Conservative Government between 1970 and 1974.

However, it is no use just looking back. If we look forward to 1990-91, we see that the comparable figure will

have reached about £600 million annually, so we shall still not be spending as much. Yet this week we heard the Chancellor speaking in glowing terms of the country's economic prosperity and well-being. Water authorities also have problems involving mains and sewer pipes, for instance, which require much more expenditure.

In the annual report for 1987-88, the chairman of the North-West water authority said:

"Contrary to some national and regional speculation, after a financial re-structure North-West Water PLC will have the scope and strength, progress record, resources and capability to ensure a successful future alongside the world's best water service businesses."

I have my doubts. I do not say that because I am a critic of the water authority; in many respects it does an excellent job, but it has not the freedom to borrow on the commercial market. It must deal with its finances on an annual basis, and it suffers from the Government's apparent difficulty in differentiating between capital expenditure and revenue expenditure, and their failure at times to accept that capital expenditure has revenue implications for future years. The report seems to have been largely an attempt to achieve publicity in preparation for privatisation. If it had examined some of the problems facing the water authority, it would have presented a very different picture. A report from the water authority about the sewage works, published by the chief scientist's department, shows the problems facing the authority and the large sums needed to put them right.

Agricultural pollution is a major problem in some parts of the country. The Chairman of the Committee put it mildly when he said that we were disappointed at the response from the Ministry of Agriculture to our questioning. We are still concerned. When I asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food about nitrates and protection zones only the other week, he replied:

"We have not yet reached any conclusions and before we do we shall consult various bodies. We look forward to finalising those conclusions in the relatively near future."—[*Official Report*, 20 October 1988; Vol. 138, c. 992.]

That is only one aspect of the problem, and we should like more positive action. Silage and slurry, for instance, must be dealt with as rapidly as possible.

We all know why the North-West water authority has the biggest problems in the world and the Mersey basin is the most polluted river basin in Europe. The problem is historical; the industrial revolution happened in that area, and we have not done enough to deal with the problems over the years. The failure to deal with them is, of course, just as much the fault of the Labour party as that of the present Government, but the Government now have money coming in like mad, as the Chancellor was able to tell us earlier this week. If we wanted to tackle the position we could, but the Government have an obsession with cutting public expenditure rather than dealing with the massive problems in the North-West water authority area.

We all want the Mersey basin project to be completed, but it will be some years before the work is done. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle said, we visited the work at Sandon docks where there is no final stage of treatment. If the works were built at Manchester and the waste was to be disposed of at sea, there would be another stage of treatment. It is unacceptable in 1988 that there is no final stage. It may be provided—the position will be monitored—but, for financial reasons, it has not been provided. We must consider closely the whole question of dumping at sea.

The hon. Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) made interesting comments and positive proposals. He was always positive in his approach to problems during the Select Committee's inquiry. North-West Water has recently been taken to court by Derbyshire county council about pollution in the river Goyt. The right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) said that we did not want to see authority after authority taken to the courts as a solution. But if the problems are not tackled that is how we must apply pressure. We want action taken to deal with the problem.

We shall oppose privatisation. We recognise that the majority of Conservative Members are heedless of the consequences, but if the legislation is forced through, it is vital that we write protection of quality and supply into it. I hope that hon. Members will at least unite on those important aspects. We can argue and we shall divide like mad on the question of private or public ownership, but surely every hon. Member will be anxious to do everything possible to ensure that we reduce pollution and provide the best possible quality of water.

The danger with privatisation is that the lower the standards, the higher the price that the Government can make from privatisation. When we consider these issues I hope that we shall all recognise that if water must be privatised it is crucial to ensure that the regulatory powers and all provisions dealing with these important matters are drawn as tightly as possible, so that by the end of this century we shall have removed the problems of pollution from which we have suffered for too long, certainly in our industrial regions, and we shall have the best possible quality of water supply.

1.53 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I have a few remarks to make about the control and disposal of sewage and, more specifically, our intensive use of disposal at sea.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) said, we are becoming increasingly isolated in Europe in using the sea as a way of disposing of sewage. There may come a time when that form of disposal is no longer acceptable. That point bears heavily on schemes which are coming up soon for just such disposal and I have a particular interest in the subject.

The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) mentioned the scheme that North-West Water has come up with for cleaning up the Fylde beaches and disposing of the sewage there. It is welcome that the proposal has been made. Wyre borough council and other local councils in the area have applied pressure for many years and I am pleased that, after extensive consultation and much research, the water authority has made the proposal.

Unfortunately, the long sea outfall proposal is controversial for two reasons. There is doubt about whether sufficient treatment will be given to the sewage before it reaches the pipeline. It is also controversial because it is a sea disposal proposal, rather than a proposal to dispose of sewage inland. Moreover, it is one of the first major proposals to be made, following publication of the Select Committee's report.

It is important that the pollution inspectorate should carry out a fully independent inquiry into the proposal.

[Mr. Keith Mans]

The hon. Member for Bootle referred to public and independent inquiries. I use the word "independent" because I want the scheme to go ahead sooner rather than later, but I am a little apprehensive about the public inquiry procedure. It goes on for too long. If there were to be a public inquiry, the proposal, which is very important for the Fylde, might be delayed. I want an indepenent inquiry, but I also want the scheme to go ahead as soon as possible.

It is important that the inquiry should be seen to be independent. That will reassure my constituents and others who live elsewhere in the Fylde that North-West Water's proposals have been looked at by a separate body and that the words and evidence of North-West Water have not been taken just as they stand. My constituents want the evidence to be scrutinised.

The inquiry ought to address specific issues, including whether the sewage is being sufficiently treated before it goes into the pipeline. It must also analyse carefully North-West Water's tidal surveys, carried out when it first made the proposal. I know that it conducted extensive work on tidal surveys. There is a highly sophisticated computer model to prove it, but the survey evidence that North-West Water accumulated to construct that model needs to be closely considered.

The independent inquiry should also examine the effect of pollution on fish. Fishing is very important in the Irish sea. We must ensure that the pipeline does not result in a build-up of bacteria. I hope that the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green about the effect of viruses in the sea and the fact that not all of them may be killed off straight away will be taken into account.

The inquiry should take into account, too, the effect of heavy metals. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell) made the good point that it is important to find a way to prevent heavy metals getting into the sewerage system in the first place. Once they are there, it is difficult to get rid of them before they are deposited in the sea.

The inquiry ought also to consider alternatives to the sea pipeline scheme. Various inland alternatives have been suggested by North-West Water, but they suffer from various disadvantages, one of which is that sooner or later the effluent will have to be deposited in a river—for instance, the river Wyre. That may eventually prove to be a less desirable alternative than the sea outfall pipe. The proposal should be analysed by an independent body, as should any other scheme or combination of schemes that might be put forward.

The assessment should take place under the new guidelines for the assessment of long sea outfalls. I understand that the pollution inspectorate wrote this document recently. I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to make it available in the Commons Library so that those who are involved in this scheme and others will know exactly under what guidelines long sea outfalls will be assessed.

Privatisaton will have an effect on the functions that I have mentioned. There will be much more public awareness of the fact that water authority schemes will be assessed independently after privatisation. It will not be a case of one public authority looking at another public authority's way of doing things. It will be a case of a properly regulated authority looking at something that a company in the private sector will do. and that will be a much more effective way of ensuring that what goes on in the private sector is correct and in the best interests of consumers generally.

Furthermore, privatisation will encourage our water authorities, companies or plcs—whatever they become—to market their proposals more effectively, to inform the public in their area of the various aspects of their policies in terms that the public can understand. It has been noticeable with recent privatisations how much more aware those recently privatised companies have become of the need to inform the general public of what they do. British Airways and the British Airports Authority are just two shining examples of how companies can work much better after privatisation.

Pipeline proposals of the sort I have mentioned are controversial. Therefore, it is important that even greater scrutiny of them is made when a decision is taken by a water authority to use that method to dispose of sewage. Any assessment must be made under the new guidelines that the pollution inspectorate has recently drawn up. The Select Committee's report makes it clear that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of the Environment need to demonstrate, by public report, and through thorough investigation, the best practical environmental option for sewage sludge and sewage disposal before a scheme can go ahead. I sincerely hope that that will take place with the North-West water scheme and with any future schemes.

2.2 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): As a Yorkshirewoman, Madam Deputy Speaker, you will probably know the old rhyme,

"The girls of Castleford are so fair,
Because they wash in the Calder and rinse in the Aire."

That has not happened in recent times. Any young woman who did such a thing now would be bathing in class 4 toxic mixes of effluents, chemicals, bugs and other items that I would not like to mention.

I have lived within a few hundred yards of the river Calder for most of my life—in fact, it runs at the bottom of my garden. I am deeply concerned about the way that I was brought up, which was to regard the river as something to fear, and as a river that one should not bathe in, nor even go near. It was odd that it was described as a river, because it was a mix of filth going through the centre of Wakefield. That complacency, that acceptance of the state of rivers is becoming, fortunately, a thing of the past. It encourages me to talk to many young people in my area, who are deeply concerned about environmental issues and the pollution of rivers.

The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) and the Secretary of State both spoke about the crucial "poacher turned gamekeeper" point. This was brought home to me vividly when, as the chairman of the local economic committee on Wakefield council a couple of years ago, I visited a factory in the Castleford area. This company is a major polluter of the river Aire, and I asked its management about consents and they openly admitted that they breached consent on a regular and frequent basis, with the knowledge of the Yorkshire water authority. They told me that the Yorkshire water authority was a far worse polluter of that stretch of river.

I am concerned to highlight one or two points about Yorkshire Water that are of deep concern to the people in my area. The record of the water authority needs to be mentioned. In its area, the extent of the problem is serious, with 300 miles of class 3 river and 90 miles of class 4, including that running through my constituency.

The important point, which has underpinned much of today's debate, is that only five of the 25 major water treatment works run by Yorkshire water authority meet European Commission standards. The pollution problem stems largely from the Yorkshire water authority. I have more up-to-date figures than my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts). They show that last year the Yorkshire water authority broke the pollution inspectorate's consents at sewage works 83 times. YWA waterworks broke consents nine times and there was a staggering total of 811 known breaches of consent in the Yorkshire water authority area last year. That is very worrying because the complacency underpinning the present arrangements can be seen from the figures that I have quoted and from those referred to by other hon. Members today.

I am concerned that nationally 1,000 sewage treatment works breached consents on more than 5 per cent. of the occasions on which samples were taken. A quarter of the main sewage works in England and Wales failed to meet the legal standards. Yet, according to a parliamentary answer that I received in May, there have been no prosecutions of water authorities by the Department of the Environment. My hon. Friend the Member for Bootle gave the latest figures, which were supplied to me in a written answer in July. That showed that only 35 convictions nationally were obtained for breaches of consent in 1986, which is the last year for which figures are available. Total fines for that year were a minimal £20,000. The £2,000 maximum was used only once.

My point is that the polluting companies are laughing all the way to the bank. They have the money and they are making the profits at the expense of our environment in areas like Yorkshire. The Secretary of State's response was very interesting in relation to the poacher-gamekeeper concept. Is it good enough for the Government to claim, in defence of the position, the kind of case presented by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) in a written answer in July when he told me

"where major investment is involved, it takes time to bring works up to standard and, in the Government's view, there is little to be gained by prosecution"—[*Official Report*, 25 July 1988; Vol. 138, c. *56*.]

If a baker sold poisonous food and made people ill, would we accept as an excuse the fact that he did not have the money to invest to bring his bakery up to proper standards? The Government's response is nonsense.

After years of financial constraints, water authorities are moving rapidly towards privatisation. I have taken a close look at Yorkshire water authority's record on pollution control. I was interested to note that YWA recorded almost a 40 per cent. increase in after-interest profits last year, making £81·5 million. Is not that surprising, when we consider the lack of investment in areas in which it should be investing? The reason why the Government place such emphasis on the returns is that they are making the authorities attractive to investors after privatisation. Is it nonsense for the Secretary of State to claim that the authorities are public bodies. We all know that in areas such as Yorkshire the authorities are run as private companies.

It has been common knowledge for some time that, behind the scenes, water authorities have been urging the Government to go easy on the pollution question to ensure a smooth passage into private hands. I believe that the pollution of our environment is too important an issue to be left to simple party politicking. I hope that we all accept that. If anyone believes that selling off water will do anything other than markedly worsen the pollution issue, they are living on cloud nine. That is like claiming that the privatisation of the pits will improve safety. We all know that that is nonsense. It is ironic that the principle of a National Rivers Authority was effectively imposed on the Government by the European Commission because of its deep concerns about the lack of provision for pollution issues within the Government's proposals. I firmly believe that we share our environment with many other species. The rivers and the streams are the veins and the life blood of the earth, and it is in our interests, and those of future generations, to look after our waterways. We poison them at our peril.

2.9 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): Locally, we have a great affection for the North sea, a fear and a respect for it, but nationally we have a kind of love-hate relationship with it. We use it, exploit it and abuse it, but suddenly the loss of a trawler, the Piper Alpha disaster or the floods of 1953 remind us quickly and dramatically of its power and impact. There is at present a feeling among the public that the North sea is becoming a toxic time bomb, which at some time in the future will again remind us of its devastating power. That opinion may be given without scientific evidence, it might not square with the comments made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and it is a sort of knee-jerk reaction, but it is felt by people throughout the country. Their confidence must be regained. I welcome the statement by my right hon. Friend, which I hope will go a long way towards achieving that. However, what was missing from his statement was a proposal to have a more combined departmental approach, because the North sea involves some 20 agencies and Departments of State, including MAFF, Energy, Environment, the DTI and Employment.

The use of the North sea encompasses so many facets of our lives. The public expects to be able to have confidence in the food chain. One would have to travel far to enjoy better value and a more nutritious meal than North sea cod and chips. Of course, with quotas as they are, one may have to go a long way to find British cod, but that is another argument. Housewives, fishermen and my constituents must not lose any confidence in that cycle of marine food or they will never come back.

The people who holiday, use our beaches and swim in our seas—as my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) has mentioned—must not lose confidence. My hon. Friend the Minister responsible for tourism assured me in Parliamentary answers last week that there is no evidence of a loss of confidence. I hope that that is right, but the warning bell has been sounded. A diving group in Waveney has expressed concerns, as too have shore anglers and swimmers. I hope that my hon. Friends understand that confidence is the key—confidence

[Mr. David Porter]

in action based on facts. We have debated already today the danger of knee-jerk legislation without scientific evidence, such as the argument that seals died this year, whales will die next year and, therefore, we must legislate. As we cannot legislate against the viruses, we legislate against every person who uses the North sea. It is the same with any natural disaster. There are those who always want a man-made scapegoat for it.

We must also recognise that pollution comes in many different forms. The garbage washed on to our beaches is very often due to the historic practice of tipping overboard from ships all the filth that they cannot dispose of.

A significant part of my constituency's economy, besides fishing, revolves around the gas and oil industries —the bringing ashore of these vital resources—and the standby industries that serve them. The platforms that they require are part of the furniture of the North sea, but what happens when they are finished with and abandoned? Derelict rig legs will kill fish and people. They are a form of pollution. Industrial dredging destroys parts of the sea bed and changes other parts —another form of pollution. One cannot take out 15 to 18 million tons a year of sand and gravel from the sea bed and say that it has a zero impact. Our waters are crowded with shipping, the skies overhead are full of helicopters and NATO exercises are carried out.

I add my weight to the support for the Environment Ministers' conference held last year, but the next one is not until March 1990 in Holland. Surely, it should be earlier than that and it should not be at ministerial level, but at Prime Ministerial level—the highest possible level. We have learnt in the past few months—triggered by the seals dying in the summer, by the greenhouse effect, by the fear of rising tides and by the loss of rain forests in other parts of the world—that this is a global problem, and we are part of the global village. People are better informed now, many as armchair experts. The subject is no longer just a recreational activity. People take part in clearing bombs and litter from beaches and saving natterjack toads. It is now a major part of our political agenda. People need to be informed, as their survival instinct depends upon it. We do not need to reinvent the wheel. We know that there is a cost penalty attached to resolving the problems, which we all accept will be high. There are signs that we are ready to pay it and will have to pay it. There is already evidence that industry and business are being market-led in an environmental as well as an economic direction.

We do not have long. I accept that national lobbies, such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth have had a part to play, but local groups are also forming. Waveney district council is establishing a maritime pollution information forum of local authorities in Suffolk and Norfolk. That is a useful response to the worries that have been expressed about the marine incineration of toxic waste. It may be a politically motivated group, but it strikes a chord of public concern.

I welcome all the measures that the Government have made and the steps that have been taken to restore confidence. Commentators are calling the environment the issue of the nineties. We do not have long to get to grips with it, but I am sure that we would all agree that failure is not an option.

2.15 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am glad that the Secretary of State is present to hear the closing speeches, because I found his speech partly encouraging and partly extremely disappointing. The right hon. Gentleman and I have had our differences over the years and no doubt we find in each other elements of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

The right hon. Gentleman spoke about the need and justification for privatisation. He sold it on two grounds. The first was that it was only in this way that adequate cash could be made available, especially for the disposal of water and its purification. His second argument, which had some justification, was that the new National Rivers Authority will provide some control that apparently does not exist at present. In an intervention I sought to illustrate that control would be possible if it was approached in the right way. I shall explain how cash has been available in the past and, therefore, why it should be available in the future. I believe that the Secretary of State's philosophical and political justifications for the water privatisation Bill have been shot out of the water.

Of course, the Secretary of State displays some Dr. Jekyll traits. We are aware of his abilities and of his feeling for the aesthetics of life. I believe that his qualifications as a civil engineer have imposed an understanding of the need for the National Rivers Authority. That authority will be concerned not only with the water in the rivers, but the water in the aquifers and underground.

The right hon. Gentleman's constituency is near the headwaters of the Thames; my constituency is at the other end. The largest purification works in the country is based at Beckton, which is responsible for putting sludge into the North sea. From what I have heard I believe that that sludge is pretty good, but I would not say that it is beyond reproach.

Paragraph 2.19 of the Government's reply to the Committee's report states:

> "The Government remains of the view that sewage sludge disposal at sea does not significantly affect the marine environment."

I am not sure that that is correct. I should have thought that the Government would say, "need not necessarily affect". I am sorry that the Government appear to have published something that is scientifically unsustainable. Perhaps the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) will want to comment on that.

In paragraph 2.20 the Government say:

> "The Government is in consultation with water authorities about the list of substances to be regulated in this way and the practical implementation of the ceiling on the amount of these contaminants reaching the North Sea in sludge".

That refers to the red list, which the Secretary of State rightly mentioned.

I know that the Secretary of State cannot reply now, but we need to know on what basis and on what criteria such substances will be allowed into the North sea—whether in sludge or in any other form. Will such substances be concentrated in the North sea? No doubt under EEC regulations that is allowed. When such substances are disposed of is the amount dictated by a figure that happens to suit the financial arrangements of sewage—sludge purification works? The Government have not made it clear. That is one inadequacy of their reply to the report.

I shall now speak about the river Thames because, as many hon. Members acknowledge, what has happened to the Thames in the past few years is an example nationally and internationally. I am not quite as complacent as that, but I must point out to Conservative Members and to the Secretary of State that the improvement of the Thames has been achieved largely by massive public expenditure—not private expenditure. Since 1906, the dominant water supply agency in the Thames has been the Metropolitan water board, which sustained, to an extent, Thames Conservancy, and the two ran the Thames well. London county council was responsible—sometimes belatedly because of the war—for capital expenditure on purification. We cannot achieve that ecological balance in the water cycle without public expenditure and research.

In 1948, under the Labour Government, the department of scientific and industrial research began a report entitled "Effects of Polluting Discharges in the Thames Estuary". It was published in 1963 after 15 years of work and it was 600 pages long. Without such work and reports, the improvement of the Thames would not have been possible. That improvement came from public money and investment in scientific research.

The Prime Minister is a disgrace to scientific research. She is supposed to be a scientist. Despite that, scientific research throughout the country is at sixes and sevens. The work that was carried out to improve the Thames would not be possible today. In the past few days, the Prime Minister has donned a green dress, but her heart is still blue—and it may be a darker colour than that. That is illustrated by the Government's proposals, which will be brought forth in the Queen's Speech, for the privatisation of water purification services.

I concede to the Secretary of State, because I cannot deny it, that there has been relatively non-harmful private enterprise activity in supplying water. There have been some good private water companies and some indifferent ones. Until now, they have operated within statutory controls and controls on the water cycle laid down by regional authorities. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) said, that position will probably change because we do not know who will own water supply companies in future.

Mr. Hardy: The French.

Mr. Spearing: It may be the Germans, the Belgians or even the Australians, with some early morning raid on the stock exchange. What is to prevent that? The Government have not told us that there will be anything to stop that happening.

That is bad enough, but the same situation will apply in the disposal and purification of dirty water. When people talk about the public ownership of water, they think of taps and purified water, but in terms of public health, it is the disposal side that is important and it takes a great deal of public money, because it is difficult to carry out. We have talked today almost entirely about the purification side. Private enterprise will find it almost impossible to deal with that.

In 1860, when curtains were pulled in the Committee Rooms against the stench outside, the Victorians, for whom the Prime Minister has such respect, did not set up private sewage companies in Wandsworth, central London and the Isle of Dogs. The set up the Metropolitan Board of Works.

Outside this House there is a vast sewer that takes water from the west to the east of London. The idea of its being owned by an international company with shareholders around the world is almost incredible, but the Government are trying to allow that. The Prime Minister has not gone green on this vital environmental matter, and nor has the Secretary of State. If they had second thoughts and said that they would privatise only the water supply, keeping its disposal in public hands, that would be another matter, but they are not saying that. They are risking the environment and what private enterprise can sometimes do. They will make whoever runs these services charge the public enormous and occasionally arbitrary sums by means of water meters to pay for costs that should fall on us all through and by public ownership.

London dealt with the problem by public ownership in the past; I see no reason why the nation should not do it the same way in the future.

2.26 pm

Sir Hugh Rossi: With the leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak again.

The less I say in the little time I have about the speech made by the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) the better. What I heard of his speech I found painful and I can only regret that he did not learn from his service on the Select Committee that environmental solutions are best found by an open-minded, non-partisan approach. Apart from his contribution, such an approach has distinguished the debate.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his Department on the action being taken. Whether it was stimulated by our report and the line of questioning that the Committee pursued or whether it would have happened in any case does not really matter. The important thing is that action is being taken.

Although I found my right hon. Friend's speech excellent in other respects, I must express disappointment about his attitude to discharges into the sea. He says there is no scientific evidence that dispersal and dilution in the vastnesses of the oceans encircling the globe are not the best options available. Certainly they are easy, cheap and have the merit of "out of sight, out of mind". But there are scientists who have serious misgivings about all this, and I urge my right hon. Friend to ask his advisers to study their writings a little more closely——

Mr. Ridley: I have.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I remind my right hon. Friend that it has taken five years and two Environment Select Committee reports to persuade the Government that the vastnesses of the atmosphere encircling the planet are not enought to absorb the emissions from the burning of fossil fuels indefinitely without damage to the environment. I suggest that my right hon. Friend reflects on whether the oceans are vast enough to absorb all the activities of the millions of people who inhabit the world. I urge him to study a little more carefully the alternative options to discharging and dumping at sea. They may not be so easy to implement. There will be problems with establishing land-based sites. Nevertheless, we must bear in mind the long-term effects of our actions on generations to come.

This has been a useful debate in which the contributions have shown that these matters are of grave concern in all parts of the House, and I hope that the Select Committee's

[Sir Hugh Rossi]

contribution in working on the inquiry and producing the report will be of value to the public debate on these matters for many years to come.

It being half past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment lapsed without Question put.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON TELEVISING OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That the Orders made on 29th March relating to the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House be Standing Orders of the House until the end of the next Session of Parliament.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Knitwear, Hosiery and Clothing Industry

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I have two main reasons for raising this debate. The first is the current state of the British knitwear, hosiery and clothing industries. These are interrelated and have all suffered severe decline in recent times. Those who work in the industry, manage, own or depend upon it believe that under the Government little seems to have been done to protect the industry.

Secondly, in recent weeks in my constituency in Nottinghamshire we have suffered the loss of a major knitwear manufacturing base, the Mansfield Knitwear Company, with the loss of at least 850 jobs. Many hon. Members will share my disappointment about that, yet the tragedy of this occurrence for the British knitwear industry is that this firm is the largest single knitwear manufacturer in the European Community. Why has this firm closed? Certainly it is not a major loss-maker. It had the most modern machinery, on a larger scale, of any such manufacturer in any of the member states of the EEC. By no stretch of the imagination was its work force overpaid or is its production level low. None of the blame for the closure can be laid at the door of the workers or the trade union that represents them. The industry in general has suffered primarily at the hands of the Government who, through their lack of commitment, have created a lack of confidence among employers, investors and markets.

Since 1980 these industries have suffered severe contraction. They have lost over 300,000 jobs, 52,000 of which were in the textile sector alone. As the Minister knows, these industries are not based in the prosperous south; rather they are found in the north and the midlands and are centred on what have become the declining areas that once housed the thriving industries of iron, coal and steel. The Minister is also aware that the industries employ mainly women—72 per cent. of the work force at the last count. He also knows that the industries are strategically and economically important because the textile and clothing industries represent approximately 16 per cent. of all manufacturing jobs in the United Kingdom. They have 10 per cent. of the 3 million workers employed in these industries in the member states of the EC.

In my county of Nottinghamshire the textile and clothing industries employ four times the number of people who work in the coal industry, despite the fact that since 1982 one in six jobs lost in the textile industry nationally have been lost in Nottinghamshire. Further, one in 12 of all jobs in these industries are in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Two thirds of those jobs are in hosiery and knitwear and the rest are in clothing. That represents a sizeable chunk of manufacturing jobs, especially women's jobs. In all, it represents 15 per cent. of women's jobs, or 22 per cent. of all women's jobs in the counties' declining coal mining communities.

In Mansfield these industries represent 13 per cent. in total and 19 per cent. of all women's employment, and that is over 11,000 jobs. The decision to close Mansfield Knitwear was rightly described by Mr. David Lambert, the general president of the hosiery and knitwear union, as like amputating the torso of the industry at a stroke. Between 1981 and 1985 only 1,300 jobs in this sector have been created in Nottinghamshire.

Will the Minister give a lead to the industry to save it from complete destruction? Will he act to stop the disastrous flow of cheap imports into the United Kingdom? The latest trade figures show that in the first eight months of 1987 imports of jumpers were up by over 1·5 million. Will the Minister act to stop goods from such places as India, Indonesia, Hong Kong and Thailand being dumped on our shores at the cost of our industry? Will he act to help the industry recover from the general fashion switch away from knitted goods to enable it to have the confidence to return to viability? Will he act to combat employers who, while receiving Government grants for parts of their companies, shift other parts of their industries abroad, outside the EEC, to such places as Turkey, where labour costs are as low as £20 a week?

I say that because rumour abounds in the textile industry that Mansfield Knitwear was closed for exactly that reason. That can be seen from an article in the *Financial Times* of 23 September 1988 in which the newspaper's textile editor, Alice Rawsthorn, said about the Coats Viyella organisation, which owns Mansfield Knitwear:

> "The group is also considering shipping knitting machinery out to Turkey, where labour costs are lower. Similarly, it may use Turkey as a base to spin acrylic yarn for knitwear."

At the time, the journalist was writing an article about Mr. David Alliance, the director of the group, so her information would have come directly from him. Mr. David Alliance has already cost the Mansfield area dearly as, 18 months ago, he closed the Viyella factories in Mansfield and moved to Lancashire, with Government development assistance, despite the fact that it was a profitable company.

I hope that the Minister will ask the Government to review their decision of 30 September this year when they declined to give assisted area status to the Mansfield travel-to-work area. The loss of such a major industry as Mansfield Knitwear will have a severe effect on the community, particularly as Mansfield already has the worst unemployment levels in the midlands, with both male and female unemployment continuing to increase, despite two years' continuous decline in the rest of the country. The area now badly needs help to break out of its present position and can only achieve that with Government help.

I should be grateful if the Minister would consider the following approach in his deliberations: first, to issue a statement of confidence in the industry and to make public visits to the regions concerned; secondly, to call a summit

soon of all those concerned in the industry to discuss a way forward; thirdly, for the Government to take immediate action to curb cheap imports of textiles and clothing, which are badly affecting home production; fourthly, to undertake an investigation into firms which are in receipt of Government grants and are moving some of their operations abroad; fifthly, to issue a statement to the effect that there will be a renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement before the implementation of the Single European Act in 1992 to safeguard home production; and, finally, that the Minister will liaise with his colleagues at the Department of Trade and Industry and, in the light of the recent closures, review assisted-area status for Mansfield and consider meeting a delegation in the area in the near future.

2.37 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): May I, at the outset, declare my interest as a sponsored member of the Transport and General Workers Union whose textile trade group represents thousands of men and women working in the textile, clothing and knitwear industries.

May I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale), on securing this debate. It is another illustration of the vigorous way in which he has sought to defend his constituents since he was first elected to that constituency in 1987 and of the way in which he has sought to advance and protect the interests of those of his constituents working in the hosiery and knitwear industries.

This is the second debate that has taken place in the House this week on the textile, clothing and knitwear industries. The first debate, which took place on Monday, was initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon). The fact that we have had two debates in a week underlines the crisis that is facing the textile, clothing and knitwear industries. I urge the Minister to recognise that that crisis is of major proportions and that there are prospects of redundancies of the scale that we saw in 1980-81.

Thousands of men and women are facing redundancy in the coming weeks. There are thousands who may receive an unwelcome Christmas present in the form of a redundancy notice. If they escape redundancy until Christmas, it will be a threat early in the new year.

The crisis is such that we must see positive Government intervention. Professor Silberston is now being commissioned to make a further inquiry into this sector of the industry, and we hope that he will have learnt from the serious errors that he made in his initial report. He seemed to listen to everyone in the industry to whom he talked, but he did not learn from what he was told. We hope that his next report will include a major recommendation that there should be a continuation of the multi-fibre arrangement. That is the unified demand of all in the industries. We hope that the Government will support the extension of the MFA, whatever Professor Silberston may report.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield said, we want urgent and decisive Government action to stem unfair imports, which are still penetrating British markets to an unacceptable level. I should welcome an assurance from the Minister that rumours circulating that the Government intend to privatise the collection of production statistics are untrue. If we are to have accurate and reliable information on production and other trade statistics, it is vital that the information is collected by the Government rather than by individual companies, many of which are not in a position to collect statistics. If we lose reliable statistics, our ability to combat unfair trade from overseas will be further worsened.

As my hon. Friend said, we need to see much greater willingness by the Government to act against British investors who are increasingly investing in low-cost production overseas at the expense of British companies and British jobs. We should be able to devise a way of preventing grant going to such companies. Tax penalties could be introduced for British companies and investors that are exploiting the advantages that exist in overseas low-cost production centres.

We must urge British employers to safeguard employment, especially in areas such as Mansfield. We know that Mansfield is suffering from high-level unemployment. In areas such as my constituency in west Yorkshire, unemployment levels are way above regional and national levels. We need a comprehensive programme of assistance for these sectors of industry. We must take concerted action to improve the overall image of the industries. That would assist recruitment. Within the past month I have met employers and trade union representatives in Bradford to discuss ways in which we can improve the image of our industry. There is an inheritance of redundancy and a reputation of bad working conditions with low pay. This background deters many young people from considering job opportunities and careers within these sectors of industry.

There must be major improvements in pay and conditions. Substantial improvements made must also be in the number of training places that are available and in the quality of training that is provided. During a debate on Monday I called upon the Government to organise a major national conference to discuss a range of urgent action that could be taken. The Government should convene such a conference. All employers, unions, local authorities and other agencies with an interest in the industries should be invited to frame an agenda for action and for assistance for the industries.

We heard today, as on Monday, about the importance of those industries as major employers and exporters and their major contribution to future growth and prosperity. They are no longer expendable. The men and women who create the wealth in that range of industries are crying out for the Government to acknowledge their importance to our country's economy. Certainly they are calling for positive and decisive Government action in reducing unfair exports and in the other areas I have outlined.

I hope that today we shall not have to record the same complacency that is so often evident when Ministers address the problems of the textile, clothing and knitwear industries. I hope that, for a change, we shall hear from the Minister positive suggestions for urgent action, which is long overdue and vitally important.

2.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): I fully understand the reasons that have prompted this debate, because the knitwear industry is important in the constituencies of both the hon. Members for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) and for

[Mr. Francis Maude]

Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). It is also important in one part of my midlands constituency, so I am aware of the industry's difficulties and of its importance, too.

However, the message of gloom that comes out of the remarks made by both hon. Gentlemen is unnecessary and depressing. I do not intend sounding complacent, as the hon. Member for Bradford, West suggested I might, but the idea that the solution to all the problems lies with the Government is fallacious. If there is a problem with the industry's image, it is for the industry itself to address it. There are within it enough firms that are robust, innovative, enterprising, and investing for the future to address that problem, if it needs addressing, and to deal with it. I do not accept that it will be helpful if the Government intervene.

The hon. Member for Mansfield mentioned regional aid and suggested that my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department should amend the assisted areas map to include Mansfield. The Nottinghamshire county council has asked for a meeting, and as such meetings take place frequently, I see no reason why one should not be arranged. I appreciate that Mansfield and neighbouring areas have unemployment problems, but the White Paper published earlier this year made it clear that the Government have no plans to change the assisted areas map in the lifetime of this Parliament. On a related issue, Nottinhamshire county council and Mansfield district council have been informed that Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire are among 22 counties and regions that appear to satisfy the eligibility criteria for European regional development fund assistance as industrial regions. We have cited the travel-to-work areas of Mansfield, Worksop and Chesterfield, as well as other parts of the counties, as the most seriously affected areas.

Mr. Meale: Does the Minister accept that the company that has just closed Mansfield Knitwear is the one that closed Viyella mills? It closed the Mansfield mills to move to an assisted development area. If we cannot be designated as an assisted area when we have the highest level of unemployment in the midlands, we shall continually face firms hopping from one side of the country to the other—and moving, in particular, away from Mansfield.

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman has highlighted one of the problems of a regional policy of this kind. The west midlands which contains my constituency, suffered considerably in the early 1980s when it did not have assisted area status and a good deal of business left for other pastures. The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the problem, but it is inherent in the system and cannot be dealt with simply by fiddling with the map to accommodate the changes.

There is certainly a possibility of ERDF assistance. We are still awaiting official Commission reaction to the proposal, but each individual council is free to contact the Commission to support its case, and I understand that Mansfield and Nottinghamshire are doing that. Mansfield is also in a priority area for European social fund purposes in regard to retraining.

To describe Mansfield and its surrounds as wholly depressing would be to give a mistaken impression. There is much good news. First and most important, Mansfield benefits, and will continue to do so, from the upswing in the national economy, and particularly from the growth in the east midlands. Moreover, rising prosperity in Nottingham and Newark is having a direct overspill effect.

The many small engineering firms in Mansfield and Sutton are finding their order books fuller than they have been for many years and are looking forward to a period of the same growth and expansion that we are now seeing throughout the country. The record-breaking performance of miners at Sherwood colliery and other pits in the area clearly show that rising productivity and competitiveness are the keys to the future of mining in Nottinghamshire. The hon. Gentleman will also be aware that public sector investment is taking place on a record level in Mansfield.

Mansfield is being given one of the most modern district general hospitals in the country with the redevelopment of Kingsmill, and at the same time the Victoria hospital is being virtually rebuilt to provide better local health care than ever before.

But the real hope for Mansfield's future comes from the growth of the private sector. As the hon. Gentleman will know, just outside the town in Sherwood forest, Center Parc is providing an increasingly successful tourist development, and the growth of the tourist industry generally is providing many new opportunities for other local businesses.

British Coal, through British Coal Enterprises, is giving support to many former miners who are seeking—successfully—to set up businesses of their own, and the managed workshop scheme developed by Mansfield Brewery is one of the earliest and best schemes in the country where a private company has used its own resources and spare capacity to help get new fledgling businesses off the ground.

Mr. Meale: That is wonderful news, which will be published in *Hansard* on Monday. But unemployment is still increasing, although the method of calculation has been changed more than 20 times. If all those good things are happening, why are firms closing down? Why is unemployment rising? Why, according to every report on the area, is deprivation worsening? Things are not good, and we need the Minister's help and direction.

Mr. Maude: Obviously at any one time firms are closing and firms are opening. That is part of the industrial process, no matter what Government are in power. It always has been, and it always will be. I accept that firms are closing in Mansfield, but if the hon. Gentleman wants to do Mansfield a service he would do well to help us to draw attention to the many positive developments. Like me, he wants to encourage businesses to develop in Mansfield, but if we are to do that we need to present a positive image for the town. I know that the hon. Gentleman can be relied on to help to do that, but he will not do it if he does nothing but preach doom and gloom and talk only about the decline of industries there. Many businesses are growing and setting up, which is thoroughly good news for the area.

The knitwear industry has contributed considerably to the development of parts of the country, but, as with any economic activity, competition invevitably develops from areas that introduce new techniques and make economies in manufacturing costs. The knitwear market is also especially susceptible to the unpredictable and capricious

influence of the demands of fashion. The industry is facing difficulties and no one suggests otherwise, but that is occurring not only in this country but internationally.

I can give the hon. Gentlemen some good news. Recently when I was in Hong Kong I helped to take part in a promotion by Richard Shops, which had just opened some new shops there, of garments made in Britain. The idea that trade in textiles and garments is entirely one way —from the far east to Europe—is false. I have seen with my own eyes garments made in Britain being exported to Hong Kong.

This industry, like many others, is developing what it is good at. The hon. Gentleman knows that knitwear is included in the multi-fibre arrangement due to expire in 1991. The MFA is under consideration with many other trade issues in the Uruguay round of GATT, and multilateral negotiations are under way in Geneva. We have committed ourselves as part of the European Community to studying the modalities for the restoration to normal of trade in clothing and textiles but also to strengthen GATT disciplines. We consider that a durable set of GATT rules for trade in clothing and textiles depends essentially on establishing the right conditions, which include a satisfactory safeguard clause against sudden import surges and a reduction in trade barriers in developing countries. We are particularly looking to the newly industrialised countries in that context.

Both hon. Gentlemen suggested that the solution to the problems of the industry is to erect barriers around the country and prevent any imports, especially cheap imports. The hon. Member for Bradford, West referred to the report by Professor Silberston and the fact that we have asked him to update it. Last time the Professor concluded that the effect of the MFA on British consumers was to increase the cost of clothes by 10 per cent. That should concern hon. Gentlemen. It affects every constituent and poorer people more than the better off. Protectionist arrangements, such as the MFA, make it more difficult for Third world countries that were seeking to industrialise and reduce their dependence on aid from the industrialised world to do so. Again, I should have thought that both hon. Gentlemen would wish to bear that matter in mind.

Mr. Meale: I am bewildered by that. The figures I have seen, for example, for women's knickers show that in 1984 a total of 1·5 million pairs of knickers were imported from China, which is the biggest exporting textile nation. Because there was no action under the MFA and no Government direction, the figure rose in 1985 to 7 million, in 1986 to 14 million, and in 1987 to 30 million. That is the result of a lack of action by the Government.

Mr. Maude: There is and always has been trade in clothes. In the past we have benefited enormously from trade in clothes. Industries in some countries are better at some products than are industries in other countries. All economic growth and development has come about because industries have specialised in doing what they are good at. The idea that we should erect barriers and prevent any clothes made elsewhere from being imported is absurd. It would not benefit British industry. The British industries that have remained least efficient are those that have been protected.

If industry is to become efficient and productive, as I know the knitwear industry predominantly is, it needs not more protection but to invest, develop and take its place in the world market. That is how we shall increase prosperity and I have no doubt that that is already happening.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 24 October 1988

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers' Income

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the average annual income of teachers with *(a)* five, *(b)* 10 and *(c)* 20 years working experience in (1) Belgium, (2) the Netherlands, (3) France, (4) Sweden, (5) Denmark, and (6) the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is not readily available. However, a number of comparisons of European Community countries are available in pages 133 to 160 of "The Conditions of Service of Teachers in the European Community", published by the European Commission in 1988. A copy is available in the Library.

School Meals

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average price of a school meal in (1) the Inner London education authority area, (2) Oxford, (3) Liverpool, (4) Birmingham, (5) Manchester, (6) Newcastle-upon-Tyne, (7) Cardiff, (8) Norwich, and (9) York.

Mr. Butcher: Data relating to the average price of a school meal in individual cities are not collected centrally. Data relating to the charges made for fixed-price school meals in local education authorities in England, based on the Department's annual school meals census, are included in the report on school meals statistics at October 1987, published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. A copy is available in the Library.

Matters relating to Cardiff are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Dyslexic Children

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will list all the educational facilities provided to dyslexic children in the United Kingdom;

(2) how many children born for each year since 1974 have been found to suffer from dyslexia in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Butcher: Since the implementation of the 1981 Education Act in 1983, this Department has not collected national or local statistics of children by category of handicap. This information is not therefore available.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to which countries make special educational provisions for dyslexic children.

Mr. Butcher: The Department does not collect, and is not aware of any systematic study of, detailed information about the educational provision made in other countries for children with specific learning difficulties.

Plankton

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what support Her Majesty's Government are giving to the research programme on plankton in the North sea and the eastern Atlantic at the Plymouth marine laboratory.

Mr. Jackson: The continuous plankton recorder survey at the Plymouth marine laboratory will cost in the order of £300,000 in 1988-89. The NERC is providing about half of the funds from its science budget allocation, with a contribution of up to £140,000 from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I understand that in 1989-90, while the NERC is to cease funding in order to concentrate on research that it considers to be of higher priority, MAFF has offered to contribute up to £150,000, subject to PML offering a satisfactory proposal. Other funding from organisations which benefit from the survey will be sought.

Nursery Places

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of under-fives are in full-time state nursery education in each European Community country.

Mr. Butcher: The following information is readily available. Further details can be obtained from the Department's *Statistical Bulletin*, a copy of which is in the Library.

Participation in education and day care by 3-5 year olds in certain EC countries: 1982

Country	*Age at which compulsory education starts*	*Percentage participation in:*		
		Education		*Day care*
		Full and part-time	*of which full-time*	
Belgium	6	97	..	..
Denmark[1]	7	11	..	65
France	6	97	14	..
Germany	6	60	6	..
Ireland[2]	6	50	..	14
Italy[3]	6	76	76	..
Luxembourg	6	62	62	..
Netherlands	6	66	66	17
United Kingdom	5	61	47	27

[1] 1984.
[2] 1981.
[3] Estimated.
.. = Not available or not applicable.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many nursery places were available in *(a)* North Yorkshire local education authority and *(b)* the Ryedale district council area for each of the years 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Butcher: Information on the number of nursery places and information for areas within local education authorities are not available centrally. The number of pupils under five in maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools in North Yorkshire for each of the years 1983 to 1987 was as follows:

Pupils under five in nursery schools and classes

January each year	*Number*
1983	2,490
1984	2,773
1985	2,652
1986	2,631
1987	2,694

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many nursery school places are available in each local education authority in England, in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher: Information on the number of nursery school places is not collected centrally. The number of pupils under five in maintained nursery schools in each local education authority in England in January 1988 is given in the following table. There are also pupils in nursery classes in primary schools; these are excluded from the answer.

Pupils under five in nursery schools January 1988

Barking	0
Barnet	500
Bexley	174
Brent	274
Bromley	0
Croydon	400
Ealing	535
Enfield	0
Haringey	246
Harrow	0
Havering	0
Hillingdon	120
Hounslow	0
Kingston-upon-Thames	236
Merton	0
Newham	972
Redbridge	0
Richmond-upon-Thames	64
Sutton	240
Waltham Forest	329
Inner London	4,232
Birmingham	2,317
Coventry	443
Dudley	401
Sandwell	209
Solihull	0
Walsall	755
Wolverhampton	843
Knowsley	0
Liverpool	560
St. Helens	66
Sefton	315
Wirral	262
Bolton	553
Bury	161
Manchester	535
Oldham	0
Rochdale	910
Salford	845
Stockport	766
Tameside	322
Trafford	0
Wigan	186
Barnsley	181
Doncaster	0
Rotherham	355
Sheffield	738
Bradford	502
Calderdale	88
Kirklees	651
Leeds	254
Wakefield	463
Gateshead	50
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	623
North Tyneside	291
South Tyneside	713
Sunderland	949
Isles of Scilly	0
Avon	1,420
Bedfordshire	1,329
Berkshire	2,021
Buckinghamshire	512
Cambridgeshire	637
Cheshire	838
Cleveland	153
Cornwall	101
Cumbria	758
Derbyshire	1,217
Devon	255
Dorset	0
Durham	2,463
East Sussex	284
Essex	252
Gloucestershire	0
Hampshire	260
Hereford and Worcester	0
Hertfordshire	1,733
Humberside	963
Isle of Wight	0
Kent	81
Lancashire	3,399
Leicestershire	50
Lincolnshire	286
Norfolk	399
North Yorkshire	308
Northamptonshire	525
Northumberland	137
Nottinghamshire	575
Oxfordshire	499
Shropshire	166
Somerset	0
Staffordshire	1,824
Suffolk	95
Surrey	416
Warwickshire	755
West Sussex	446
Wiltshire	0
England	49,786

School Rolls

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all those local education authorities who have increasing school rolls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: It is for local education authorities themselves to assess their school provision in the light of local circumstances. In most LEAs primary school rolls are rising and secondary school rolls are continuing to decline.

Temporary Classrooms

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimate he has made of the cost of replacing the 500 temporary classrooms in use by Bradford schools by permanent accomodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: It is entirely a matter for the Bradford education authority, rather than my right hon. Friend, to calculate the cost involved.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Sunday Trading

71 **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Attorney-General if he proposes to issue further guidance to local authorities regarding the enforcement of the Sunday trading laws; and what steps he is taking to ascertain the scale of such enforcement, other than the information he has requested from the Association of District Councils.

The Attorney-General: I have no plans to issue guidance concerning the enforcement of the law relating to Sunday trading. As to the scale of enforcement undertaken by local authorities, I received in July a detailed summary of the survey undertaken by the Association of District Councils into the current situation and have no plans to seek further information at this stage.

Courts (Functioning)

72. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Attorney-General if there are any plans to improve the functioning of law courts.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor has the effectiveness and efficiency of the court service under constant review.

Crown Prosecution Service

74. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Attorney-General what has been the cost to the Government of the Crown Prosecution Service for the last two years.

The Attorney-General: The net cost to the Government of the Crown Prosecution Service for the years to 1986-87 and 1987-88 was as follows:

	£ million
1986-87	67·45
1987-88	120·90

The Crown Prosecution Service became a national service on 1 October 1986. Prior to that date, only the former metropolitan counties had been assimilated into the service. This expansion explains the disparity between the two figures given above.

Birmingham Pub Bombing

75. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss the Birmingham pub bombing case.

The Attorney-General: I last discussed this case with the Director on Friday 8 July 1988.

Dr. Frank Skuse

76. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions Mr. Ray Paton was interviewed by City of London police in the course of the recent inquiry into the conduct of Dr. Frank Skuse.

The Attorney-General: Mr. Paton was questioned on three occasions during the course of the inquiry.

Guildford and Woolwich Pub Bombings

77. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings case.

78. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings case.

79. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings case.

80. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss the case of the persons convicted of the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings.

The Attorney-General: I have had no reason to discuss that case with the Director.

Solicitors Remuneration Order

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Attorney-General on what date he received the 23rd report of the Law Reform Committee (Cmmd. 8733); when he intends to introduce the amendments to the Solicitors Remuneration Order recommended therein; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The 23rd report of the Law Reform Committee on the powers and duties of trustees (Cmnd. 8733) was published on 19 October 1982. The council of the Law Society agreed in principle to the changes to the Solicitors Remuneration Order recommended on that report in June 1987. Discussions on their implementation have now concluded. It is expected that the Law Society will invite the committee responsible under section 56 of the Solicitors Act 1974 for amendments to the order to make a new order early in 1989.

Family Law Reform Act

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Attorney-General if he will now specify the date on which the outstanding parts of the Family Law Reform Act 1987 will be brought into force.

The Attorney-General: I cannot yet specify a date when the remaining parts of the Act will be brought into force, but I hope it will be possible to make an announcement in respect of part II of the Act shortly.

"Spycatcher"

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Attorney-General if he will now give the estimated sum that will be paid in total in all matters involving the Government's total legal action in the United Kingdom and abroad regarding the "Spycatcher" case, including travelling and all other related expenses.

The Attorney-General: It will not be possible to estimate the eventual total costs for some time, as several bills have not yet been submitted to the Government, but the figure of £1,019,000 given in a written answer to a question by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 19 October, is likely to increase substantially.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his reply of 19 October, *Official Report*, column 853, if he will provide a convenient analysis of the £1,019,000 cost to public funds of efforts made by Her Majesty's Government in respect of legal actions against the book "Spycatcher".

The Attorney-General: The breakdown of costs is as follows:

Civil Proceedings for Breach of Confidence

	Legal fees	*Travelling and subsistence*	*Total*
Australia	559,862	77,078	€36,940
New Zealand	157,428	15,786	173,214
Hong Kong	—	—	77,716
England and Wales	—	—	70,171
Legal advice received from other countries			60,769
			1,018,810

Jurors

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Attorney-General how many black jurors have been involved in the trying of cases in Liverpool Crown court in the last period of 12 months for which figures are available.

The Attorney-General: This information cannot be provided as no record is kept of the ethnic origin of jurors.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Attorney-General how many jury panels out of the total number selected over the last period of 12 months for which figures are available originate from each of the Liverpool areas; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The figures requested could be extracted only at disproportionate cost. However, jurors are summoned from all the electoral districts within the catchment area of the Crown court at Liverpool, based on annually updated electoral registers.

Legal Profession

Mr. Hind: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Government have any proposals for the future of the legal profession; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor has considered the report to the general council of the Bar and the council of the Law Society on the future of the legal profession chaired by Lady Marre which the Bar and the Law Society published in July this year.

The Lord Chancellor has now decided that it would be appropriate to publish his own proposals relating to the requirements for carrying out in the future the work presently conducted by the legal profession. He therefore intends to issue a Green Paper for consultation early in the new year with a view to reaching decisions before the summer recess 1989. Separate consultation papers on contingency fees and on corporate conveyancing will also be prepared with the intention of publication on a similar time scale to the proposed Green paper.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Rural Areas (Violence)

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the reasons for his decision not to publish the report on violence in rural areas by the chief constable of Surrey; and whether he will review that decision.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The report was undertaken by the Association of Chief Police Officers. Its distribution is a matter for the association.

Visiting Forces Act

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications have been made for waivers under the Visiting Forces Act for each year since 1979.

Mr. John Patten: Requests for waiver under the Visiting Forces Act 1952 may be made either by the visiting force authorities where primary right of jurisdiction lies with United Kingdom courts, or by the United Kingdom where primary right of jurisdiction lies with the visiting force authorities. There is no requirement for central reporting of cases in either category, but their numbers are thought to be small.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest available figures for his Department in the London pay area of the number of vacancies by grade and the proportion this is of the grade complement in London.

Mr. Hurd: The latest available information in respect of posts in the London area which are normally filled by direct recruitment is as follows:

Administration Group	*Vacancies*
Executive Officer	89
Administrative Officer	82
Administrative Assistant	69
Specialist and Support Grades (other than Prison Service)	
Inspector—Animals (Scientific Procedures Inspectorate)	2
Assistant Information Officer (Public Relations Branch)	1
Marketing post (Directorate of Telecommunications)	2
Inspector (Territorial) (Fire Service Inspectorate)	1
Inspector (Grade I) (Fire Service Inspectorate)	1
Inspector (Grade II) (Fire Service Inspectorate)	2
Assistant Inspector (Fire Service Inspectorate)	14
Legal Officer (Legal Advisers Branch)	2
Economic Adviser (Grade 7)	1
Higher Scientific Officer	6
Scientific Officer	15
Assistant Scientific Officer	1
Research Officer	2
Immigration Officer	30
Paperkeeper	5·5
Personal Secretary	25
Typist	12·5
Assistant Librarian	2
VSU consultant	1
Porter/Messenger	3
Reprographic Officer	8
Prison Service	
Prison Service Unified Grades	
Grade 4	2
Grade 5	5
Grade 6	36
Grade 7	177
Grade 8	37
Night Porter	19
Specialist Grades	
Medical Officer	2

Administration Group	Vacancies
Professional and Technology Group	
Grade 7	5
SPTO	5
HPTO	14
PTO	28
Typist	3·5
Telephonist	1

[1] These vacancies will all be filled by new recruits currently or shortly in training.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide the latest available figures for his Department for *(a)* numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions, by grade, *(b)* location of those offices awarding local pay additions and *(c)* annual cost.

Mr. Hurd: The information requested is as follows:

Numbers of Home Office Staff in receipt of Local Pay Additions (by Grade and rounded)

Grade	Number
Typist	200
Personal Secretary	230
Senior Personal Secretary	35
Typing Manager	20
Administrative Assistant	515
Administrative Officer	1,300
Total	2,300

Local pay additions are paid to staff in the above grades in the following locations:

London boroughs

Barnet, Croydon, Hammersmith, Islington, Lambeth, Wandsworth, Westminster.

Other local authority areas

Harlow and Tunbridge Wells—Typists and Typing Managers only.

The estimated annual cost of local pay additions in the Department is £1·5 million.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide the latest available figures for the Metropolitan police for *(a)* numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions, by grade, *(b)* location of those offices awarding local pay additions and *(c)* annual cost.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner that the latest information available is as follows:

(a)	Number
Executive officers	54
Administrative officers	2,194
Administrative assistants	115
Senior personal secretaries	9
Personal secretaries	51
Typing managers	89
Typists	892
Trainee typists	9
Traffic warden area controllers	7
Traffic warden senior controllers	11
Traffic warden controllers	47
Traffic warden supervisors	194
Traffic wardens	883
Knowledge of London examiners	5

(b) Local pay additions are awarded to selected staff in Metropolitan Police offices throughout the Metropolitan Police District.

(c) £2,292,975.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest available figures for the Metropolitan police in the London pay area of the number of vacancies by grade and the proportion this is of the grade complement in London.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner that on 30 September there were a total of 479 vacancies within the working civil staff ceiling of the Metropolitan police. This represents a shortfall of 3·7 per cent.

The Metropolitan police is introducing a system of grade complements within the civil staff ceiling. Until this has been completed, it is not possible to provide reliable figures on vacancies by grade.

Metropolitan police staff are based in the London area.

BBC and IBA

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will urgently take steps to remove British Broadcasting Corporation and Independent Broadcasting Authority board appointments from direct Government involvement.

Mr. Renton: No. The current arrangements work satisfactorily.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will urgently introduce legislation giving the right of participation in the work of the boards of the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Independent Broadcasting Authority to elected representatives of all the professionals and technicians, producers and workers.

Mr. Renton: No. Appointments to the broadcasting authorities are made on the basis of personal distinction, experience and ability.

Official Secrets Act (Reform)

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many organisations have made representations to him in connection with the White Paper on reform of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 (Cm. 408); and if he will list those organisations.

Mr. John Patten: Up to 21 October, my right hon. Friend had received representations on the proposals set out in the White Paper from the following nine organisations:

The Association of British Editors.
The BBC.
The Campaign for Freedom of Information.
The Guild of British Newspaper Editors.
The Law Society of Scotland.
The National Consumer Council.
The Newspaper Society.
The Press Council.
The Society of Authors.

Public Representations

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which subject within his Department's

range of responsibilities has generated most representations from the public in the past 12 months; and if he is able to estimate the numbers of correspondence and telephone calls.

Mr. Hurd: This information is not available centrally and could be obtained, if at all, only at a disproportionate cost.

Adolfo Calero

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why Adolfo Calero was given permission to enter the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Renton: Mr. Calero qualified for entry as a visitor under the immigration rules.

Heathrow and Gatwick Airports (Armed Police)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what special training police officers publicly wearing sidearms at Heathrow and Gatwick have received in the use of firearms; what instructions they have for the use of such firearms in terminal buildings; and how many times such firearms have been fired in the past 12 months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: All police officers who are authorised to carry firearms must undergo initially the basic 10-day firearms training course, and then attend two-day refresher courses four times a year. An officer must qualify on each occasion in order to retain his authorisation certificate. All authorised firearms officers are made fully aware that under section 3 of the Criminal Law Act 1967

'a person may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances in the prevention of crime, or in the effecting or assisting in the lawful arrest of offenders or suspected offenders or of persons unlawfully at large',

and that responsibility for the use of the firearm is an individual decision which may have to be justified in legal proceedings. I understand that during the last 12 months firearms have been fired by officers stationed at Heathrow and Gatwick only for training purposes.

Cruise Missiles (Policing)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, since the ratification of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty, any public expenditure has been incurred in respect of policing for exercises involving United States cruise missiles outwith the Greenham common base; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not the practice, for both operational and security reasons, to give details of matters relating to exercises conducted by nuclear missile units.

Nazi War Crimes

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when it is expected that the committee inquiring into those in the United Kingdom alleged to have been involved in Nazi war crimes will make its report to him.

Mr. Hurd: I understand that the report of the war crimes inquiry is likely to be submitted to me by next Easter.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many reported crimes and convictions there were in 1987 in respect of offences involving the following weapons *(a)* shotguns, *(b)* airguns, *(c)* other firearms, *(d)* crossbows, *(e)* knives *(f)* martial arts weapons and *(g)* bows and arrows.

Mr. John Patten: Information on reported crimes involving firearms in 1987, by type of weapon, will be given in table 3.5 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1987", which is being published later this week. Information on convictions in 1987 for offences involving firearms, bringing up to date the information in table 7 of HOSB 2/88, is given in the table below and will be published in due course in a Home Office statistical bulletin. Corresponding information for crossbows, knives martial arts weapons and bows and arrows is not available. However, from an ad hoc survey covering 21 of the 43 police forces it is estimated that in 1987 about 1,000 (one in 12) of the recorded offences of violence against the person in England and Wales and about 8,000 (one in 4) of robberies and aggravated burglaries involved sharp instruments.

Table: Persons found guilty in 1987 of offences under the Firearms Act 1968 by type of offence
England and Wales

Offence	*Number found guilty*
Indictable offences	
Possession of firearms with intent to endanger life or injure property	37
Using firearms with intent to resist arrest	16
Possessing firearms at time of committing, or being arrested for, an offence	52
Possessing firearms with intent to commit an indictable offence or resist arrest	135
Possessing firearms or ammunition without certificate (Section 1)[1]	318
Shortening a shot gun	29
Possessing or distributing prohibited weapons or ammunition	65
Carrying loaded firearm in public place	179
Possession of firearms by persons previously convicted of crime	139
Other indictable offences	67
Total indictable offences	1,037
Summary offences	
Non-compliance with condition of firearm certificate (Section 1)[1]	53
Possessing shot gun without certificate	451
Carrying loaded firearm in public place	490
Trespassing with firearm on land	355
Person under 17 acquiring firearm	14
Making false statement in order to procure grant or renewal of firearm or shot gun certificate	150
Other summary offences	145
Total summary offences	1,658
All offences	2,695

[1] Section 1 includes all firearms (including imitations, conversions, signalling apparatus) except shot guns and air weapons as defined in sections 1(3)(a) and 1(3)(b) of the Firearms Act 1968.

Children (Fruit Machines)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimates he has as to how much money children under 18 years and under 16 years are spending on fruit machines.

Mr. John Patten: The research carried out by the Home Office research and planning unit "Amusement Machines: Dependency and Delinquency" (research study No. 101) provides estimates for the amount of money spent by young people under the age of 17 on amusement-with-prizes (fruit) machines. No figures are provided for those aged 17 and the figures are not broken down for the ages under 17, and this information is not otherwise available.

The figures are set out in detail in paragraph 4 of the report. In summary, from the sample of 10 to 16-year-olds, 71 per cent. of fruit machine players spent less than £1 per week, 17 per cent. spent £1 to £2 per week and 10 per cent spent more than £2. The figures should properly be viewed in relation to the amount of spending money available to the players per week and the proportion of this which was spent on fruit machines; and estimates for these are given in the report.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to ban children under 18 years from playing fruit machines.

Mr. John Patten: No. I would refer the hon. Member to the statement I made in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon North (Mr. Gorst) on 28 July at columns *423-24*.

Crime Investigations Priority Project

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the role and purpose of the crime investigations priority project.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the crime investigations priority project is a study of ways in which crime investigation is undertaken within the Metropolitan police. Its purpose is to identify ways in which investigative resources might be used more effectively.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he proposes to take to reduce the number of remand prisoners in police cells.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are more prisoners held in police cells because of industrial action by some branches of the Prison Officers Association. On 29 September, the Home Secretary invited the POA national leaders to work with prison service management to bring a rapid end to industrial action across the prison system and made clear our intention to take vigorous action if a significant improvement was not shortly forthcoming. Encouraging progress has been made. The POA branches in the four prisons recently involved in industrial action have undertaken to end their refusal to admit prisoners and the prisons should start to build up to capacity again this week.

Meanwhile, the measures to produce more prison places which the Home Secretary announced at the end of March are on target. In total, over 2,600 new places have been provided so far, including two new prisons which have opened in the past two months. A further 1,400 places will be delivered by the end of the financial year.

Member's Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, concerning Mr. M. Younis, about whom the right hon. Member first wrote to him on 4 May; and what are the reasons for this delay in response.

Mr. Hurd: I replied to the hon. Member's letter of 5 May on 30 June and sent him a copy of that reply on 20 October.

Indo-Chinese Refugees

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Indo-Chinese refugees from Hong Kong he now expects to be admitted to the United Kingdom in the next year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We will be admitting the remainder of 468 relatives of refugees already here whose acceptance was announced by my right hon. Friend on 8 May 1987 at column *547*. We are considering proposals that have been made, in the light of developments in Hong Kong, for the United Kingdom to admit more.

PRIME MINISTER

"Next Steps"

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister whether those functions of the Civil Service which are given agency status as part of the "next steps" initiative will be exempt from privatisation; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government's privatisation policies will continue. Before an agency is established, alternative options, including contracting out the work and privatisation will be examined. "Next steps" is primarily about those operations which are to remain within Government. I cannot rule out, however, that after a period of years agencies, like other Government activities, may be suitable for privatisation. Where there is a firm intention of privatisation when an agency is being set up, this should be made clear.

Environment Policies

Mr. Wray: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her Majesty's Government's top priorities on the environment and related issues for the next 24 months and indicate the Government Department or Departments involved in such policies and activities.

The Prime Minister: Her Majesty's Government's main priorities are to reduce further the use of ozone depleting chemicals and to prevent acid rain; to research climate change and the greenhouse effect and to take appropriate action; to protect the environment of the North sea; to strengthen the pollution control framework for water by establishing the National Rivers Authority; to establish an integrated pollution control system and reform the laws on

waste disposal. In the developing countries of the Third world, we will direct more of our aid to encourage the wise and sustainable use of forest resources. A number of Government Departments are involved in these policies and activities.

Official Residences

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if she will provide the final figure for 1987-88 for *(a)* the cost of maintaining and running 10 Downing street and additional costs at Chequers, *(b)* the grant-in-aid to the Chequers Trust and *(c)* the costs on a consistent basis, expressed at constant 1984-85 prices.

The Prime Minister: The figures requested are:

	£
a. cost of maintaining and running 10 Downing street and additional costs at Chequers (1) (2) (3)	5,418,455
b. the grant-in-aid to the Chequers Trust	224,000
c. figures at *(a)* and *(b)* in 1984-85 price terms (4)	*(a)* 4,708,764
	(b) 194,661

Notes:

(1) The figure includes costs at both 10 Downing street and Chequers; the information is not available by location.

(2) Salaries and wages, notional pension liability, administration costs, the costs of office services and the grant-in-aid to the Chequers Trust are included. The salary of the Prime Minister is excluded.

(3) The figures are consistent with the estimates given in the reply to the hon. Member on 14 April 1988 at column 217. If office services costs are excluded (to put the figures on a consistent basis with those for 1986-87 given to the hon. Member on 23 October 1987 at column 846), the total for 1987-88 is £4,872,925 (£4,234,686 at constant 1984-85 prices).

(4) Constant costs have been calculated using the Treasury's GDP deflator for 1986-87 rebased to 1984-85.

Official Duties (Expenditure)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total cost to public funds of all her offices, duties, accommodation and expenses in 1987-88.

The Prime Minister: The total cost of all my offices in 1987-88 was £5,451,853(1).

Note:

(1) Salaries and wages, notional pension liability, administration costs and the grant-in-aid to the Chequers Trust are included. My salary as a Cabinet Minister is also included. My pay and allowances as a Member of this House are excluded.

Representations

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister which subject has generated most representations to her office from members of the public in the past 12 months; and if she is able to estimate the numbers by correspondence and telephone calls.

The Prime Minister: During the past 12 months I have received over 200,000 letters about various subjects and topical issues. No records are kept of the number of telephone calls.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what were the final 1987-88 figures for the total cost of official entertainment associated with the office of Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: The 1987-88 final figure for the total cost of entertainment associated with the office of the Prime Minister was £9,756.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what is the estimated cost for 1988-89 for entertainment associated with the office of the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: The estimated cost is £21,250. (This figure is not comparable with those given for previous years due to changes in the way in which costs are allocated to individual budgets.)

Australia (Visit)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *856*, how the charge of £1,750 to journalists was arrived at.

The Prime Minister: The charge to journalists was calculated with reference to the costs that they would have incurred had they flown by commercial carrier.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply of 19 October, *Official Report*, columns *855-56*, if the figure she gave for the cost to public funds of her recent visit to Australia included the total sum for the Royal Air Force VC-10 aircraft and crew.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

British Rail

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister when she last travelled by British Rail on official business.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave him on 22 April 1988 at column *583*.

Tidy Britain Initiative

Mr. Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the progress of her Tidy Britain initiative launched on 22 March.

The Prime Minister: Nineteen experimental projects are under way which are intended to test new approaches to the problem of tackling litter. A review at the end of the year will draw lessons which will be capable of more general application. The Tidy Britain group reports that it is receiving good support for the projects from all sections of the community.

Conservative Party Conference

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister which Departments of state incurred costs associated with the 1988 conference of the Conservative party.

The Prime Minister: The Home Office and the Ministry of Defence both incurred costs associated with the provision of security relating to the 1988 Conservative party conference. A number of Departments incurred minor additional costs on transacting official business as a result of their Ministers' attendance at the conference.

Members (Hospitality)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer of 29 October 1987, *Official Report*, columns

359-60, how many Conservative hon. and right hon. Members have received hospitality at No. 10 Downing street since that date, and what is the estimated cost to public funds.

The Prime Minister: Since 29 October 1987, 108 Conservative hon. and right hon. Members have attended lunches (including working lunches) teas, dinners (including working dinners) and receptions at No. 10 Downing street. The costs of these attendances are not separately identifiable.

GCHQ

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her oral answer to the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) of 20 October, and the oral answer of the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, of 19 October, *Official Report*, column 882, whether the figure of 10,000 refers to man hours or man days lost at Government Communications Headquarters due to industrial action between 1979 and 1981.

The Prime Minister: I confirm that the figure of 10,000 man days is the correct one.

Security Services

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister, if she will set out her objections to the establishment of a Select Committee to oversee the security services; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It has been the longstanding convention, under Governments of both parties, that the security services are responsible to the appropriate Secretary of State and through them to the Prime Minister. I believe that the establishment of a Select Committee would not represent an improvement in these arrangements.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

GATT (Uruguay Round)

114. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action he proposes in the general agreement on tariffs and trade Uruguay round to stimulate exports from developing countries.

Mr. Alan Clark: The United Kingdom is seeking a more liberal multilateral trading system, the extension of GATT principles to agriculture, trade in services, investment and intellectual property and the strengthening of the GATT system by the closer integration of developing countries. These reforms will benefit all countries. The European Community has made it clear that it is willing to negotiate on all subjects of interest to the developing countries, including tropical products and textiles.

Steel Prices

Mr. Speller: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will request his colleagues in the EC to investigate alleged violations of European Community competition rules in respect of a cartel which decides prices for stainless steel.

Mr. Atkins: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 28 July at column *376*.

Vacancies (London)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest available figures for his Department in the London pay area of the number of vacancies by grade and the proportion this is of the grade complement in London.

Mr. Forth: Information is not held by the Department in the form requested, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Local Pay Additions

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will provide the latest available figures for his Department for *(a)* numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions, by grade, *(b)* location of those offices awarding local pay additions and *(c)* annual cost.

Mr. Forth: The approximate numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions in my Department are: administrative assistant—770; administrative officer—1,200; typist—250; personal secretary—240; senior personal secretary—40; typing manager—27; executive officer—35. The additions are being paid (but not necessarily to all these grades in each location) in the Department's offices in central London, Croydon, Reigate, Eastcote, Reading, Watford, Kenley and Cambridge. The annual cost is approximately £1 million.

British Steel Corporation

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what studies he proposes or has made of the possibility of the separate flotation of the Scottish arm of the British Steel Corporation, in the event of its privatisation.

Mr. Atkins: A range of alternative options, including the separate sale of British Steel's Scottish operations, was considered before the Government announced, on 3 December last year, their decision to privatise British Steel as a single entity. The Government do not consider that there is any need for further studies of the issue.

Insider Trading

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will take steps to seek to amend the legislation on insider trading to make the offence consequent on acting upon rather than obtaining inside information.

Mr. Maude: There is no offence of obtaining inside information as such under the Company Securities (Insider Dealing) Act. All the offences under that Act depend on the prosecution showing that a person who has inside information has dealt on a recognised stock exchange or has done certain other acts.

Preferential Trade Arrangements

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to the answer of 29 July, *Official Report*, columns *653-61*, what are the criteria used

for the inclusion of a country in *(a)* Lomé convention preferential trading arrangements, *(b)* the European Community generalised scheme of preferences (GSP) list and *(c)* the European Community preferential trade agreements.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following criteria apply to the inclusion of countries in preferential trading arrangements:

Lomé convention

The Lomé convention is open to states whose economic structures and productive capacity are comparable with those of existing ACP member states. Membership is by approval of the EC/ACP Council of Ministers.

Generalised Scheme of Preferences

The European Community offers generalised preferences to all the member countries of the "Group of 77", which is made up of all those designated as developing countries by the United Nations, as well as to certain territories or countries dependent on Community countries such as Hong Kong, Macao and French Polynesia.

Other Preferential Trading Agreements

The EC has also agreed preferential trading arrangements with 13 Mediterranean partners during the course of the last 25 years, some of which are aimed at achieving a customs union between the contracting parties, and some at furthering the economic and social development of the Mediterranean partner as well as improving trade and other relations. They are the result of individual negotiation, and no general criteria apply.

Trade Deficit

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to which were the 15 countries with the highest balance of trade deficit in *(a)* terms of percentage of their gross domestic products, and *(b)* in pounds sterling, for each year since 1975.

Mr. Alan Clark: The analysis has been restricted to the members of OECD because a comparison involving all countries would involve disproportionate cost. Figures for all OECD countries up to 1986, the latest available on the balance of payments basis, are in the tables.

Balance of trade (BoP basis): OECD countries, in decreasing order of deficit—£ million

1975

	£ million
United Kingdom	−3,333
Spain	−3,294
Turkey	−1,336
Norway	−1,268
Greece	−1,053
Finland	−783
Portugal	−689
Austria	−626
Denmark	−559
Italy	−396
New Zealand	−323
Ireland	−251
Canada	−117
Iceland	−60
Belgium/Luxembourg	−18
Switzerland	1
Sweden	61
France	520
Netherlands	609
Australia	885
Japan	2,155
USA	4,662
Germany	7,356

1976

Spain	−4,127
United Kingdom	−3,929
USA	−3,919
France	−2,593
Italy	−2,093
Norway	−1,965
Turkey	−1,577
Denmark	−1,555
Austria	−1,393
Greece	−1,260
Portugal	−1,106
Sweden	−457
Finland	−409
Ireland	−377
Belgium/Luxembourg	−153
New Zealand	−117
Iceland	−14
Switzerland	217
Australia	811
Canada	1,041
Netherlands	1,104
Japan	5,048
Germany	8,476

1977

United States of America	−16,632
Spain	−3,634
Norway	−2,321
United Kingdom	−2,284
Austria	−2,245
Turkey	−1,969
Greece	−1,560
Denmark	−1,505
France	−1,444
Portugal	−1,374
Belgium/Luxembourg	−1,044
Ireland	−519
Sweden	−430
Iceland	−30
Switzerland	34
New Zealand	87
Finland	211
Italy	214
Netherlands	268
Australia	592
Canada	1,819
Japan	9,243
Germany	10,638

1978

United States of America	−16,683
Spain	−2,251
Austria	−1,636
Greece	−1,608
United Kingdom	−1,542
Portugal	−1,189
Denmark	−1,163
Turkey	−972
Belgium/Luxembourg	−935
Ireland	−613
Netherlands	−390
Norway	−260
Iceland	17
France	92
Switzerland	196
Australia	372
New Zealand	384
Finland	527
Sweden	802
Italy	1,719
Canada	2,182
Germany	12,232
Japan	12,284

	£ million
1979	
United States of America	−13,643
United Kingdom	−3,449
Spain	−2,634
Greece	−1,947
Austria	−1,835
France	−1,446
Belgium/Luxembourg	−1,362
Denmark	−1,323
Turkey	−1,261
Portugal	−1,169
Ireland	−1,159
Switzerland	−934
Sweden	−352
Netherlands	−270
Italy	−76
Iceland	12
Japan	30
Norway	112
Finland	130
New Zealand	418
Australia	1,391
Canada	1,971
Germany	7,224
1980	
United States of America	−9,796
Italy	−6,736
France	−6,317
Spain	−4,687
Turkey	−3,167
Austria	−2,657
Switzerland	−2,349
Portugal	−1,587
– Belgium/Luxembourg	−1,505
Greece	−1,485
Ireland	−1,023
Sweden	−995
Denmark	−698
Finland	−336
Japan	−248
Australia	−32
Netherlands	−26
Iceland	14
New Zealand	228
Norway	877
United Kingdom	1,361
Germany	3,365
Canada	3,445
1981	
United States of America	−14,087
France	−5,388
Italy	−5,145
Spain	−4,446
Portugal	−2,383
Austria	−2,048
Turkey	−1,905
Australia	−1,828
Greece	−1,799
Switzerland	−1,363
Ireland	−1,175
Belgium/Luxembourg	−1,065
Denmark	−331
Sweden	−86
Iceland	−13
Finland	59
New Zealand	445
Norway	1,573
Netherlands	2,569
Canada	3,239
United Kingdom	3,360
Germany	7,630
Japan	9,293
1982	
United States of America	−20,510
France	−6,358
Spain	−4,771
Italy	−4,421
Greece	−2,673
Austria	−1,788
Portugal	−1,523
Turkey	−1,520
Switzerland	−1,290
Belgium/Luxembourg	−1,248
Ireland	−729
Sweden	−494
Denmark	−279
Australia	−256
Iceland	−87
Finland	28
New Zealand	80
Norway	1,446
United Kingdom	2,331
Netherlands	3,382
Canada	8,580
Japan	9,387
Germany	13,899
1983	
United States of America	−43,312
Spain	−4,032
France	−3,209
Greece	−2,733
Switzerland	−2,158
Austria	−2,148
Turkey	−1,999
Italy	−1,066
Portugal	−1,040
United Kingdom	−835
Belgium/Luxembourg	−254
Ireland	−165
Australia	−43
Finland	−28
Iceland	12
Denmark	294
New Zealand	640
Sweden	1,019
Norway	3,009
Netherlands	3,377
Canada	9,882
Germany	13,750
Japan	19,600
1984	
United States of America	−82,729
United Kingdom	−4,384
Italy	−3,646
Greece	−2,656
Switzerland	−2,501
Austria	−2,321
Turkey	−2,247
France	−2,184
Spain	−2,003
Portugal	−290
Belgium/Luxembourg	−183
Australia	−74
Iceland	−8
Denmark	50
Ireland	171
Finland	951
New Zealand	964
Sweden	2,278
Norway	3,953
Netherlands	5,115
Canada	12,436
Germany	15,943
Japan	31,673
1985	
United States of America	−93,197
Italy	−4,140
Greece	−3,491
France	−2,555
Switzerland	−2,310

	£ million
Spain	−2,223
United Kingdom	−2,178
Austria	−1,942
Turkey	−1,915
Australia	−1,734
Portugal	−384
Denmark	−302
New Zealand	−62
Iceland	0
Belgium/Luxembourg	175
Ireland	450
Finland	569
Sweden	1,497
Norway	3,821
Netherlands	5,228
Canada	10.177
Germany	21,586
Japan	41,068
1986	
United States of America	−97,600
United Kingdom	−8,463
Spain	−3,287
Switzerland	−2,191
Austria	−2,145
Turkey	−2,072
Norway	−1,234
Australia	−792
France	−695
Denmark	−500
Portugal	−450
Greece	0
Iceland	66
New Zealand	328
Ireland	1,057
Finland	1,267
Belgium/Luxembourg	1,378
Italy	2,730
Sweden	3,342
Netherlands	5,389
Canada	5,517
Germany	37,400
Japan	61,561

Source OECD Annual National Accounts; IMF

Balance of trade (BoP basis):
OECD countries in order of decreasing deficit—as per cent. of GDP

	Per cent.
1975	
Greece	−11·2
Portugal	−10·4
Iceland	−10·2
Norway	−9·9
Turkey	−8·3
Spain	−7·0
Ireland	−6·6
Finland	−6·1
New Zealand	−5·4
Austria	−3·7
Denmark	−3·3
United Kingdom	−3·1
Italy	−0·4
Canada	−0·2
Belgium/Luxembourg	−0·1
Switzerland	0·0
Sweden	0·2
France	0·3
United States of America	0·7
Japan	1·0
Netherlands	1·6
Australia	2·0
Germany	3·9
1976	
Portugal	−12·9
Norway	−11·3
Greece	−10·1
Ireland	−8·1
Turkey	−6·9
Spain	−6·9
Denmark	−6·8
Austria	−6·2
United Kingdom	−3·1
Finland	−2·4
Italy	−1·7
Iceland	−1·6
New Zealand	−1·6
France	−1·3
Sweden	−1·1
United States of America	−0·4
Belgium/Luxembourg	−0·4
Switzerland	0·7
Canada	0·9
Australia	1·4
Japan	1·6
Netherlands	2·1
Germany	3·4
1977	
Portugal	−14·7
Norway	−11·3
Greece	−10·4
Ireland	−9·1
Austria	−8·1
Turkey	−7·2
Denmark	−5·6
Spain	−5·2
Iceland	−2·5
Belgium/Luxembourg	−2·2
United Kingdom	−1·6
United States of America	−1·5
Sweden	−0·9
France	−0·6
Switzerland	0·1
Italy	0·2
Netherlands	0·4
Australia	1·0
New Zealand	1·1
Finland	1·1
Canada	1·6
Japan	2·3
Germany	3·6
1978	
Portugal	−12·7
Greece	−9·8
Ireland	−9·1
Austria	−5·4
Denmark	−4·0
Turkey	−3·6
Spain	−2·9
Belgium/Luxembourg	−1·8
United States of America	−1.4
Norway	−1·2
United Kingdom	−0·9
Netherlands	−0·5
France	0·0
Switzerland	0·4
Australia	0·6
Italy	1·1
Iceland	1·3
Sweden	1·7
Canada	2·0
Japan	2·4
Finland	2·9
Germany	3·7
New Zealand	4·2
1979	
Ireland	−15·2
Portugal	−12·2
Greece	−10·7
Austria	5·7
Denmark	−4·3

	Per cent.
Turkey	−3·9
Spain	−2·9
Belgium/Luxembourg	−2·5
Switzerland	−2·1
United Kingdom	−1·8
USA	−1·2
Sweden	−0·7
France	−0·5
Netherlands	−0·4
Italy	0·0
Japan	0·0
Norway	0·5
Finland	0·6
Iceland	1·0
Canada	1·8
Germany	2·0
Australia	2·2
New Zealand	4·4
1980	
Portugal	−14·7
Turkey	−12·9
Ireland	−12·4
Greece	−8·6
Austria	−8·0
Switzerland	−5·4
Spain	−5·1
Italy	−3·4
Belgium/Luxembourg	−2·8
Denmark	−2·4
France	−2·2
Sweden	−1·9
Finland	−1·5
USA	−0·8
Japan	−0·1
Australia	0·0
Netherlands	0·0
United Kingdom	0·6
Germany	1·0
Iceland	1·0
New Zealand	2·4
Canada	3·0
Norway	3·5
1981	
Portugal	−19·8
Ireland	−13·0
Greece	−9·9
Turkey	−6·7
Austria	−6·3
Spain	−4·9
Switzerland	−2·9
Italy	−2·5
Belgium/Luxembourg	−2·1
Australia	−2·1
France	−1·9
Denmark	−1·2
United States of America	−0·9
Iceland	−0·8
Sweden	−0·2
Finland	0·2
United Kingdom	1·3
Japan	1·6
Canada	2·2
Germany	2·3
Netherlands	3·7
New Zealand	3·7
Norway	5·6
1982	
Greece	−12·1
Portugal	−11·5
Ireland	−6·7
Turkey	−5·0
Iceland	−4·9
Austria	−4·7
Spain	−4·7
Belgium/Luxembourg	−2·4

	Per cent.
Switzerland	−2·3
France	−2·0
Italy	−1·9
United States of America	−1·2
Denmark	−0·9
Sweden	−0·9
Australia	−0·3
Finland	0·1
New Zealand	0·6
United Kingdom	0·8
Japan	1·5
Germany	3·7
Netherlands	4·3
Norway	4·5
Canada	5·0
1983	
Greece	−11·9
Portugal	−7·6
Turkey	−5·9
Austria	−4·9
Spain	−3·9
Switzerland	−3·4
United States of America	−2·0
Ireland	−1·4
France	−0·9
Belgium/Luxembourg	−0·4
Italy	−0·4
United Kingdom	−0·3
Finland	−0·1
Australia	0·0
Iceland	0·7
Denmark	0·8
Sweden	1·7
Japan	2·5
Germany	3·2
Netherlands	3·8
New Zealand	4·2
Canada	4·6
Norway	8·3
1984	
Greece	−10·5
Turkey	−6·0
Austria	−4·9
Switzerland	−3·7
United States of America	−3·0
Portugal	−2·0
Spain	−1·7
United Kingdom	−1·4
Italy	−1·2
France	−0·6
Iceland	−0·4
Belgium/Luxembourg	−0·3
Australia	−0·1
Denmark	0·1
Ireland	1·3
Finland	2·5
Sweden	3·2
Japan	3·4
Germany	3·5
Canada	4·9
Netherlands	5·5
New Zealand	5·8
Norway	9·5
1985	
Greece	−13·5
Turkey	−4·7
Austria	−3·8
Switzerland	−3·2
United States of America	−3·1
Portugal	−2·4
Spain	−1·8
Australia	−1·4
Italy	−1·3
Denmark	−0·7
France	−0·6

	Per cent.
United Kingdom	−0·6
New Zealand	−0·4
Iceland	0·0
Belgium/Luxembourg	0·3
Finland	1·4
Sweden	1·9
Ireland	3·2
Canada	3·8
Japan	4·0
Germany	4·5
Netherlands	5·4
Norway	8·5
1986	
Turkey	−5·2
United States of America	−3·4
Austria	−3·4
Norway	−2·6
Switzerland	−2·4
Portugal	−2·3
United Kingdom	−2·3
Spain	−2·1
Denmark	−0·9
Australia	−0·7
France	−0·1
Greece	0·0
Italy	0·7
Belgium/Luxembourg	1·7
New Zealand	1·7
Canada	2·2
Iceland	2·5
Finland	2·6
Sweden	3·7
Netherlands	4·5
Japan	4·6
Germany	6·2
Ireland	6·3

Source: OECD Annual National Accounts; IMF.

Mail Services

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to the average percentage increase in the cost of mail services in *(a)* Belgium, *(b)* Denmark, *(c)* France, *(d)* the Federal Republic of Germany, *(e)* The Netherlands, *(f)* Norway, *(g)* Spain, *(h)* Sweden and *(i)* the United Kingdom for each year since 1974.

Mr. Forth: Details of United Kingdom letter prices for each year since 1974, with the percentage increase on the previous year, are shown in the table.

Information on postal tariff increases in the other countries named during the years in question on a comparable basis is not readily available to this Department or to the Post Office and could be obtained only at disproportionate expense.

United Kingdom letter prices 1974 to 1988

	Tariff		*Percentage increase (decrease) on previous year*	
	1st-class	*2nd-class*	*1st-class*	*2nd-class*
1974	4·5p	3·5p	—	—
1975 (2 increases)	7p	5·5p	55	57
	8·5p	6·5p	89	86
1976	8·5p	6·5p	—	—
1977	9p	7p	6	8
1978	9p	7p	—	—
1979	10p	8p	11	14
1980	12p	10p	20	25
1981	14p	11·5p	17	15
1982	15·5p	12·5p	11	9
1983	16p	12·5p	3	—
1984	17p	13p	6	4
1985	17p	12p	—	(8)
1986	18p	13p	6	8
1987	18p	13p	—	—
1988	19p	14p	6	8

Telephone Charges

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to the average increase in telephone charges to *(a)* domestic and *(b)* commercial consumers in (i) Belgium, (ii) Denmark, (iii) France, (iv) the Federal Republic of Germany, (v) The Netherlands, (vi) Norway, (vii) Spain, (viii) Sweden and (ix) the United Kingdom for each year since 1974 in percentage terms.

Mr. Forth: An indication of the movement in United Kingdom domestic telephone charges may be obtained from the telephone component in the retail prices index (RPI) as follows:

Year	*Average index*	*Percentage increase*
1974	104·8	
1975	147·9	41·1
1976	193·9	31·1
1977	[1]179·1	−7·6
1978	191·7	7·0
1979	194·1	1·3
1980	248·9	28·2
1981	307·2	23·4
1982	342·5	11·5
1983	338·5	−1·2
1984	349·6	3·3
1985	372·6	6·6
1986	392·5	5·3
1987	401·0	2·2

[1] Rebate give to customers.

An index for commercial customers may be calculated by removing from British Telecom's telecommunications charges index those items which are included in the RPI. In addition to the telephone, this index includes charges for telex, leased lines and customer premises equipment, as follows:

Year[3]	[2]Average index	Percentage increase
1975	100	
1976	164·8	64·8
1977	189·1	14·7
1978	186·5	−1·4
1979	185·9	−0·3
1980	189·2	1·8
1981	219·6	16·1
1982	261·9	19·3
1983	268·4	2·5
1984	270·5	0·8
1985	284·6	5·2
1986	303·9	6·8
1987	309·3	1·8

[2] Source British Telecom.
[3] Year ending March.

Information on increases in telephone charges in other countries named during the years in question on a comparable basis is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate expense.

Exports

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list the goods exported by or from the United Kingdom to *(a)* Jamaica, *(b)* the Bahamas, *(c)* Grenada and *(d)* Trinidad and Tobago, for each year since 1976;

(2) what in 1988 moneys was the value of exports from Britain to *(a)* Jamaica, *(b)* the Bahamas, *(c)* Grenada and *(d)* Trinidad and Tobago, for each year since 1976.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information on the value of goods at 1988 prices for the years to 1987 is not available. The tables show the value of goods exported at standard international trade classification section level. Further breakdown can be obtained from the annual volumes of the *Overseas Trade Statistics*, copies of which can be found in the Library.

United Kingdom exports 1976 to 1987

£ million

SITC section	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Jamaica												
Food (0)	3·0	1·6	3·1	2·1	1·4	3·4	3·3	4·0	2·3	2·6	1·7	2·4
Beverages and tobacco (1)	0·3	0·1	0·3	0·3	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·3	0·2	0·4	0·3	0·3
Crude materials (2)	0·4	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·2	0·3	0·5	0·2	0·4	0·4	0·6	0·5
Mineral fuels (3)	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·4	0·5	0·3	0·4	0·3	0·2	0·3	0·3
Animal and vegetable fats (4)	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Chemicals (5)	6·6	7·5	7·3	5·4	5·0	6·1	8·2	8·5	7·9	7·1	7·1	8·3
Manufactured goods by materials (6)	12·5	10·7	14·2	11·6	7·9	11·0	13·0	12·3	13·3	11·8	9·1	11·0
Machinery and transport equipment (7)	19·1	11·8	14·8	15·6	11·1	15·5	20·5	79·8	15·7	13·0	14·3	19·9
Miscellaneous manufactured articles (8)	5·5	3·6	4·1	4·4	2·9	2·8	6·5	7·1	4·6	5·2	6·0	7·8
Commodities and transactions nes (9)	2·8	4·1	4·1	4·7	4·3	2·8	3·3	3·6	3·2	3·5	4·0	4·1
Bahamas												
Food (0)	1·6	1·9	1·7	1·8	2·0	1·0	1·3	1·7	1·7	2·5	3·2	3·9
Beverages and tobacco (1)	1·0	1·2	1·5	1·4	1·4	1·2	1·6	1·6	1·7	2·3	1·8	2·0
Crude materials (2)	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·1	0·4	0·3
Mineral fuels (3)	0·0	12·5	89·3	57·8	66·6	160·7	9·9	0·0	206·0	48·9	71·0	6·7
Animal and vegetable fats (4)	0·0	—	—	0·0	—	—	—	0·0	0·0	—	0·0	—
Chemicals (5)	0·7	1·0	1·1	1·2	1·1	1·1	1·5	2·0	2·1	2·3	2·3	2·6
Manufactured goods by materials (6)	1·0	1·1	1·2	1·5	1·4	1·9	1·3	1·4	1·7	3·2	2·3	2·3
Machinery and transport equipment (7)	1·7	2·0	6·9	13·6	2·3	2·9	7·8	7·5	2·9	9·4	10·0	4·8
Miscellaneous manufactured articles (8)	1·1	1·5	1·7	1·6	1·6	1·6	1·6	2·4	3·2	4·0	3·7	3·7
Commodities and transactions nes (9)	0·6	0·9	0·8	1·1	1·0	0·9	1·4	1·2	1·7	1·3	1·0	1·0
Grenada												
Food (0)	0·6	0·8	0·6	0·6	0·6	0·6	0·8	0·7	1·2	1·6	1·8	2·2
Beverages and tobacco (1)	0·5	0·7	0·8	0·6	0·4	0·2	0·4	0·3	0·5	0·8	0·8	0·6
Crude materials (2)	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·1
Mineral fuels (3)	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·0	0·1	0·0	0·0
Animal and vegetable fats (4)	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	—	0·0	0·0	0·0	—	0·0
Chemicals (5)	0·3	0·4	0·4	0·2	0·3	0·3	0·2	0·4	0·4	0·6	0·7	0·6
Manufactured goods by materials (6)	0·5	0·6	0·6	0·7	0·6	0·5	0·5	1·1	1·7	1·4	1·3	1·1
Machinery and transport equipment (7)	0·4	1·0	0·8	1·2	0·8	1·7	1·0	4·0	3·3	2·9	2·6	2·8
Miscellaneous manufactured articles (8)	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·1	0·2	0·3	0·6	0·8	0·6	0·8
Commodities and transactions nes (9)	0·3	0·6	0·6	0·5	0·5	0·4	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·6	0·8	0·6
Trinidad and Tobago												
Food (0)	3·9	5·6	6·3	7·7	7·2	9·1	9·7	9·4	11·1	7·4	4·9	4·8
Beverages and tobacco (1)	2·2	4·1	5·2	6·5	7·6	6·1	10·7	12·6	5·6	2·0	1·4	1·3
Crude materials (2)	0·6	0·6	0·7	0·5	0·5	0·4	0·5	0·5	0·6	0·7	0·8	0·4
Mineral fuels (3)	0·4	0·6	0·7	0·9	0·9	1·0	4·0	1·4	1·6	0·8	1·0	0·3
Animal and vegetable fats (4)	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·0	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·0
Chemicals (5)	10·4	12·9	14·4	12·6	14·8	14·4	19·8	19·7	19·1	19·1	21·3	14·2
Manufactured goods by materials (6)	18·7	22·2	23·7	21·2	22·6	26·0	44·6	33·6	26·5	23·5	17·4	13·4
Machinery and transport equipment (7)	31·1	43·1	50·1	44·9	54·9	53·5	55·8	57·5	34·4	25·8	20·2	14·7
Miscellaneous manufactured articles (8)	5·0	6·2	7·4	7·9	9·9	9·1	10·8	11·0	12·5	12·3	10·4	6·3
Commodities and transactions nes (9)	1·6	2·0	2·0	2·2	2·0	1·7	2·4	3·2	2·1	2·2	1·6	1·5

Note: 1987 figures are provisional.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the goods and services exported from the United Kingdom for each year since 1976 to *(a)* Brazil, *(b)* Chile, *(c)* Colombia, *(d)* Mexico, *(e)* Paraguay, *(f)* Peru, *(g)* Venezuela and *(h)* Uruguay.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information on the value of services exported to the individual countries is not available. The value of goods listed at the standard international trade classification section level is given in the following tables. Further detail can be obtained from the annual editions of the *Overseas Trade Statistics*, copies of which are available in the Library.

United Kingdom exports of goods 1976-1987

£ million

SITC section	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Brazil												
Food (0)	1·2	7·9	6·9	4·6	6·8	3·0	5·0	5·1	1·2	1·5	26·5	16·8
Beverages & tobacco (1)	4·4	2·8	5·4	4·6	4·4	3·9	3·3	4·9	7·8	8·6	13·3	11·5
Crude materials (2)	0·9	1·2	3·0	0·5	0·7	0·5	0·6	0·6	1·6	2·2	4·7	2·8
Mineral fuels (3)	2·2	2·9	3·8	2·8	3·1	2·4	1·4	5·8	2·7	4·7	2·4	1·3
Animal & vegetable fats (4)	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·2	0·1
Chemicals (5)	48·2	42·7	35·6	30·9	36·0	30·9	34·2	30·2	38·2	50·6	65·3	75·3
Manufactured goods by materials (6)	23·7	30·4	42·8	36·3	31·2	16·6	18·5	14·2	19·6	16·0	21·3	21·6
Machinery & transport equipment (7)	84·0	152·8	113·2	189·6	120·6	106·2	80·3	77·7	142·4	94·6	131·4	184·6
Miscellaneous manfactured articles (8)	6·5	9·5	8·4	13·3	14·9	8·6	12·7	15·7	14·3	15·2	16·4	16·2
Commodities & transactions nes (9)	2·8	5·3	2·0	3·1	3·0	2·2	2·6	4·3	10·7	18·0	18·3	17·9
Chile												
Food (0)	0·2	0·8	1·1	0·9	1·2	0·9	1·6	0·3	2·2	0·5	0·4	2·3
Beverages & tobacco (1)	0·9	2·1	3·2	5·9	6·1	10·7	6·8	5·9	5·8	4·1	6·1	7·1
Crude materials (2)	0·3	0·3	0·4	0·6	1·0	0·7	0·6	0·6	0·9	1·2	0·7	0·9
Mineral fuels (3)	0·1	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·4	0·3	0·4	0·3	0·6	0·4	0·6	0·5
Animal & vegetable fats (4)	0·0	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·1	0·1
Chemicals (5)	4·1	5·7	6·6	7·3	7·2	11·1	10·5	11·7	13·7	15·8	15·4	20·0
Manufactured goods by materials (6)	2·3	4·1	5·1	6·8	8·7	9·9	5·5	4·2	7·5	11·4	9·7	12·5
Machinery & transport equipment (7)	25·7	23·8	15·5	20·6	27·5	21·9	23·5	16·0	34·7	33·2	29·1	54·2
Miscellaneous manfactured articles (8)	1·3	1·8	2·4	2·5	2·9	5·9	3·8	2·8	4·4	5·5	4·1	4·8
Commodities & transactions nes (9)	1·4	0·5	3·0	0·7	0·8	0·9	4·1	1·7	5·0	1·7	1·3	3·4
Colombia												
Food (0)	0·0	0·3	0·2	0·1	0·5	0·5	0·2	0·6	0·4	1·1	0·7	0·2
Beverages & tobacco (1)	1·9	2·6	3·8	4·5	5·4	4·2	5·6	5·6	1·8	1·7	2·3	3·2
Crude materials (2)	0·4	0·5	0·4	0·3	0·3	0·2	0·6	0·6	0·9	0·9	0·8	0·7
Mineral fuels (3)	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·2	0·1	0·2	0·2	12·1	0·2	0·2
Animal & vegetable fats (4)	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·0	0·1
Chemicals (5)	6·0	8·3	8·9	8·5	7·8	10·5	10·8	13·4	17·3	20·2	13·2	18·1
Manufactured goods by materials (6)	2·7	6·7	5·8	8·2	3·9	6·6	7·2	11·0	6·2	7·4	6·3	7·2
Machinery & transport equipment (7)	14·9	20·5	28·2	26·1	21·0	18·6	18·7	14·9	11·7	29·1	29·7	24·8
Miscellaneous manufactured articles (8)	2·6	2·3	2·5	3·8	2·2	3·8	6·5	4·1	4·3	9·2	4·1	6·0
Commodities and transactions nes (9)	0·2	0·5	0·8	0·6	0·8	0·6	0·6	0·7	0·6	0·9	0·7	0·9
Mexico												
Food (0)	0·1	0·1	0·3	1·5	7·4	0·4	0·3	0·5	0·7	1·1	2·1	2·7
Beverages & tobacco (1)	3·8	3·5	4·2	6·6	9·6	8·7	3·6	0·5	1·2	2·1	3·	5·9
Crude materials (2)	0·4	0·3	2·3	0·7	0·2	0·5	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·5	0·	0·5
Mineral fuels (3)	0·0	0·1	0·8	2·1	2·0	0·2	0·2	0·1	0·3	0·2	2·4	2·0
Animal & vegetable fats (4)	0·1	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	—
Chemicals (5)	9·7	12·4	11·1	12·7	17·1	20·1	15·9	16·1	21·6	31·5	23·0	24·2
Manufactured goods by materials (6)	9·4	5·7	6·5	16·0	16·6	22·7	14·3	4·3	7·9	9·4	10·1	8·8
Machinery & transport equipment (7)	91·3	52·7	75·7	86·9	121·1	143·9	117·3	58·8	101·9	148·5	113·2	146·4
Miscellaneous manufactured artiles (8)	4·6	3·6	6·9	7·5	13·4	12·6	10·5	14·7	14·2	9·5	7·0	7·9
Commodities & transactions nes (9)	0·3	0·5	0·9	0·8	0·8	0·7	0·6	0·5	2·2	0·6	0·6	0·6
Paraguay												

SITC section	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Food (0)	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·0	0·1	0·1	0·3	0·1
Beverages and tobacco (1)	3·7	5·7	7·9	8·8	9·3	15·3	9·5	5·0	11·4	11·2	20·8	18·6
Crude materials (2)	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Mineral fuels (3)	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·2	0·4
Animal and vegetable fats (4)	0·0	0·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Chemicals (5)	0·5	0·5	0·6	0·7	0·9	0·9	0·8	0·5	0·8	1·5	1·2	1·3
Manufactured goods by materials (6)	0·8	0·7	0·8	1·1	1·0	0·7	3·8	2·9	0·6	0·8	5·1	1·4
Machinery and transport equipment (7)	0·3	0·8	1·7	1·4	1·1	0·9	2·2	6·1	3·4	1·1	2·4	1·7
Miscellaneous manufactured articles (8)	0·1	0·5	0·3	0·4	0·7	0·2	0·3	0·5	0·2	0·4	0·9	1·7
Commodities and transactions nes (9)	0·0	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·2	0·3	0·4	0·1	0·2
Peru												
Food (0)	0·1	0·2	0·1	0·1	2·9	0·9	1·7	2·5	1·2	3·7	0·7	2·8
Beverages and tobacco (1)	0·1	0·2	0·3	0·5	1·5	2·3	2·3	1·9	1·9	1·3	1·7	0·3
Crude materials (2)	0·3	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·3	0·1	0·3	0·4	0·2	0·4	0·2	0·9
Mineral fuels (3)	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·2	0·3	0·2	0·3	0·2	0·4	0·5	0·4	0·4
Animal and vegetable fats (4)	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·1
Chemicals (5)	5·7	4·8	4·3	4·4	6·8	8·4	7·0	8·1	7·6	10·9	14·2	15·1
Manufactured goods by materials (6)	4·9	3·1	2·3	2·5	4·9	5·5	2·9	4·1	3·2	3·3	3·1	3·9
Machinery and transport equipment (7)	21·6	23·2	16·7	15·2	25·1	29·5	22·3	11·5	15·8	18·3	24·2	23·1
Miscellaneous manufactured articles (8)	2·6	3·4	0·7	0·8	4·0	3·0	2·2	4·0	3·3	1·8	3·3	2·3
Commodities and transactions nes (9)	0·2	0·3	0·5	0·2	0·8	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3
Venezuela												
Food (0)	4·9	3·5	2·4	3·0	2·1	8·8	8·2	10·3	9·2	6·8	5·4	6·3
Beverages and tobacco (1)	18·8	30·0	42·3	30·2	45·3	38·9	40·0	22·8	20·6	22·6	25·6	23·3
Crude materials (2)	1·1	1·9	1·3	0·9	0·9	1·7	1·1	1·8	3·4	2·5	2·7	4·7
Mineral fuels (3)	0·3	13·5	1·4	1·2	1·5	1·0	1·2	0·6	4·9	2·7	1·5	2·4
Animal and vegetable fats (4)	0·1	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·0
Chemicals (5)	17·1	20·2	22·5	17·5	17·7	15·9	26·5	23·6	32·0	36·4	36·3	48·0
Manufactured goods by materials (6)	13·0	22·7	31·2	33·3	15·9	15·3	27·2	8·5	6·9	14·7	12·8	11·9
Machinery and transport equipment (7)	66·4	76·8	74·7	43·8	39·7	34·9	35·1	17·0	21·2	73·5	77·5	55·0
Miscellaneous manufactured articles (8)	6·5	8·2	8·8	7·0	5·4	6·8	9·0	3·3	2·9	5·5	5·4	4·8
Commodities and transactions nes (9)	0·4	3·7	4·3	0·7	2·9	3·0	0·4	0·4	0·3	0·6	2·8	1·3
Uruguay												
Food (0)	0·1	0·2	0·2	0·4	0·5	0·4	0·1	0·1	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·3
Beverages and tobacco (1)	0·7	0·8	1·2	2·7	3·0	3·2	2·4	2·0	3·4	2·8	5·2	6·6
Crude materials (2)	0·0	0·4	0·1	0·1	0·2	0·4	0·0	0·1	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·1
Mineral fuels (3)	0·0	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·0	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1
Animal and vegetable fats (4)	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Chemicals (5)	2·3	2·5	3·4	3·8	3·8	3·2	2·8	3·3	3·7	4·9	5·2	7·0
Manufactured goods by materials (6)	1·1	2·4	1·7	2·3	2·9	1·9	2·1	0·9	1·6	1·5	6·6	4·6
Machinery and transport equipment (7)	5·7	12·4	9·9	14·4	13·3	9·6	5·4	3·3	4·0	4·7	5·6	5·6
Miscellaneous manufactured articles (8)	0·3	0·3	0·7	0·8	2·5	1·1	0·8	0·6	0·7	1·0	1·1	1·9
Commodities and transactions nes (9)	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·4	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·2	0·3

Note: 1987 figures are provisional.

Trade Missions

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many trade missions the Latin America Trade Advisory Group supported to *(a)* Mexico, *(b)* Bolivia, *(c)* Venezuela, *(d)* Panama and *(e)* Nicaragua, for each year since 1976.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Latin American Trade Advisory Group (LATAG) started sponsoring missions to Latin America in 1985. Since then there have been eight DTI-supported LATAG missions to the area, two visitied Venezuela in 1985 and 1986 and one Panama in March this year. The other Latin American countries visited by LATAG missions are Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Scotch Whisky (Korea)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent representations he has made to the Government of the Republic of Korea to permit the sale of bottled-at-origin Scotch whisky in Korea.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Korean authorities have undertaken to liberalise the market for bottled-in-Scotland Scotch whisky on 1 July 1989. We welcome this undertaking, but continue to press, both bilaterally and through the European Community, for firm details of the proposed measures. We have made our position clear to the authorities in Seoul, and the issue will be high on the agenda for forthcoming United Kingdom economic policy talks.

British Shipbuilders

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the chairman of British Shipbuilders; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Newton: I last met the chairman of British Shipbuilders on 17 October. We discussed a range of issues of current interest to the corporation, including the position on the disposal of its subsidiary companies.

Underwriting Agency Agreements

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what communications he has had with the council of Lloyd's following its consideration of the working group on underwriting agency agreements; and if he will place copies of the relevant correspondence in the Library.

Mr. Maude: The chairman of Lloyd's has kept my Department in close touch with the views of the council of Lloyd's on the subjects considered in the working group report on underwriting agency agreements. I understand that the council of Lloyd's will soon be taking decisions on these matters following extensive consultation with the members of Lloyd's and the Lloyd's community. It is not the practice to make public correspondence between Lloyd's and the Department. Parliament is kept informed on Lloyd's progress in implementing the recommendations of the committee of inquiry into regulatory arrrangements at Lloyd's—the Neill report—by the placing in the Library of regular memoranda from the chairman of Lloyd's.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Local Pay Additions

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide the latest available figures for Her Majesty's Customs and Excise for the *(a)* numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions, by grade, *(b)* location of those offices awarding local pay additions and *(c)* annual cost.

Mr. Lilley: Details of the number, grade and location of staff in Her Majesty's Customs and Excise who are at present in receipt of a local pay addition are as follows:

Number of staff	*Grade*	*Location of offices*
584	Higher Executive Officer	Central London, Aylesbury, Balham, Enfield, Finchley, Harlow, Kingston, Letchworth, Luton, Maidenhead, Reading, Romford, Southall, Stratford, Wembley, Woking.
482	Executive Officer	Central London, Aylesbury, Balham, Croydon, Enfield, Finchley, Kingston, Maidenhead, Reigate, Romford, Southall, Stratford, Wembley, Woking.
63	Administrative Officer	Aylesbury, Kingston, Luton, Reading, Reigate, Stansted, Stratford, Woking.
217	Administrative Assistant	Central London, Aylesbury, Balham, Bexley, Croydon, Enfield, Finchley, Greenwich, Harlow, Hayes, Hounslow, Kingston, Luton, Maidenhead, Orpington, Reading, Reigate, Southall, Stansted, Stratford, Wandsworth, Wembley, Woking.
133·5	Typing grades[1]	Central London, Heathrow, Stratford.

[1] Typist, personal secretary and typing manager.

The overall cost in a full year is estimated at about £800,000.

Monetary Conditions

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to the reply of 29 July, *Official Report*, column *749*, he will list those factors which guide his continuous and comprehensive assessment of monetary conditions.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to recent financial statement and Budget reports, where the principles underlying the Government's monetary policy are set out each year in chapter 2, and also to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech to the Lombard Association in April 1986.

Conservative Party Conference

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many officials from his Department were on official duties in Brighton on the occasion of the 1988 Conservative party conference; and what was the total cost to public funds.

Mr. Brooke: Six officials from my Department were present in Brighton on various occasions during the 1988 Conservative party conference to assist Treasury Ministers in their conduct of departmental business. Minor travelling costs were incurred.

European Community (United Kingdom Contributions)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the table showing the net contribution made by the United Kingdom to the European Economic Community in each of the calendar years since 1973; and what is his estimate for 1988 and 1989, including the special payment for excess spending to be paid in 1988.

Mr. Brooke: The information requested is set out in the table. An estimate of the United Kingdom's net contribution in 1988 will be contained in the statement on

the 1988 Community budget to be published shortly after the autumn statement. It is not the Government's practice to publish calendar year forecasts for future years.

Year	*Net contribution to European Community budget*
1973	102
1974	29
1975	−56
1976	167
1977	369
1978	822
1979	947
1980	706
1981	397
1982	606
1983	647
1984	656
1985	1,808
1986	572
1987	1,713

Value Added Tax

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average payment of value added tax made by a couple with two children now and in 1979.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 19 October 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary gave to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 17 May at column *423*.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Development Natural Resources Institute

87. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the Overseas Development Natural Resources Institute to move to its new location at Chatham.

Mr. Chris Patten: The relocation of the Overseas Development Natural Resources Institute to its new site at Chatham maritime began on 1 August 1988. Phase 1 of the move was completed in late September and almost 60 per cent. of the institute staff are now operational at Chatham. Relocation of the remainder will be phased over the next year and is expected to be complete by the end of 1989.

EC Aid Budget

88. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the European Community's aid budget is funded by him in the current financial year, and what trend that budget shows in real terms.

Mr. Chris Patten: We contribute 16·58 per cent. of the sixth European development fund, and paid 21·3 per cent. of aid financed from the Community budget in 1987, which is attributed to the British aid programme. I cannot yet give later figures.

The present EDF more than maintains the real value of its predecessor. We also judge that there was a slight real increase in budget-financed aid between 1985 and 1987.

Aga Khan Foundation

89. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what purpose he has signed an accord with the Aga Khan Foundation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The accord reflects the successful collaboration between the Aga Khan Foundation (UK) and the Overseas Development Administration and confirms our joint intention to consolidate that partnership in further development projects.

Since 1983, we have collaborated in five projects, the largest of which is the rural support programme for the Chitral district in the North West Frontier province of Pakistan to which the ODA will contribute a grant of £3·7 million. Following signature of the accord in May, three further joint-funded projects have been approved.

Water and Sewerage Projects

90. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the water supply and sewerage projects being funded by him in developing countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Under bilateral aid arrangements the Overseas Development Administration currently supports 88 water supply and sewerage projects in developing countries at a total cost of approximately £184 million.

Following is the information:

List of water and sewerage projects as at October 1988

	£'000s	£'000s
AFRICA		
1. *Liberia*		556
Rural water supplies		
2. *Mozambique*		80
Assistance to UDAAS in water sector training		
3. *Morocco*		78
Specialist courses		
4. *Lesotho*		4,366
(a) Village water supply	1,475	
(b) Rural sanitation	405	
(c) Maseru sewerage	444	
(d) Maseru urban sanitation	725	
(e) Highland water scheme	979	
(f) Hydro data processing	127	
(g) Senior engineer (sewage)	112	
(h) Senior water engineer	99	
5. *Botswana*		241
(a) Senior water engineer	46	
(b) Hydrogeologist	82	
(c) Hydrogeologist	113	
6. *Swaziland*		609
(a) Rural water III	550	
(b) Ezulwini valley study	59	
7. *Zambia*		804
(a) Senior lecturer, water engineering university of Zambia	204	
(b) Provincial water engineers	600	
8. *Malawi*		385
(a) Lilongwe water board	195	
(b) Manpower assistance Blantyre water board	190	

	£'000s	£'000s
9. *Zaire*		68
(a) Installation of Handpumps	25	
(b) Water Leakage Study	43	
10. *Zimbabwe*		848
(a) Nyanyadzi Irrigation Scheme	280	
(b) Feasibility Study for Mayfair and Claw Dams	73	
(c) Two Engineers for MEWRD	240	
(d) Self Help Sanitation and Water Supply Projects	141	
(e) Mechanical Engineer for MEWRD	114	
11. *Ethiopia*		1,250
Welo Well Rehabilitation		
12. *Somalia*		717
(a) Well Rehabilitation	510	
(b) Water Hydrometry	207	
13. *Kenya*		449
(a) Tiwi Aquifer	340	
(b) Manpower development and Training in Sanitation	109	
14. *Tanzania*		410
(a) Dar-es-Salaam Sewerage	60	
(b) Mbeya Hospital Sewerage	350	
15. *Egypt*		59,000
Great Cairo Waste water Scheme		
16. *Ghana*		3,294
Kumasi Water Supply Rehabilitation		
17. *Mauritius*		806
(a) Central Water Authority Leak Detection Institutional Review	403	
(b) Leak Detection Study	403	
18. *Sudan*		66
Blue Nile Health Project		
19. *Seychelles*		122
Mahe Water Supply Project		
TOTAL		74,149
AMERICA		
1. *Brazil*		90
(a) River pollution project		
2. *Peru*		90
Potopac—Village water supply		
3. *Mexico*		20
Leakage control problems following earthquake		
4. *Anguilla*		100
Water engineer water and electricity department		
5. *British Virgin Islands*		344
Road town sewer		
6. *Grenada*		561
(a) Western main road pipes	168	
(b) Grand Roy water supply	193	
(c) Hydrologist and water distribution expert	100	
(d) Local water supply and sanitation initiatives	100	
7. *Montserrat*		570
(a) Water supply reticulation	385	
(b) Drain improvements	185	
8. *St. Kitts and Nevis*		380
(a) Charlestown water mains	70	
(b) Nevis water development phase II	310	
9. *St. Lucia*		466
(a) Castries urban drainage	275	
(b) Integrated water development phase III	191	
10. *Turks and Caicos Islands*		222
Water supply distribution		
TOTAL		2,843
ASIA		
1. *Philippines*		4,510
Mini Hydro and Electrification Project		
2. *China*		1,205
(a) Urban Waste Disposal Studies for Tianjin	103	
(b) Water Management Study Shanghai	300	
(c) Chongqing Water Quality Monitoring Study	117	
(d) Water Management Training Beijing	75	
(e) Marine Disposal of Wastewater and Sludge Tianjin	10	
(f) Tianjin Water Optimisation Consultancy	200	
(g) Qing He Pollution Control Project, Beijing	250	
(h) Hydrogeological Modelling Consultancy Beijing	100	
(i) Industrial Effluent and Water use in Textile and Paper Industry Beijing	50	
3. *Nepal*		4,944
Eastern Region Water Supply Project		
4. *Pakistan*		22,100
(a) Lahore Water Sewerage Project	16,400	
(b) Karachi Water and Sewerage Project	5,700	
5. *India*		5,003
(a) Assistance to the Central Board for the Prevention and Control of Water Pollution	410	
(b) Environmental Improvements of Waterways in Madras	800	
(c) Assistance to Ganga Pollution Control Plan	543	
(d) Christian Aid Tube Well Projects	250	
(e) Contribution to UNICEF Water and Sanitation Programme for India	3,000	
6. *Thailand*		4,682
(a) Mekong Basin Water Balance Study Phase III	74	
(b) Sukhothai Groundwater Project	1,330	
(c) Storm Water Project	568	
(d) Formation of a Dam Panel	210	
(e) Mini-Hydro Project	2,500	
7. *Malaysia*		62,619
(a) Rural Water Supply Project	59,000	
(b) Liwagu Hydro-Power Study (Phases 1 and 2)	250	
(c) Ulu Jelai Hydro-Power Study	1,020	

	£'000s	£'000s
(d) Sungei Ahning Dam	2,349	
TOTAL		105,129
EUROPE		
1. *Turkey*		802
(a) Water Quality Studies Project	304	
(b) Chekezkoy Industrial Waste Water	498	
2. *Cyprus* 1987 Southern Conveyor		807
TOTAL		1,609
OCEANIA		
1. *Solomon Is Vanuatu* Water Leakage Control Project		200
2. *Fiji* Groundwater Resource and Development Unit		450
TOTAL		650
TOTAL—All developing countries		184,314

Sub-Saharan Africa

91. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total British bilateral aid given to the whole of sub-Saharan Africa in 1979, and in the latest year for which figures are available, in constant prices.

Mr. Chris Patten: British bilateral aid to sub-Saharan Africa was £386 million in 1979 and £284 million in 1987 in constant 1987 prices. On the same basis British aid to sub-Saharan Africa channelled through multilateral institutions rose from £161 million in 1980 to £209 million in 1986.

101. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received regarding aid to sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have frequent discussions with Ministers and senior officials from sub-Saharan African countries. Much of my mail bag is concerned with this subject.

113. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total British bilateral aid given to the whole of sub-Saharan Africa in 1979, and in the latest year for which figures are available, in constant prices.

Mr. Chris Patten: British bilateral aid to sub-Saharan Africa was £386 million in 1979 and £284 million in 1987 in constant 1987 prices. On the same basis British aid to sub-Saharan Africa channelled through multilateral institutions rose from £161 million in 1980 to £209 million in 1986.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total United Kingdom bilateral aid given to the whole of sub-Saharan Africa in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available, in constant prices.

Mr. Chris Patten: British bilateral aid to sub-Saharan Africa was £386 million in 1979 and £284 million in 1987 in constant 1987 prices. On the same basis British aid to sub-Saharan Africa channelled through multilateral institutions rose from £161 million in 1980 to £209 million in 1986.

Apartheid

92. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the United Kingdom contribution to the European Community's special programme for the victims of apartheid, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Chris Patten: Our share of expenditure under this special programme was £1·95 million in 1987, and our share of commitments was £2·8 million.

Malawi

93. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, when he next intends to make an official visit to Malawi.

Mr. Chris Patten: I hope to visit Malawi in the first half of next year.

Self-reliance

94. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his Department does to encourage self-reliance in those areas and among those peoples in receipt of aid.

Mr. Chris Patten: The basic purpose of the aid programme is to promote sustainable economic and social progress in developing countries. Self-reliance is developed particularly through our technical co-operation programmes, including the training of developing country personnel, and through support to countries undergoing agreed structural adjustment programmes designed to increase exports and develop the private sector.

Afghanistan

95. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he is currently giving to Afghan refugees; and how he proposes to aid their rehabilitation in Afghanistan.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have now fully committed the £10 million which was pledged for Afghan refugees earlier this year. These funds have been channelled through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee for the Red Cross, UNICEF and British voluntary agencies, including Afghan Aid.

We are continuing to keep in close contact with the United Nations special co-ordinator for Afghanistan, as he draws up his plans for the relief and resettlement of the refugees. In view of the importance of agricultural rehabilitation in this process, I have recently agreed to provide £150,000 to assist the work of the agricultural survey of Afghanistan.

Third World (Private Aid)

96. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he

has about the size of private aid flows to the Third world from other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, in relation to those from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chris Patten: Comparative figures for grants to developing countries by voluntary agencies, which are the only type of net private aid flow recorded, are available only for the 18 member countries of the OECD's development assistance committee and, most recently, for 1986.

Following is the information:

Voluntary Grants

	£ million
Australia	27
Austria	13
Belgium	16
Canada	120
Denmark	8
Finland	19
France	57
Germany	372
Ireland	14
Italy	8
Japan	56
Netherlands	95
New Zealand	5
Norway	39
Sweden	58
Switzerland	45
United States of America	1,196

In the same year the figure for grants from British voluntary agencies was £119 million, while total net private flows from the United Kingdom to developing countries stood at £2,916 million.

English Language Teachers

97. **Mr. Rhodes James:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many English language teachers are supported under his Department's overseas aid budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: At 31 December 1987 the Overseas Development Administration was supporting 137 key English language teachers-advisers and 41 English language lecturers in some 45 countries at a cost of £5·5 million in the calendar year 1987.

OECD

98. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the development assistance committee of the Organisation for Economic co-operation and Development will next review the development assistance efforts and policies of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Chris Patten: The next review is on 1 December 1988.

Aid (Priorities)

99. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last reviewed Her Majesty's Government's priorities for granting aid assistance.

Mr. Chris Patten: Priorities for granting aid assistance are kept under continuous review.

Spain and Portugal

100. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the impact on the European Community's aid programme of the accession of Spain and Portugal.

Mr. Chris Patten: Spain and Portugal are making a valuable contribution to the consideration of European Community aid policies, and to proposals for specific projects.

Sri Lanka

102. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last paid an official visit to Sri Lanka.

Mr. Chris Patten: I visited Sri Lanka between 16 and 19 March of this year.

Kampuchea

103. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives are being considered by Her Majesty's Government in respect of a revival of the Mekong river project; and what consideration has been given to the use of this scheme as a means of international support to the current development needs of Kampuchea.

Mr. Chris Patten: As I told the hon. Member on 13 July, at column *206*, we expect to spend about £100,000 in the current financial year in support of two projects managed by the interim Mekong committee. We hope that in the longer term the full committee will be reconstituted but believe it would be premature to consider now any initiatives to revive proposals for major projects to develop the Mekong river.

Nicaragua

104. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the level of aid to Nicaragua provided by the Government of Italy; if he will increase the United Kingdom's aid to Nicaragua to that figure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The latest figures we have from the development assistance committee are those for 1986. They show that bilateral aid from Italy to Nicaragua amounted to US$13·7 million. We have no plans to increase our aid to Nicaragua.

India

105. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to review the scope of British aid to India.

Mr. Chris Patten: We review our aid to India regularly. We expect India to remain our largest bilateral aid programme. How much we spend is determined by what we can afford and the rate at which we and the Indian authorities agree on projects. As agreed with the Indian authorities we will continue to concentrate on projects to promote economic growth and to alleviate poverty.

EC (Price Review)

106. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he was consulted by the EEC Commission over the changes in aid consequent upon the price review.

Mr. Chris Patten: The level of EC aid has not been affected by the Community's agricultural price review.

Ethiopia

107. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance Her Majesty's Government is providing to help the recent large influxes of Sudanese and Somali refugees into Ethiopia.

Mr. Chris Patten: So far in 1988 we have provided over £5·6 million—£4 million to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the form of cash and foodstuffs, and £1·5 million to British voluntary agencies working with UNHCR to supply water and medical services to Somalis in south-east Ethiopia. We are considering what further help might be provided.

Private Aid

108. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his Department is doing to encourage private aid flows to developing countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government help the voluntary sector in four principal ways:

1. By changes in tax concessions aimed at encouraging charitable donations;
2. Through matching, under the joint funding scheme, the cost of agreed long-term development projects mounted by British voluntary agencies;
3. By providing substantial grants to the volunteer recruitment agencies on the condition that the agencies themselves meet pre-agreed fund-raising targets; and
4. By making immediate and substantial contributions to appeals launched by the Disasters Emergency Committee.

In addition, the Government have helped through the abolition of exchange controls and in other ways to promote substantial flows of United Kingdom private investment to the developing countries.

Immunisation

109. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report further progress on the UNICEF global immunisation programme, and the United Kingdom contribution thereto.

Mr. Chris Patten: By 1 September UNICEF had committed just under US$302 million to immunisation projects or 71 per cent. of what they estimate to be needed.

This year the United Kingdom will give a record £7·5 million to UNICEF's general resources, and some of this will go towards programmes which increasingly contain an immunisation element. In addition, so far this year we have provided almost £6 million to UNICEF special appeals which also contain an immunisation element.

Consultancy Contracts

110. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many new consultancy contracts his Department agreed in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was their value.

Mr. Chris Patten: In the year ending 31 March 1988, the Overseas Development Administration agreed 173 new consultancy contracts worth £30,870,000.

West Bank and Gaza

111. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British aid to the West Bank and Gaza.

Mr. Chris Patten: In the current financial year we aim to spend about £850,000 on bilateral assistance to the occupied territories. This will cover grants to British non-governmental organisations for health and community work including the special contribution that I agreed to make earlier this year to the St. John's ophthalmic hospital in Jerusalem. It will also finance training for Palestinian students in Britain and the supply of books to certain Palestinian institutions.

Japan

112. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the Government of Japan to discuss overseas development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I am in frequent contact with representatives of the Government of Japan. I visited Tokyo as recently as 4 to 8 July when I had wide-ranging discussions with the Japanese Government on overseas development issues.

Pan-American Health Organisation

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's funding directly and indirectly to the Pan-American Health Organisation in the current financial year; and whether there has been any previous funding.

Mr. Chris Patten: The British Government do not make a direct contribution to the Pan-American Health Organisation. The Pan-American Health Organisation receives support from member states and from its parent body the World Health Organisation. In 1988-89 we are providing £16·6 million in support of the World Health Organisation's regular budget and a number of special programmes.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement explaining the cause of the recent error in the jobless totals for April, May and June for various parts of the United Kingdom, including the Borders region in Scotland; if he will ensure that the errors will not cause prejudice to the areas concerned in assessing entitlement to Government assistance; and if he will take steps to ensure that such errors will not occur again.

Mr. Lee: The error in the jobless totals in the Borders region of Scotland in April, May and June was the result of a defect in the post code directory used to allocate claimants post codes to the ward in which they live. The Scottish total was not affected. The post code directory is produced by the Office for Population Censuses and Surveys and using information for Scotland coming from the General Register Office for Scotland. The directory was corrected before the July unemployment figures were compiled.

Revised figures for the areas affected have been published so that the original figures will not cause prejudice in assessing entitlement to Government assistance. Checks have been introduced to avoid the recurrence of this error. Also, additional checks have been built into the Department's system for producing unemployment figures.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current level of *(a)* unemployment and *(b)* job vacancies in the travel-to-work area of Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 8 September 1988, the number of unemployed claimants in the Bradford travel-to-work area was 22,198 or 10·4 per cent. of employees in employment plus the unemployed, compared with 27,522 or 12·7 per cent. a year ago. The September 1988 figures include some over-recording. On 2 September 1988 the number of unfilled vacancies registered at jobcentres which closely correspond to the Bradford travel-to-work area was 1,790 compared with 1,846 a year ago.

Labour Costs

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the relative movement of unit labour costs in the United Kingdom and the other European Economic Community countries since 1979.

Mr. Lee: International comparisons of unit labour costs for the whole economy are not available. However, the available information for manufacturing industries is provided in the table:

Unit labour costs in manufacturing (increases) percentage change since 1979

Country	*Per cent.*
Netherlands	7·0
Belgium	10·7
Germany	26·8
United Kingdom	54·7
Ireland	55·2
Denmark	62·8
France	73·2
Spain	91·3
Italy	108·9

Notes:

1. The percentages are calculated from index series produced by the International Monetary Fund; the latest available figures are for the first quarter of 1988.
2. Figures for Greece, Luxembourg and Portugal are not available.
3. The source index series are in local currency and are not adjusted for exchange rate changes.

Pollution (North Sea)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the tourist industry in North sea resorts, in the light of reports during the summer of seal deaths and pollution caused by industrial waste, marine incineration, sewage sludge containers and waste substance.

Mr. Lee: I have seen no evidence that these reports are having any adverse effects on the number of visitors to North sea resorts. Indeed, I understand that many resorts are reporting excellent business during the 1988 main season and anticipate an equally buoyant autumn.

However, I remain concerned about these reports. Hence I welcome the initiatives which the Government are taking, including the research into seal immune systems commissioned by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which will seek to establish whether pollution may have exacerbated the effects of the disease which caused this year's seal deaths.

Employment Training Programme

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any proposals to meet the council of the Trades Union Congress to discuss the employment training programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Rain Forests

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) when he last discussed with his European counterparts, the United States of America Administration and the Brazilian Government the destruction of the rain forests in the Amazon basin;

(2) if he will list British, European Community and other international initiatives aimed at concerted action to stop the destruction of rain forests in Brazil;

(3) what specific proposals Her Majesty's Government, the European Community and other countries are discussing in order to begin the reforestation of rain forests in Brazil.

Mr. Eggar: I Intend to raise these issues with the Brazilian Government during my visit to Brazil in early November.

We keep in touch with our European Community partners and the US Administration on this matter in the International Tropical Timber Organisation and in other fora. The United Kingdom is a major participant in scientific research on the reafforestation of the Amazon.

The hon. Member may be aware that the Brazilian Government have recently announced an initiative aimed at limiting the destruction of the rain forests.

Chile

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed the situation of Chile with the Chilean ambassador or other Chilean authorities.

Mr. Eggar: The Chilean ambassador called on me on 11 October to discuss the outcome of the plebiscite. Her Majesty's ambassador in Santiago also remains in frequent contact with the Chilean authorities.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed with

his European counterparts and the United States of America Administration the situation in Chile and the ways in which the opposition in Chile could be further supported in their aims to bring about a civilian and democratic government.

Mr. Eggar: We have continuing contact with our European partners and with the United States Administration on Chile. The 7 October statement by the 12 member states of the European Community, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, describes the commitment of the 12 to the restoration of democracy in Chile.

Nicaragua

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards referring to the Government of Nicaragua as the Sandinista Government; and what considerations underlie that policy.

Mr. Eggar: There is no such policy.

Public Representations

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which subject within his Department's range of responsibilities has generated most representations from the public in the past 12 months; and if he is able to estimate the numbers by correspondence and telephone calls.

Mr. Eggar: Consular inquiries account for the largest number of representations from the public. Statistics are not available.

Adolfo Calero

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any assistance, facilities or advice were made available by his Department to Adolfo Calero on the occasion of his visit to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: No.

US Embassy (Firearms)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the quantity and type of firearms held within the United States embassy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We regularly remind all heads of mission of United Kingdom law on the possession and carriage of firearms, but it is not our practice to comment on the position of individual missions.

Kampuchea

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his policy towards Kampuchea, with regard to *(a)* the provision of reconstruction and development aid to that country and *(b)* diplomatic relations with the coalition Government of democratic Kampuchea.

Mr. Eggar: We concentrate our aid on the humanitarian needs of the victims of years of conflict in Cambodia. We are not prepared to give development aid to help sustain in power the illegal Vietnamese-backed regime in Phnom Penh.

Her Majesty's Government do not recognise the coalition Government of democratic Kampuchea (we recognise only states) and have no dealings with the coalition as a Government.

BBC External Services

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of those countries currently known to be jamming the output of the British Broadcasting Corporation external services.

Mr. Eggar: BBC world service output is not intentionally jammed anywhere at present.

ENERGY

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what specific (i) economic, (ii) commercial, (iii) financial and (iv) technical factors will introduce real competition after electricity privatisation; and if he will detail how such competition will reduce *(a)* the cost of supplies, *(b)* the cost of the labour force, and will increase *(c)* investment, *(d)* research and development and *(e)* efficiency, and, in general, reduce the prices of electricity to domestic and non-domestic consumers;

(2) what specific (i) economic, (ii) commercial, (iii) financial and (iv) technical factors he considered when concluding that his privatisation proposals will produce real competition in the generating of electricity.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There is no natural monopoly in the generation of electricity, which accounts for about 80 per cent. of the total cost of electricity. Our proposals will introduce competition in generation and will also provide scope for generators and others to compete with distribution companies in supplying customers directly. Competition in these areas will help protect customers from monopoly abuse and put downward pressure on costs.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the western countries in which the generation of electricity by nuclear power is in the hands of (i) the state, (ii) the private sector and (iii) the state and private sector.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows:

State	
France	Netherlands
Italy	South Africa
Canada	United Kingdom
Private	
West Germany	Belgium
Japan	
Private/Public	
USA	Switzerland
Spain	Finland
Sweden	

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will detail the effects on efficiency produced by the

separation of generation from transmission in his electricity privatisation proposals and his measures to deal with such effects;

(2) if he can now give a detailed estimate of the extra cost of splitting the transmission responsibilities of electricity from the main generators in his privatisation proposals.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government believe that any additional costs that might arise from the transfer of ownership of the grid will be outweighed by the benefits of increased competition. The separation of the grid from the generators is an essential step to increase competition in generation. The distribution companies, which will own the grid company, will have every reason to encourage new generators to connect to the system. No generator owning the grid would have such an incentive.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if, in his proposals for the privatisation of the electricity system, he will introduce measures aimed at preventing area board mergers or any other similar move likely to produce monopolistic practices;

(2) what proposals he has to avoid monopolistic practices in the generation, distribution and commercialisation of electricity once the privatisation of the electricity system is put into operation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Our privatisation proposals will introduce effective competition in the generation and supply of electricity. Detailed proposals for regulating those areas where monopolies will remain after privatisation will be included in legislation and licences for the new companies.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are his specific proposals for the proper representation of consumers of domestic and commercial electric power once the electricity system is privatised.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The White Paper, Privatising Electricity (Cm. 322), made it clear that arrangements will be made for maintaining an effective voice for customers' interests after privatisation. We want to ensure that none of the benefits of the existing customer representation arrangements are lost.

The detailed arrangements necessary to achieve our objective are still under consideration. We have undertaken detailed and lengthy discussions with all the existing area electricity consultative councils and the Electricity Consumers' Council and will take their views into account when finalising the future arrangements for consumer representation.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are his proposals for the regulation of the lower voltage grid in the case of privatisation of the electricity system.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The regulatory regime will ensure access to the lower voltage system on reasonable terms.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are his specific proposals for the responsibility for planning electricity generation and supply in Britain in the event of the privatisation of the electricity system.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Distribution companies in England and Wales will have a statutory obligation to supply and will need to determine the amount of electricity that they will require to meet demand and satisfy the obligation. They will then obtain this by contracting for sufficient capacity and energy from generating companies, or by generating themselves.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what information he has about the prices to (i) domestic and (ii) non-domestic consumers of 1 kwh (unit) of electricity in *(a)* Belgium, *(b)* Denmark, *(c)* France, *(d)* the Federal Republic of Germany, *(e)* Holland, *(f)* Italy, *(g)* Norway, *(h)* Spain, *(i)* Sweden *(j)* the United Kingdom and *(k)* the United States of America on 30 June;

(2) what information he has on the annual changes in electricity prices (in percentages) in *(a)* Belgium, *(b)* Denmark, *(c)* France, *(d)* the Federal Republic of Germany, *(e)* Holland, *(f)* Italy, *(g)* Norway, *(h)* Spain, *(i)* Sweden, *(j)* the United Kingdom and *(k)* the United States of America for each year since 1975 up to the 30 June;

(3) what information he has as to the average percentage increase in electricity prices to *(a)* domestic and *(b)* commercial consumers in (i) Belgium, (ii) Denmark, (iii) France, (iv) the Federal Republic of Germany, (v) The Netherlands, (vi) Norway, (vii) Spain, (viii) Sweden and (ix) the United Kingdom for each year since 1974.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The table gives the price in pence per kWh at 1 July in 20 countries and shows that domestic and industrial electricity prices in England and Wales remain in the mid-range of both European and world prices.

	Domestic	*Industrial*
Australia	5·15	4·15
Austria	8·34	4·84
Belgium	9·09	4·07
Canada	3·44	2·35
Denmark	8·35	2·38
England and Wales	6·81	4·20
Finland	4·59	2·93
France	7·40	3·72
Germany	9·41	6·23
Greece	6·23	4·46
Ireland	7·40	4·23
Italy	9·49	4·57
Japan	10·74	7·21
Korea	9·14	4·23
Netherlands	6·30	3·14
Portugal	6·94	4·78
South Africa	3·68	2·04
Spain	8·16	4·76
Sweden	4·16	2·50
USA	7·32	5·04

We have no detailed information as to historic annual percentage price increases for these countries.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to those western countries in which the generation of electricity depends for more than 50 per cent. on (i) coal, (ii) hydro electric power, (iii) oil, (iv) gas and (v) nuclear power.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The western countries of the IEA and OECD in which the generation of electricity depends for more than 50 per cent. on one fuel are as follows:

	per cent.
(i) Coal	
United States of America	57·2
West Germany	54·4
Luxembourg	50·0
Australia	77·2
Greece	71·8
United Kingdom	71·0
Denmark	95·9
Yugoslavia	58·1
(ii) Hydro electricity	
Canada	62·5
Norway	98·7
New Zealand	80·4
Luxembourg	50·0
Austria	73·1
Switzerland	58·9
Iceland	100·0
(iii) Gas	
Netherlands	59·4
(iv) Nuclear	
Belgium	65·7
France	69·9

This information is based on estimated data for 1987 contained in the IEA publication "Coal Information 1988". Table 13—"Electricity Production by Fuel".

Select Committee

Mr. Wray To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to reply to the third report of the Select Committee on Energy (HC,1987-88, 307), and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: I expect to reply shortly.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Partially Sighted Society

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what extra moneys he has given to the Partially Sighted Society; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the annual grant made by his Department to the Partially Sighted Society; for what purposes; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will increase the annual grant to the Partially Sighted Society; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Partially Sighted Society has received grant aid towards headquarters costs since 1977. Following a recent review, a grant of £10,000 a year for three years has been awarded from this year. There has also been an additional grant this year of £20,000 to help the society with the cost of its low vision aid service.

Benefits

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will increase the £250 limit on benefit payments made by uncrossed girocheque, in view of the increases in benefit rates since it was fixed at that level and the difficulties it can cause to claimants who have no bank accounts.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The level at which girocheques are to be crossed is determined by Girobank in conjunction with the Post Office and the Department. The level is subject to regular review when account is taken of *(a)* the number of payments of benefit above the uncrossed level and *(b)* the need to protect both the beneficiary and the Department from fraudulent encashment of large amounts.

The current level was introduced in 1986 and was reviewed in 1987 at which time there was no evidence to support an increase in the uncrossed level. A further review will take place shortly. Claimants who do not have a bank account are advised that a relative, friend, employer or tradesman may help to cash a girocheque or, if difficulty continues, to contact the local social security office to arrange for payment to be split into two, or more, uncrossed girocheques.

Social Fund

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many people in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde, *(c)* Greater Glasgow, and *(d)* Glasgow, Provan, were successful in their applications to the social fund, by 30 September;

(2) how many people applied for social fund grants in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde, *(c)* Greater Glasgow and *(d)* Glasgow, Provan up to 30 September;

(3) what proportion of the social fund allocated to Glasgow, Provan for 1988-89 was spent by 30 September.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Of the local offices of the Department in Scotland, those contained within the Strathclyde region, excluding those within the area of Greater Glasgow, are Airdrie, Ayr, Bellshill, Campbeltown, Clydebank, Coatbridge, Cumbernauld, Dumbarton, East Kilbride, Greenock, Hamilton, Irvine, Johnstone, Kilmarnock, Motherwell, Oban, Paisley and Port Glasgow but their boundaries are not conterminous.

The offices contained within the Strathclyde region which are also in the Greater Glasgow area are Glasgow Anniesland, Glasgow Bridgeton, Glasgow City, Glasgow Craigton, Glasgow Cranstonhill, Glasgow Laurieston, Glasgow Maryhill, Glasgow Parkhead, Glasgow Partick, Glasgow Provan, Glasgow Rutherglen, Glasgow South Side, and Glasgow Springburn.

Information on numbers of applications for social fund loans and grants received, processed and awarded, listed by local office, including information on budget allocations and expenditure, is available in the Library.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications have been made to date for social fund *(a)* community care grants, *(b)* budgeting loans, and *(c)* crisis loans; and how many have been refused in each category.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information for the period 11 April to 31 August 1988 (the latest for which figures are available) is as follows:

	Decisions made	*Applications refused*
Community Care Grants	73,430	40,059
Budgeting Loans	281,968	124,793
Crisis Loans	167,979	24,904

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases have been taken to review

by *(a)* a social fund officer and *(b)* a social fund inspector in the categories of *(a)* community care grants, *(b)* budgeting loans and *(c)* crisis loans; and what proportion of such reviews were (1) refused and (2) decided in the applicant's favour.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is given in the tables.

Reviews by Social Fund Officers: 11 April 1988-31 August 1988

	Total No. of review decisions	*Decisions revised (as percentage of total)*	*Decisions not changed (as percentage of total)*
Community Care Grants	4,336	34	66
Budgeting Loans	20,135	32	68
Crisis Loans	3,336	49	51
Total	27,807	34	66

Reviews by Social Fund Inspectors: 11 April 1988-30 September 1988

	Total No. taken to review	*Decisions substituted by SFI (as percentage of total)*	*Referred back to SFO for determination (as percentage of total)*	*Confirmed by SFI (as percentage of total)*
Community Care Grants	133	2	36	62
Budgeting Loans	437	—	38	62
Crisis Loans	51	6	37	57
Total	621	1	38	62

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many reviews of social fund decisions are waiting determination by *(a)* social fund officers and *(b)* social fund inspectors.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of applications for review by social fund officers awaiting determination on 31 August 1988 was 3,523. The number of applications for review by social fund inspectors on 30 September 1988 was 263.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will establish an internal inquiry into the reasons for social fund payments at his Department's Halifax office running at 50 per cent. of the budgeted level; and if he will issue guidelines to encourage higher levels of payment.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans to initiate an inquiry into levels of social fund payments at the Department's Halifax office, or to issue further guidance. At present loans expenditure is close to the amounts profiled and the office has undertaken a number of initiatives to promote awareness of community care grants.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide figures on community care grants from the social fund in Scotland for *(a)* the number of applications for funds to cover the cost of hospital visits, *(b)* the number of the above applications that have been approved and *(c)* the total sum of money paid out to successful applicants at (i) each area office and (ii) in Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Homeless Unemployed

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many of the homeless unemployed in the United Kingdom have families of one or more children;

(2) how many of the unemployed in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Glasgow are also homeless;

(3) how many of the unemployed in England and Wales are also homeless;

(4) how many of the homeless unemployed have families of one or more children in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Glasgow.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Family Credit

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for family credit are still to be determined; and what is the average time currently taken for the determination of a family credit claim.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At 14 October 1988 there were 62,299 claims for family credit still to be determined. Of these, there were 37,238 where replies to inquiries were awaited, mainly from employers about earnings, before further action could proceed.

The average time between receipt and determination of claims cleared during September 1988 was 29·7 working days. During much of that period clearance times were affected by the postal dispute, particularly in delaying further inquiries. Prior to the dispute, in August, the average clearance time was just over the target of 18 working days.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of people entitled to family credit have claimed it.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A precise estimate of the number of people currently entitled to family credit cannot be made until information from the 1988 family expenditure survey is available.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if a deadline has been imposed on claims for transitional protection for those people recently affected by reductions in housing benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No cut-off date for applications has yet been announced.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps were taken to inform potential

claimants of the transitional protection of housing benefit; and what proportion of potential claimants have applied for transitional protection.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Over 8 million leaflets have been printed and more than 4 million of these have been distributed to various advice centres, DSS local offices and local authorities, together with posters encouraging people to apply. A national press publicity campaign was launched during week commencing 23 May and a further campaign was launched at the end of July. In addition some local authorities have been advising claimants directly where they are able to anticipate eligibility to transitional payments. A freepost address and a freeline telephone number have been in operation since early May, giving information and advice on the scheme. Applications are still being received each day and the number received to date stands at just under 350,000.

Family Statistics

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in Great Britain *(a)* over pension age and *(b)* under pension age are (i) below, (ii) on and (iii) up to 40 per cent. above supplementary benefit level; how many children there are in each group; and how many heads of households in each group are (x) in work, (y) unemployed or (z) sick or disabled.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The figures are set out in the table.

Thousands

	Below the Supplementary Benefit Scale Rates	*In receipt of Supplementary Benefit or HBS*[1]	*Up to 140 per cent. of the Supplementary Benefit Benefit Scale Rates (but not receiving Supp Benefit)*
Estimated number of persons in 1985:			
Over pension age	960	1,880	3,690
Under pension age	1,460	5,080	4,780
Estimated number of children in 1985: in families			
Over pension age	[2]	[2]	[2]
Under pension age	360	1,890	1,650
Estimated number of heads of households in 1985:			
In full-time work	240	—	980
Unemployed	320	1,540	490
Sick or disabled	50	220	210

[1] HBS = Housing Benefit Supplement.
[2] below 10,000.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of couples, either married or cohabiting, in which the man is unemployed and the woman is employed or receiving social security benefits as head of household.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give figures showing the numbers and proportion of all households in Great Britain in which the head of household is a woman.

Mrs. Currie: I have been asked to reply.

It is estimated that in spring 1987 there were 21·404 million households in Great Britain, of which 5.086 million or 23·8 per cent. were headed by a woman.

Notes:

1. The source of the estimates is the 1987 Labour Force Survey. The estimates were produced by the Department of Employment.
2. All married couple households are assumed to be headed by the man.
3. Analysis of General Household Survey results for 1985 shows that in that year about 50 per cent. of households headed by a woman consisted of a woman aged 60 or over living alone; and that a further 14 per cent. of such households contained at least one child (i.e. person aged 15 or under).

Poverty

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table setting out the figures for those his Department accepts as living in poverty in September.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no official definition of "poverty" and no generally agreed way in which to quantify it. Nor has there ever been any suggestion of, or acceptance by, any Government, irrespective of party, that it is possible to draw any simple poverty line.

Supplementary Pensions and Allowances

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give figures showing the number and proportion of recipients of supplementary pensions and supplementary allowances in May 1987 who were *(a)* women and *(b)* lone parents.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

	Total claimants (Thousands)	*Women (Thousands)*	*Lone parents (Thousands)*
Supplementary pension claimants	1,727	1,280 (74 per cent.)	3 (0·17 per cent.)
Supplementary allowance claimants	3,169	1,256 (40 per cent.)	661 (21 per cent.)

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry, May 1987.

Benefit Advice Shops

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy towards the provision of benefit advice shops by local authorities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A number of organisations, including local authorities, make a voluntary contribution towards the provision of social security benefit advice. But the prime source of advice and information is the Department, via its local office network.

Bradford

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of extra staff likely to be needed at his Department's offices at Vicar lane and Leeds road, Bradford, in the light of the 9,000 redundancies over five years announced by Bradford city council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Levels of staff in DSS offices are determined through a complementing system which has been developed and agreed by management and trade unions and consists of constant measurement of activity, annual recomplementing and reviews of staffing levels. It is designed to match staff to workloads by calculating the number of staff to be allocated to local offices using statistical information on workloads collected by local offices. This information, together with other factors, is used to forecast future workloads which are converted into staffing resources using the average times required to carry out different tasks. The system is therefore designed to reflect differences in caseloads experienced by different offices.

It is not possible to be specific on the possible effect of redundancies on the local office workloads at this stage. However a broad estimate of two to three staff would be required to service the work generated by 1,000 claims over a year.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the likely cost of additional benefits payments arising from the 9,000 redundancies over five years announced by Bradford city council.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No such estimate has been made.

Crisis Loans

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the payment of crisis loans in the form of vouchers made out to one particular retailer; what is his policy on this matter; and if he will take steps to ensure that all such future loans provided by his Department will not restrict the freedom of choice of recipients.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None. Guidance contained in the social fund manual makes it clear that crisis loans will usually be made by giro cheque payable to the applicant. Social fund officers may however decide to make a payment wholly, or in part, by voucher if this is likely to be to the benefit of the applicant or his family. We have no plans to alter this guidance.

DEFENCE

Aviation Support Ship

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will be in a position to invite tenders for an aviation support ship.

Mr. Sainsbury: The House will recall that my right hon. Friend announced in December 1986 the Government's decision to retain an amphibious capability in the longer term. As part of the continuing review of how best to meet this commitment, the method of providing helicopter lift, including the concept of an aviation support ship, has been considered.

In the summer, my Department gave a presentation to Industry which outlined our requirements for an ASS and our intention to procure the vessel on a "prime contractorship" basis. I am pleased to be able to announce that an invitation to tender for the ASS is being issued today to those consortia who subsequently expressed an interest in bidding and meet our criteria.

Tenderers will be free to offer varying options for meeting the requirement, not just by new design and build. Other options might include new build to an existing but suitably modified merchant ship design, or by the conversion of an existing merchant ship hull. The successful prime contractor will also be responsible for the selection, procurement and setting to work of the weapons and associated system.

Surplus Housing

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many housing units in the ownership of his Department are surplus to requirements in the Plymouth and surrounding area; and what plans he has to dispose of them.

Mr. Freeman: A total of 486 housing units in the ownership of the Ministry of Defence have been identified as surplus to requirements in Plymouth and the surrounding area. Over the next 12 months it is expected that 164 will be offered for sale to service personnel under the discount scheme, 278 will be sold on the open market and 44 will be demolished.

Surplus Land

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many acres of land in Plymouth and the surrounding area in the ownership of his Department are surplus to requirements; and if he will make a statement on his plans for their disposal.

Mr. Freeman: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced last November, we are planning to dispose of a number of sites in the Plymouth area over the next few years. Some 70 acres are involved including the Royal William yard. Devonport Management Ltd. has also indicated that part of the area licensed from the Ministry of Defence in south yard can also be released. We are in discussion with Plymouth city council and have already agreed to work with it in planning the release of land, which will be sold on the open market, to support the concept of comprehensive redevelopment of the Stonehouse bay area. We have engaged consultants to advise us in this work and hope to make very early progress.

Drugs Research

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research on drugs affecting perception and reaction time of service personnel is being or has been carried out at Porton Down during the past five years.

Mr. Sainsbury: Tests of perception and reaction time are included in studies by the chemical defence establishment at Porton Down of medicinal drugs used to increase servicemens' resistance to chemical agents. These tests are standard and widely used and are basic to investigating the ability of service personnel to function efficiently whilst using protective systems.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has incurred any expenditure in respect of exercises involving cruise missiles based at Greenham Common since the ratification of the intermediate range nuclear forces treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice, for both operational and security reasons, to give details of matters relating to these exercises. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Stewart) said in his reply to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 3 December at column *708*, cruise missiles off-base training exercises from Greenham Common will continue until the missiles are withdrawn from the base.

Armed Forces Pension Scheme

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the cost would be in the current year if the 1973 improvements in the armed forces pension scheme were to be extended to *(a)* pre-1973 war widows and *(b)* service men entitled to disability pension in respect of injuries received before 1973.

Mr. Freeman: It is estimated that if the 1973 improvements to the armed forces pensions scheme were extended so as to pay pensions on the same basis and rates as for current awards, the additional cost for the full year would be *(a)* for war widows, in the region of £200 million and *(b)* for disabled ex-service men, in the region of £400 million.

Conservative Party Conference (Security)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 19 October, *Official Report*, column *860*, if he will now give the total cost to his Department of *(a)* the military personnel deployed to assist the police, *(b)* HMS Nurton and *(c)* the three boats crewed by Royal Marines all being involved in security work associated with the 1988 Conservative party conference.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing further to add to my answer to the hon. Member of 19 October.

Harland and Wolff

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his Department's policy on inviting tenders from the Belfast shipyard of Messrs. Harland and Wolff;

(2) whether he has invited shipyards to submit proposals for a new aviation support ship; whether Messrs. Harland and Wolff of Belfast will be given an opportunity to be considered for this project; and if he will make a statement.

(3) how many shipbuilding firms he made a presentation for the proposed new aviation support ship; why Messrs. Harland and Wolff were not invited to this presentation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 21 October 1988]*: A total of 61 companies responded positively to the invitation to attend a presentation given by my Department on the aviation support ship in June of this year, including seven private shipbuilding companies. The invitation to tender is being issued today, with tenders to be returned in July 1989. It is not envisaged that the order will be placed before 1990.

The Government have made it clear that a private sector Harland and Wolff will, subject to its suitability and eligibility, be able to tender for MOD contracts. On this basis, whether then it will be able and would wish to tender for the current contract will clearly depend on whether the future structure of the company can be resolved within the limited time available.

HEALTH

NHS (Review)

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received in response to the fifth report of the Social Services Select Committee on the future of the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: We have received a number of representations relating to the areas of policy addressed in the Committee's fifth report, and one specifically in response to it. We shall respond to the report in due course.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is, for each year since 1974, the public expenditure in private nursing homes in 1988 moneys.

Mrs. Currie: Information in the form requested is not held centrally. Following is the available expenditure information derived from the annual accounts and financial returns submitted to the Department by health authorities and local authorities, respectively.

In addition, people in homes may be able to get help with fees through income support. Information on the amount of total expenditure on income support to people in residential care and nursing homes is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

£ million
(at 1988-89 prices)

	Health authorities[1] Expenditure with contractual hospitals and homes	*Local authorities[2] Expenditure on private residential care*
1974-75	40·0	61·8
1975-76	42·9	68·3
1976-77	42·6	75·5
1977-78	40·8	75·4
1978-79	39·6	82·1
1979-80	40·7	86·8
1980-81	42·5	91·1
1981-82	43·6	98·6
1982-83	44·0	104·7
1983-84	45·7	109·0
1984-85	48·0	107·9

	Health authorities[1] Expenditure with contractual hospitals and homes	Local authorities[2] Expenditure on private residential care
1985-86	49·0	74·6
1986-87	49·6	n/y/a

[1] Total hospital and community health services expenditure with contractual hospitals and homes (including contracts with voluntary organisations, etc.).
[2] Net expenditure on all private residential care incurred under personal social services programme.
n/y/a—Not yet available.
Note: The figures have been expressed at 1988-89 prices by the use of the gross domestic product deflator.

"Medical Care of the New-born"

Ms. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he intends to take in the light of the deficiencies in a wide range of essential laboratory and technical staff specialising in problems of the new-born, identified in the report "Medical Care of the New-born" by the Royal College of Physicians.

Mr. Mellor: The professional and technical staff groups have, overall, had the largest percentage growth of all staff groups in recent years, but we are aware of shortages in some high technology areas where there is competition for staff from other types of employer. The management side of the relevant Whitley council has developed proposals for a more flexible grading structure for medical laboratory scientific officers and has made an offer to the staff side. The joint DH/NHS manpower planning advisory group has commissioned a report on the staffing and structure of the pathology services which will be issued for consultation shortly. However, the claims of staff shortages in the neonatal area in the Royal College of Physicians' report are not specific and we have received no other evidence of shortages in this area.

Nuclear Warfare

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department plans to publish any response to or initiate any public discussion on the report from the British Medical Association's board of science and education entitled "Selection of Casualties for Treatment After Nuclear Attack", and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The Government have no plans to respond to the report quoted, nor to initiate public discussion of it. We have no plans to depart from the widely accepted principles of medical triage.

Government advice about the effects of nuclear attack, including the scale of casualties, is contained in section 2 of the Home Office publication, "Emergency Planning Guidance to Local Authorities" issued in 1985. Further advice concerning the treatment of casualties following nuclear attack is given in part 4 of health circular (88)31, "Emergency Planning in the NHS: Health Service Responsibilities in Civil Defence", issued in July 1988.

General Practitioner Maternity Units

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of general practitioner maternity units that have closed in the last five years, nationally and by region.

Mrs. Currie: The table gives a regional breakdown of the 13 general practitioner maternity units which we are aware have been approved for closure between 1983 and December 1987.

	Number
Yorkshire	1
Oxford	1
North Western	1
Trent	8
West Midlands	2

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the number of general practitioners maternity units that are scheduled to close over the next five years, for each region.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

Care in the Community

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he now expects to publish Her Majesty's Government's response to the Griffiths report on care in the community.

Mr. Mellor: We are giving Sir Roy's report and the numerous representations we have received the most careful consideration. We shall bring forward our own proposals in due course and are mindful of concern that action should not be unduly delayed.

Halifax General Hospital (Cook-chill System)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will call for a report from the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority as to why it has refused to disclose which members of a sub-committee took the decision that the system of cook-chill would be introduced into the new Halifax general hospital when it is built.

Mrs. Currie: No.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of admissions to hospitals of persons suffering from schizophrenia in the immediate past 12 months for which statistics are available; what proportion of such admissions were for the first time in that period; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: In 1986, the latest year for which statistics are available, there were 25,046 admissions to NHS mental illness hospitals and units in England where the main diagnosis was schizophrenia psychoses. One person can be admitted several times in one year. I regret that it is not possible to say what proportion of these admissions related to people admitted for the first time in that year. However, of the admissions in 1986, 2,523 or 10 per cent. were of people who had never previously been admitted to a mental illness hospital or unit.

Mental Disorder (Aftercare)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the rôle of health and local authorities in

relation to the provision of aftercare for all former patients who have suffered mental disorder; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The primary objective of aftercare is to ensure that the discharged patient remains mentally fit and can return as far as possible to a normal life.

Any requirement for continuity of treatment remains the responsibility of the health authority. The local authority would be expected to meet assessed needs for community support, such as residential care, day care, domiciliary and social work support. Section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983 places a duty on both health and local authorities to consider and arrange provision of the aftercare needs of discharged patients formerly detained under certain sections of that Act.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he has any plans to change the provision of hearing aids as an integral part of the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to impose charges or contributions on National Health Service hearing aids; whether such charges or contributions are to be subject to means-testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We are aware of dissatisfaction with aspects of the present arrangements and of the views of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf. We are carefully considering these and other suggestions. We have not yet, however, arrived at firm plans for any financial or other changes.

In-patient Waiting List (Wessex)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give, for each district within the Wessex regional health authority, the total in-patient waiting list, broken down by specialty, and waiting time for March 1985, March 1986 and September 1987.

Mr. Mellor: For the information on waiting lists in the Wessex regional health authority I refer the hon. Member to the bound volumes of regional and district summaries of hospital in-patient lists, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Sight Tests

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total of sight tests carried out under the National Health Service during 1987.

Mr. Mellor: A total of 11·1 million sight tests were carried out in England during 1987.

AIDS

Mr. Marlow: to ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide advice as to the extent to which the AIDS virus can be carried and transmitted by mosquitoes *(a)* within the United Kingdom and *(b)* in high risk areas overseas.

Mr. Mellor: There is a theoretical possibility that the mouthparts of a mosquito could become contaminated with HIV as a result of feeding on an infected individual. However, expert advice is that the experimental, entomological and epidemiological evidence indicates that the risk of transmission of HIV by mosquitoes is highly improbable. There is no evidence to indicate that such transmission is occurring either in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Merseyside (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the visit of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Derbyshire South, (Mrs. Currie) to Liverpool on Wednesday 19 October.

Mrs. Currie: On Wednesday 19 October I visited Sunnybank, one of 11 continuing care homes run by Marie Curie Cancer Care. I was impressed by the high standards of care the patients and their families receive. I expressed my appreciation to the director-general of Marie Curie Cancer Care, who was present, for the services it provides nationally for people with cancer.

I also visited Deysbrook barracks to meet apprentices and later went to West Derby Conservative club. If the hon. Member requires further details perhaps he would contact me direct.

Care of the New-born

Ms. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to implement the recommendations in the report on the care of the new-born in England by the Royal College of Physicians, with particular regard to the proposals *(a)* that each region should have regional and sub-regional centres for ill new-born babies, and women with high-risk pregnancies, *(b)* that 80 extra consultant posts in intensive care of the new-born should be established, *(c)* that there is no shortage of junior doctors in this field and *(d)* that adequate resources should be available to train sufficient neonatal nurses.

Mrs. Currie: Every region already has a range of facilities to care for pregnant women, mothers and new-born children. In all cases these facilities comprise either regional or sub-regional centres along the lines of the recommendations in the reports of the Social Services Committee (1979-80) and the maternity services advisory committee.

It is for health authorities to determine the number of new consultant posts needed to meet their service requirements.

The joint planning advisory committee advises on the number of training posts at registrar and senior registrar level for doctors making a career in this country. Its advice is based on health authorities' future requirements for consultants in each specialty. The total number of junior posts in the field also takes account of the training needs of doctors intending to enter general practice and posts available to doctors visiting this country for training.

The National Health Service management board has commissioned a study of current high-tech nurse training, including neonatal training. The results of the survey are being analysed and will be considered by the National Health Service management board shortly.

Health Authorities (Rates)

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate for each health authority

in the shire counties the number of people they serve, how much each pays in lieu of rates to the local authority and how much this amounts to per person served by the area.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 26 July 1988]*: I regret that information precisely as requested is not available. Following is the information held centrally.

District Health Authorities (Non-metropolitan counties)	*Resident population mid 1986*	*Expenditure on contributions in lieu of rates 1986-87*	
		Total	*Per head of resident population*
	000s	*£000s*	*£*
Cambridge	273·3	1,983	7·3
Darlington	123·9	884	7·1
Preston	125·0	838	6·7
Nottingham	616·4	3,817	6·2
Basildon and Thurrock	281·0	1,425	5·1
Aylesbury Vale	142·5	678	4·8
West Cumbria	136·6	659	4·8
Mid Surrey	167·0	785	4·7
North West Hertfordshire	261·2	1,221	4·7
Peterborough	201·1	911	4·5
Bristol and Weston	364·8	1,579	4·3
Chester	177·7	745	4·2
Kidderminster	100·9	419	4·2
South Tees	291·1	1,230	4·2
Exeter	302·6	1,228	4·1
Hartlepool	90·7	373	4·1
East Surrey	185·3	746	4·0
Hull	306·7	1,232	4·0
North Tees	175·8	710	4·0
North Hertfordshire	186·1	723	3·9
Oxfordshire	539·6	2,052	3·8
Southampton and South West Hants	417·5	1,579	3·8
York	260·5	981	3·8
Lancaster	129·9	479	3·7
Crewe	246·7	876	3·6
Grimsby	159·0	567	3·6
Northumberland	301·0	1,090	3·6
Leicestershire	875·0	3,059	3·5
Tunbridge Wells	195·7	684	3·5
North Devon	131·5	450	3·4
North West Surrey	207·9	717	3·4
Salisbury	123·0	416	3·4
Eastbourne	227·8	759	3·3
East Cumbria	177·4	589	3·3
Frenchay	219·7	728	3·3
Northampton	301·3	983	3·3
East Suffolk	318·4	1,020	3·2
Southern Derbyshire	525·6	1,669	3·2
Swindon	227·7	723	3·2
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	229·4	713	3·1
Norwich	465·6	1,431	3·1
Warrington	181·6	570	3·1
Huntingdon	129·8	394	3·0
Mid Essex	287·0	863	3·0
North Lincolnshire	267·7	807	3·0
Basingstoke and North Hants	215·0	615	2·9
Chichester	178·7	497	2·9
Dartford and Gravesham	220·5	638	2·9
North Staffordshire	460·7	1,316	2·9
Central Nottinghamshire	285·1	804	2·8
Macclesfield	178·9	503	2·8
South Cumbria	172·6	483	2·8
Southmead	232·3	661	2·8
South West Durham	153·6	427	2·8
West Berkshire	445·0	1,268	2·8
East Yorkshire	188·9	504	2·7
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	194·9	526	2·7
Harrogate	134·6	370	2·7
Scarborough	143·3	392	2·7
South Lincolnshire	299·6	796	2·7
South West Surrey	183·6	502	2·7
West Essex	253·8	687	2·7
West Norfolk and Wisbech	184·0	498	2·7
North West Durham	86·1	224	2·6
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	525·9	1,367	2·6
Worthing	242·0	638	2·6
Bath	396·4	975	2·5
Canterbury	301·0	749	2·5
Gloucester	308·0	772	2·5
South Warwickshire	223·0	557	2·5
West Dorset	196·5	492	2·5
West Suffolk	224·5	553	2·5
Mid Downs	274·1	661	2·4
Plymouth	327·9	802	2·4
South West Hertfordshire	244·7	586	2·4
Torbay	237·0	578	2·4
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	275·6	662	2·4
Bassetlaw	104·9	244	2·3
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	270·9	621	2·3
East Berkshire	361·3	823	2·3
North Derbyshire	361·6	818	2·3
Somerset	396·4	916	2·3
South East Staffordshire	252·3	579	2·3
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	318·3	709	2·2
Milton Keynes	161·8	359	2·2
Shropshire	392·7	853	2·2
West Lancashire	106·8	240	2·2
East Dorset	441·8	937	2·1
Kettering	253·2	531	2·1
Mid Staffordshire	308·0	657	2·1
Scunthorpe	193·9	400	2·1
South Bedfordshire	275·3	590	2·1
Southend	320·7	687	2·1
Winchester	208·2	444	2·1
Worcester	236·3	487	2·1
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	448·2	916	2·0
Halton	142·5	291	2·0
Isle of Wight	124·5	254	2·0
North Warwickshire	172·8	367	2·0
Wycombe	271·6	531	2·0
Brighton	297·7	573	1·9
Durham	235·9	459	1·9
Maidstone	195·5	364	1·9
North Bedfordshire	245·6	479	1·9
South East Kent	264·5	512	1·9
East Hertfordshire	293·8	519	1·8
North East Essex	298·7	528	1·8
Bromsgrove and Redditch	164·0	280	1·7
Cheltenham	209·1	332	1·6
Medway	323·8	507	1·6
Hastings	164·2	237	1·4
Herefordshire	153·3	217	1·4
Rugby	85·0	117	1·4
Northallerton	113·2	145	1·3
Chorley and South Ribble	192·8	139	0·7

Sources:

a. Mid year estimates of resident populations—1986 (Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys).

b. Annual accounts of those district health authorities wholly or mainly lying outside London and the metropolitan counties—1986-87, being the latest year for which complete information is available centrally.

Notes to the table
1. The population figures make no allowance for people resident in one locality who receive treatment in others.
2. Expenditure on contributions in lieu of rates by regional health authorities and by family practitioner committees is excluded.

NHS Pay

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the percentage increase of pay to *(a)* nurses, *(b)* doctors and *(c)* ancillary staff in the National Health Service for each year since 1970.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 21 October 1988]:* The table gives details of increases in rates of pay. The extent by which basic rates are enhanced by additional earnings varies between staff groups and is substantial in the case of ancillary staff.

Year (1 Aug-31 July)	*Nurses and Midwives*	*Doctors and Dentists*	*Ancillary Staff*	*Retail Prices Index (July-July)*
	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	
1969-70	20·0	[1]30.0	n.a.	6·7
1970-71	8·5	[1]30·0	[2]19·0	10·1
1971-72	8·0	8·0	[2]10·9	5·8
1972-73	8·0	4·5	[2]17·1	9·4
1973-74	11·0	7·4	[2]17·1	17·1
	[3]30·0			
1974-75	20·0	35·0	24·9	26·3
1975-76	8·0	2·2	17·3	12·9
1976-77	5·0	2·5	6·5	17·6
1977-78	10·0	10·0	10·0	7·8
1978-79	10·0	25·7	9·0	15·6
1979-80	[4]21·0	[5]10·7	[4]10·6	16·9
	14·0	18·7	13·0	
1980-81	6·0	6·0	7·8	10·9
1981-82	—	6·2	6·0	8·7
1982-83	[6]12·3	9·7	4·5	4·2
1983-84	7·5	6·9	4·5	4·5
1984-85	8·6	6·3	4·7	6·9
1985-86	7·8	7·6	6·0	2·4
1986-87	9·5	7·7	5·0	4·4
1987-88	[8]17·9	7·9	[7]5·4	4·8

[1]The 1969-70 increase of 30 per cent. paid from April 1970, covered the period up to 31 March 1972.
[2]Estimated figures.
[3]Halsbury award of 30 per cent. paid in May 1974.
[4]Staged Clegg award paid in August 1979 and April 1980.
[5]Part of 1978-79 Review Body award paid from April 1980.
[6]Two-year award paid wholly in 1982-83 pay round.
[7]In addition the standard working week will be reduced by 1 hour wef the week including 12.12.88.
[8]Figure revised in the light of the regrading outcome; original Review Body estimate 15·3 per cent.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bee Disease

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many bee disease officers have been employed, full or part-time, by his Department in each of the last three years; what their duties have been; what has been the cost of running the service; and if he has any plans to review the present arrangements.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Bees officers are employed seasonally, normally for six months of the year. Their duties are to inspect bee colonies for fool broud, and to take necessary follow-up action. The numbers of officers employed and the direct costs of this inspection work for the last three seasons are as follows. The reduction in 1988 reflects the decision to cease routine inspections about which beekeeping associations were informed in September 1987. These arrangements are kept under regular review.

Year	*Numbers of bees officers (full and part time)*	*Inspection costs (£'000)*
1986	63	321
1987	61	326
1987[1]	38	200

[1] Provisional.

Pollution

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will outline his plans to safeguard the parts of the British fishing industry dependent on the North sea in respect of pollution caused by industrial waste, marine incineration, sewage sludge containers and waste substances.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government's action plan for the protection of the North sea environment is contained in the ministerial declaration arising out of the North sea conference held in London in November 1987 and the guidance note on this declaration which was published in February of this year, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

My Department makes a careful scientific examination of all applications to dispose of waste at sea to ensure that no pollution is caused by dumping, and a review of licences is now in hand to determine whether dumping can be replaced by practicable alternative disposal options on land. My fisheries research laboratory also gives scientific advice to water authorities on the implications for the marine environment of pipeline discharges.

Pesticides

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the research departments and scientific bodies consulted by him in matters of agricultural pesticides and their effect on human consumption and on wildlife and water.

Mr. Ryder: Ministers have a statutory duty under section 16(9) of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 to consult the advisory committee on pesticides. Its membership is listed in its annual reports (published by HMSO) along with the Departments and agencies which assist it by the nomination of assessors.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if co-ordination exists on a regular basis between his Department and its European counterparts in matters of pollution caused by pesticides and similar matters regarding *(a)* research and *(b)* proposals for common policies and action.

Mr. Ryder: The Department of the Environment has primary responsibility for co-ordination within the European Community on matters of pollution.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last received a comprehensive report about agricultural pesticides and their effect on human consumption and on wildlife.

Mr. Ryder: I believe that the hon. Member is referring to the general reports of the working party on pesticides residues. The last of these was published in March 1986 and the next will be published early next year. Where appropriate I also receive reports of the results of the individual monitoring exercises which are recorded in the general report.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many times and when the different institutions of the European Community *(a)* discussed the subject of environmental pollution produced by the use of pesticides, especially dieldrene, in farming activities and *(b)* discussed proposals aimed at controlling or establishing specific limits to the use of pesticides in farming and dieldrene in particular; and what the position of the United Kingdom and of each of the other member countries was in each of such discussions.

Mr. Ryder: My Department is responsible for discussions within the European Community on the prohibition of "plant protection products", that is pesticides used in agriculture, and on the presence of much pesticides in food. All member states, including the United Kingdom, have implemented directive 79/117 which prohibited plant protection use of dieldrin. In this context all member states, including the United Kingdom, supported proposals to set residue limits for dieldrin which preclude its use.

Public Representations

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which subject within his Department's range of responsibilities has generated most representations from the public in the past 12 months; and if he is able to estimate the numbers by correspondence and telephone calls.

Mr. MacGregor: This information can be given only at disproportionate cost.

Chernobyl

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to be in a position to make his response to the recommendations contained in the Agriculture Committee's report on the Government's handling of the Chernobyl incident.

Mr. Ryder: The Government's response to this report was submitted on 20 October.

Wool Guarantee

Mr. Curry: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in the light of the Government's intention to end the potato guarantee, if he will make a statement on the future of the wool guarantee.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government set guaranteed prices for wool and potatoes only. The intention to end the potato guarantee and review the potato marketing support arrangements was announced earlier this year. The financial agreement between the Government and the British Wool Marketing Board expires on 30 April 1990 and must be reviewed before that date. The prospect of this review, and the announcement on potatoes, have created uncertainties in relation to wool. It therefore seems appropriate to state the Government's intentions on wool as early as possible to remove uncertainty and to give the industry maximum notice of proposed changes.

The board has been notably successful in recent years in promoting improvements in quality and marketing of British wool in the interest of wool producers and consumers. The board also administers on behalf of Government the wool guarantee which operates through a stabilisation fund. This element of Government involvement in the wool market is no longer appropriate since the Government believe that the industry should now be ready to accept financial responsibility for its own affairs. The Government do not intend otherwise to change the marketing arrangements for wool. The marketing of clip wool in the United Kingdom will continue to be organised by the British Wool Marketing Board operating under the British wool marketing scheme.

The Government therefore intend to introduce legislation as soon as parliamentary time permits to abolish the guarantee arrangements under which the Government fix a guaranteed price for wool each year. The precise timing of such a step will be subject to further discussions, but it seems unlikely on present indications to take effect before 1991. Thus guaranteed prices will continue to be fixed for the 1989 and 1990 wool clips. In so far as this would necessarily involve an extension of the current financial agreement between the Government and the British Wool Marketing Board beyond its expiry, when the Government are due to write off any debts outstanding

in the stabilisation fund, the Government will be entering into discussions with the British Wool Marketing Board to agree appropriate arrangements.

SCOTLAND

A7 (Hawick)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what representations have been received about traffic congestion on the A7 trunk route through Hawick at the Commercial road/Mansfield road junction;

(2) what plans he has to relieve the current hold-ups on the A7 trunk route through Hawick at the Commercial road/Mansfield road junction; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department has received one representation.

The sequence of the traffic signals at the junction is being looked at with a view to improving its efficiency. For the longer-term, Borders regional council, the Department's agent authority, is currently considering other ways in which traffic flows at the junction might be improved.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the specific criteria which make it advisable for electricity privatisation in Scotland to retain its vertically integrated structure.

Mr. Lang: We consider that vertical integration is the structure which is best suited to the particular needs and circumstances of Scotland, with its low population density in relation to landmass and its mix of urban and rural communities. The present structure has been a proven success in meeting the needs of all Scottish consumers and the industry privatised on these lines will continue that success and indeed improve on it as full commercial and competitive disciplines are brought to bear. Retention of the existing structure will also minimise disruption in the industry as it moves into the private sector ensuring that it is able to build on what is best in its present arrangements.

Schools (Opting out)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what parents' associations or federations he has consulted before drafting his opting-out proposals for Scottish schools.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have had discussions with a range of parents' organisations on a wide spectrum of educational issues.

There has been no formal consultation on arrangements for opting out. Legislation could do no more than confer a right on parents at individual schools to initiate moves to take their school out of education authority control.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the representatives of the Education Institute of Scotland; and if he discussed or consulted them about his plans to introduce a new education Bill with opting-out proposals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend last met representatives of the Educational Institute of Scotland in December 1986 following publication of the Main report on the pay and conditions of teachers. There was no discussion of opting-out on that occasion.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of Scottish head teachers and teachers in order to consult them about proposals for opting-out.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have met representatives of Scottish head teachers on a number of occasions over recent months.

There has been no formal consultation on arrangements for opting out.

School Premises (Community Use)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many state *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Scotland have their premises used by community groups (i) more than three times a year and (ii) more than 12 times a year;

(2) how many state primary schools in Scotland allow their premises to be used by community groups *(a)* three times a year at least, *(b)* between four to 12 times a year and *(c)* more than 13 times a year;

(3) how many state secondary schools in Scotland allow their premises to be used by community groups *(a)* at least three times a year, *(b)* between four to 12 times a year and *(c)* more than 13 times a year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Schools (Parental Involvement)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many state primary schools in Scotland involve parents in school activities (i) occasionally and (ii) on a regular basis; and which type of activities tend to attract more parents' involvement;

(2) how many state secondary schools in Scotland involve parents in school activities (i) occasionally and (ii) on a regular basis; and which type of activities tend to attract more parents' involvement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Detailed information on individual school activities is not held centrally. There is considerable evidence that parents wish to be more closely involved with their children's education and want more and better information about their progress. Our plans for the introduction of school boards and for the review of curriculum and assessment are intended to meet these needs.

Physical Education

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many state secondary schools in Scotland provide 50 per cent. of their classes or more with physical education practice (i) more than twice a week, (ii) twice a week, (iii) once a week and (iv) none;

(2) how many state primary schools in Scotland provide 50 per cent. of their classes or more with physical education practice (i) more than twice a week, (ii) twice a week, (iii) once a week and (iv) none.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

The guidelines on the secondary school curriculum in Scotland issued last year by the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum recommend that a minimum of 7 per cent. of available time in S1 and S2, and between 5 per cent. and 15 per cent. in S3 and S4, should be allocated to physical education.

Schools (Sports Facilities)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the percentage of state primary schools which in Scotland have (i) their own sports facilities or (ii) regular access to other schools or council sports facilities;

(2) what is the percentage of state secondary schools which in Scotland have (i) their own sports facilities or (ii) regular access to other schools or council sports facilities.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many unemployed people under 25 years of age in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde, *(c)* Greater Glasgow and *(d)* Glasgow, Provan were without jobs for more than (1) 12 months, (2) between six months and 12 months, and (3) up to six months, in 1976, 1980 and 1987.

Mr. Lang: The available information is shown in the table. Parliamentary constituency figures were not compiled before June 1983. Figures for 1976 other than the Scottish totals could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Unemployed claimants under 25 (July)

	1976	*1980*	*1987*
Scotland			
over 12 months	2,770	10,057	34,847
6-12 months	5,547	16,396	27,363
up to 6 months	34,703	82,684	62,297
Strathclyde Region			
over 12 months	n.a.	6,996	21,077
6-12 months	n.a.	10,359	14,964
up to 6 months	n.a.	47,656	32,600
Glasgow Travel-to-Work Area			
over 12 months	n.a.	4,293	13,009
6-12 months	n.a.	5,984	8,470
up to 6 months	n.a.	27,355	19,172
Glasgow Provan Parliamentary Constituency			
over 12 months	n.a.	n.a.	1,400
6-12 months	n.a.	n.a.	734
up to 6 months	n.a.	n.a.	1,255

Due to changes in the coverage of the statistics during the period and to the boundaries of travel-to-work areas the figures are not comparable.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many unemployed people aged under 25 years there were in August 1988 in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde, *(c)* Greater Glasgow, and *(d)* Glasgow, Provan.

Mr. Lang: The number of unemployed claimants under 25 years of age in the areas requested on 14 July 1988, the latest date for which information is available, is shown in the table.

Unemployed claimants under 25 on 14 July 1988

Area	*Number*
Scotland	100,826
Strathclyde Region	56,612
Glasgow travel-to-work area	34,005
Glasgow Provan Parliamentary Constituency	2,750

This information is available in the Library

Sport and Leisure

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the private sector contribution to (1) sport and (2) other leisure facilities in Scotland in *(a)* percentage of the total expenditure in such activities and *(b)* actual terms at current price, for each year since 1975;

(2) what information he has as to how many people in (1) Scotland, (2) Strathclyde and (3) Glasgow used *(a)* private sport and other leisure facilities and *(b)* local authorities' sport and other leisure facilities, for each year since 1975.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many people in Scotland made, on a regular basis, use of sports and leisure facilities in Scotland during the period 1986-87.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Surveys of this kind are not made. Figures for average participation based on random sampling are available from the Scottish Sports Council, 1 St. Colme Street, Edinburgh.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many people in Scotland are working in management of local authorities' sport and other leisure facilities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the central Government contribution to Scottish local authorities' spending on (1) sports, and (2) other leisure facilities in Scotland, for each year since 1975.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Substantial support was provided in each year through rate support grant, which was not however hypothecated to individual services. Direct grants and centrally funded agency contributions were as in the table.

Year	*(1) Sport*	*(2) Other Leisure Facilities*
1975-76	61,500	139,000
1976-77	169,400	138,622
1977-78	105,000	155,700
1978-79	296,300	332,140
1979-80	265,500	1,196,063
1980-81	538,577	3,486,022
1981-82	[1]11,322,309	[2]15,792,907
1982-83	2,164,546	4,958,102
1983-84	2,602,182	3,300,494
1984-85	2,105,519	2,346,502
1985-86	2,154,703	1,995,380
1986-87	[3]5,439,385	[4]4,151,079
1987-88	3,258,076	2,466,747

[1] Includes £10,758,505 for 1975-82.
[2] Includes £11,704,043 for 1975-82.
[3] Includes £3,284,682 for 1985-87.
[4] Includes £2,599,591 for 1985-87.

These Scottish Development Agency expenditures cannot now be disaggregated.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated central Government contribution for the (1) sports, and (2) other leisure activities in Scotland for 1989-90.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Sports Council has been advised to plan for grant-in-aid amounting to £4·92 million in 1989-90. Other centrally funded agencies can be expected to make a further significant contribution to sports and leisure activities. Central Government will continue to support local government expenditure through revenue support grant, which will not be hypothecated to individual services.

School Meals

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the price of a school meal in (1) Aberdeen, (2) Dundee, (3) Edinburgh, and (4) Glasgow for each year since 1976 at current prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested was not collected centrally prior to 1981. Details from 1981 to 1988, taken from the annual school meals census carried out in January each year are as follows for the regions concerned.

Charge for a fixed price school meal adjusted to 1988-89 prices using the GDP deflator

(pence)

	Grampian		*Tayside*		*Lothian*		*Strathclyde*	
Year	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Primary*	*Secondary*
1981	65	65	61·9	61·9	54	54	61·9	61·9
1982	59·1	63·4	63·4	63·4	49·3	49·3	63·4	63·4
1983	55·2	59·2	59·2	65·7	59·2	59·2	65·7	65·7
1984	56·5	69·1	56·5	62·8	56·5	56·5	66·5	66·5
1985	60·1	72·2	60·1	60·1	60·1	66·1	66·1	61·1
1986	62·4	73·8	62·4	62·4	56·7	62·4	65·8	65·8
1987	63·7	74·6	65·9	65·9	54·9	60·4	67·0	67·0
1988	62·7	73·2	62·7	62·7	52·3	57·5	65·8	65·8

NHS Beds

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the four areas in Scotland most affected by the reduction of 4,000 available staffed beds from 1981, reported in the September 1988 "Health Briefing" of the information and statistics division of the Scottish Health Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The provisional figure for the reduction in the average number of available staffed beds in NHS hospitals in Scotland between the years ending 31 March 1981 and 1988 was 3,663. In terms of absolute numbers the health boards most affected were Greater Glasgow (−1,836), Lanarkshire (−579), Forth Valley (−463) and Tayside (−408). The reduction in the total number of beds has to be seen in the context that Scotland still has at the latest date for which comparisons can be made 60 per cent. more beds in relation to population than England.

Hospitals (Readmissions)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of the 871,287 in-patients discharged so far in 1988 were *(a)* readmitted and *(b)* applied for readmission suffering from the same complaints as, or complaints related to those for which they had originally been admitted.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Dyslexia

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children born, for each year since 1975, have been found suffering from dyslexia in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde, *(c)* Greater Glasgow and *(d)* Glasgow, Provan.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Dyslexic Children

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what educational and health facilities are provided for dyslexic children in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde, *(c)* greater Glasgow and *(d)* Glasgow, Provan.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is, for each year since 1974, the public contribution to private nursing homes in Scotland in 1988 moneys.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information in the form requested is not held centrally. The table gives the information available centrally, which relates to payments by health boards for the care of patients in hospitals not vested in the Secretary of State. In addition, people in nursing homes may be able to get help with fees from the social security system.

Year	*Amount in respect of NHS patients (at 1988 prices) £'000*	*Amount in respect of War Pensioners (at 1988 prices) £'000*
1974-75	6,692	185
1975-76	7,287	343
1976-77	7,571	308
1977-78	7,455	283
1978-79	8,137	332
1979-80	7,685	400
1980-81	8,495	435
1981-82	9,170	390
1982-83	8,639	431
1983-84	9,011	286
1984-85	9,312	257

Year	Amount in respect of NHS patients (at 1988 prices) £'000	Amount in respect of War Pensioners (at 1988 prices) £'000
1985-86	8,352	519
1986-87	8,505	597
1987-88	9,690	374

Drinking Water

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last ordered a report on the state of drinking water in Scotland and particularly on the existence of toxic substances in drinking water.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for the quality of public drinking water supplies lies with regional and islands councils as water authorities. The Scottish Development Department gathers information on water quality from the authorities from time to time as necessary. Our most recent inquiries have included the collection of information on the presence of pesticides in drinking water in late 1987 and on lead in the summer of 1988.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total cost of programmes aimed at the purification of rivers, lakes and other sources of irrigation and drinking water in Scotland in accordance with European Community directives and regulations.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. The total cost of local authority capital programmes for water and sewerage services is over £100 million in 1988-89, but it is not possible to apportion this sum between expenditure incurred to meet EC standards and that consequent on domestic requirements.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the sources of drinking water and irrigation in Scotland in urgent need of purification according to national and European Community regulations and directives.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There is no specific legislation governing the quality of water used for irrigation. The river purification authorities (the seven mainland river purification boards and the islands councils) are responsible for monitoring the quality of inland, estuarial and coastal waters and for securing improvements to such waters where necessary.

The quality of sources of drinking water is regulated by EC directives 75/440/EEC (quality of surface water intended for the abstraction of drinking water) and 80/68/EEC (protection of groundwater against pollution caused by certain dangerous substances). There are no such sources in Scotland which require urgent improvement.

The quality of drinking water supplies is regulated by EC directive 80/778/EEC on the quality of water intended for human consumption, which came into force in July 1985. Under article 20 of the directive an application may be made for a delay in complying with its standards provided that an action programme is submitted to the Commission with an appropriate timetable for the improvement of water quality. Some 201 such applications in respect of Scottish supplies were forwarded in 1985. Of these, 111 have since been completely withdrawn and a further 21 withdrawn in part as improvement programmes have progressed. A separate application has been made relating to concentrations of lead in a number of supplies: in this context, I would refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on 4 December 1987, at columns *749-50*. The timetables for improvement programmes are being discussed with the Commission.

Water Fluoridation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest information regarding water fluoridation in Scotland and the toxicity of fluorosilicic acid.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no fluoridation schemes in operation in Scotland at present. Draft guidance on the implementation of the Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985, including a model formal agreement and a revised indemnity for water authorities, has been prepared and was recently sent to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities for comment. Its response is awaited. There has been no change in the toxicity of fluorosilicic acid.

Free School Meals

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many school children in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Glasgow qualified for free school meals for each year since 1976;

(2) how many school children in Scotland qualified for free meals for each year since 1976.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information regarding the number of school children who would qualify for free school meals is not available. Details of the number who actually received free meals, taken from the annual school meal census carried out each January, are as follows:

Number of children in receipt of free school meals

Year	Strathclyde	Glasgow Division	Scotland
1976	71,086	32,179	116,805
1977	71,390	32,726	117,790
1978	94,357	39,239	155,716
1979	84,999	37,234	142,989
1980	72,881	31,743	122,618
1981	74,565	32,913	114,713
1982	79,406	34,156	124,547
1983	85,426	36,045	132,953
1984	82,348	33,791	129,335
1985	84,096	33,947	136,669
1986	84,659	34,059	136,627
1987	87,364	34,671	143,194
1988	87,147	35,337	145,219

Student Population

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the 1988-89 student population registered in state *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Scotland; and how many of them are (i) boys and (ii) girls.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The 1988-89 student population of state schools in Scotland is not currently available. Information from 1987-88 is set out in the table.

Pupils in Education Authority Schools, 1987

	Primary	*Secondary*
Boys	220,840	164,200
Girls	210,080	162,970
Total	430,920	327,170

Scottish Sports Council

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in the light of the Scottish Sports Council report, "Sport 2000", he will give local authorities the extra £18 million needed annually until the end of this century, in order to carry out its capital investment, according to the Scottish Sports Council.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is for local authorities to determine their priorities within the resources available to them.

St. Ninian's Isle Church Site

Mr. Wallace To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any proposals to bring the St. Ninian's Isle church site, Shetland, into the guardianship of Historic Buildings and Monuments (Scotland); and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilon: We have no proposals to bring St. Ninian's Isle church site into state care.

Offensive Weapons

Mr. Wallace To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many reported crimes and convictions there were in 1987 in respect of offences involving the following weapons *(a)* shotguns, *(b)* air guns, *(c)* other firearms, *(d)* crossbows, *(e)* knives, *(f)* martial arts weapons and *(g)* bows and arrows.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Comprehensive information is available only on crimes and offences in which firearms were used. In 1987, 1,429 such crimes and offences were recorded in Scotland. Of these 142 involved shotguns, 1,094 involved airweapons and 193 involved other types of firearm, including imitation and unidentified firearms.

Convictions for crimes and offences involving weapons cannot generally be separately identified in the available statistics. Total figures are available, however, on convictions in 1987 for the following crimes and offences which generally involve the use of a weapon of some sort.

Crime/Offence	*Convictions (1987, Scotland)*
Carrying an offensive weapon	1,086
Offences under Restriction of Offensive Weapons Act	3
Possessing firearm with intent	9
Reckless conduct with firearms	129
Miscellaneous firearms offences	354

Inverclyde Royal Hospital, Greenock (Inquiry)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received a copy of the report of the committee of inquiry into the conduct of a consultant surgeon, employed at the Inverclyde royal hospital, Greenock, following the death of a patient; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. The committee of inquiry will submit its report to Argyll and Clyde health board in accordance with the procedures in Scottish hospital memorandum 49/1968. It will be for the health board to consider the committee's findings and to decide what action, if any, is required.

Barlinnie Prison

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce and proposals for changing the future role of Barlinnie prison.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have no proposals to change the future role of Barlinnie prison.

Education System

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what distinctive traditions of the Scottish education system he is seeking to maintain.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Those which command the support of parents, such as breadth of study, competence in literacy and numeracy, acceptance of the need for discipline and hard work, equality of opportunity and the pursuit of excellence.

Forestry Vehicles (Road Damage)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has decided to allow the Borders region a specific grant to make good roads damaged by heavy vehicles used for forestry; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 October 1988]:* It is for the local authority to identify its needs in the production of its transport policies and programme statement and to determine the priority to be given to forestry road schemes. Full account of such work is taken in determining capital allocations but the Government have not been persuaded of the case for extra support.

Scottish Bus Group

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has yet decided to privatise the constituent parts of the Scottish Bus Group on the basis of all the existing companies; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 October 1988]:* My right hon. and learned Friend hopes shortly to announce the detailed pattern of privatisation in terms of the units to be offered for sale.

ENVIRONMENT

Open Spaces (Development)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what plans he has to ensure that where permission for development of green belt or urban open space land has been refused on appeal there should be a five-year moratorium within which further applications for development of that land will not be entertained;

(2) if he will take steps to ensure that when considering any planning application for development of a given site in

green belt or urban open space land in respect of which an earlier permission has been given in the last five years, the planing authority should consider the application in the light of the local plan as if that earlier permission did not exist.

Mr. Chope: We have no present plans to restrict the number or nature of planning applications that may be submitted. There is, however, a general presumption against inappropriate development within green belts, as set out in "Planning Policy Guidance Note 2". An extant planning permission may be, and relevant provisions of a development plan will be, material considerations to which a local planning authority is obliged to have regard when determining a subsequent application for development of the same site.

Stop Notices

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many section 90 (Town and Country Planning Act 1971) stop notices were served by local authorities in each of the last three years;

(2) if he will list the number of prosecutions which were instigated in each of the last three years by local authorities as a result of failure to observe the requirements of section 90 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

(3) how many stop notices have been issued by local authorities since March 1987 following his Department's revised guidance about stop notices in DoE circular 4/87.

Mr. Chope: I regret that none of the information requested by my hon. Friend is available and it could be obtained from local planning authorities only at disproportionate cost.

Planning Enforcement Powers

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the report by Robert Carnwath, QC reviewing planning enforcement powers.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend hopes to receive the report early next year.

North Sea Pollution

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further statement on North sea pollution and his plans to tackle it.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The quality status report prepared by experts from all the North sea states for the second international conference on protection of the North sea chaired by my right hon. Friend, indicated that generally the North sea was in good condition, although there were some problem areas, particularly on the eastern coast for example in the Wadden sea and German Bight where the major continental rivers discharge into slow moving shallow water. At last year's conference we agreed a very wide range of measures covering all the main aspects of man's inputs to the sea including a substantial reduction of the input of dangerous substances to rivers and estuaries and an end to dumping of harmful industrial waste and waste incineration at sea.

We have taken an early lead in implementing these measures and the progress being made by all the North sea states will be reviewed as part of the third North sea conference to be held in the Hague on 7 and 8 March 1990.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review his decisions concerning environmental features of the proposed east London river crossing road, particularly relating to Oxleas wood.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend gave careful consideration to the environmental effects of the proposed road and its impact on Oxleas wood in reaching a joint decision with the Secretary of State for Transport on the inspector's report relating to the proposed east London river crossing. They see no reason to review that decision.

Joint Local Valuation Panels (Leicester)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why his Department instructed the joint local valuation panels for Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire to close their administrative unit at Leicester and move to Nottingham; and what consideration was given to making the new central unit as readily accessible as possible.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The three panels and the Department agreed last year that the present offices at Leicester and Nottingham would be inadequate to cope with the future workload and staffing requirements arising from the non-domestic rating revaluation and the panels' new role as the appellate body for community charge appeals. In common with other panels which are jointly administered by a single clerk, it was decided that a single office should be established. Nottingham was the preferred location of the panels, as 60 per cent. of the workload of the three counties is drawn from that county and the nearby area of Loughborough.

The service to appellants will not be affected. Local valuation court hearings are held at centres throughout the three counties.

Pollution (Expenditure)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the amounts spent by his Department in each of the years 1983 to 1987 in order to combat *(a)* acid rain pollution, *(b)* ozone layer pollution, *(c)* motor vehicle pollution and *(d)* marine pollution.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has spent the following amounts on research to combat these aspects of pollution:

£000

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Acid rain	1,050	1,440	2,420	3,600	3,470
Ozone layer	70	90	50	100	120
Motor vehicle	450	380	790	750	1,000
Marine and estuarine	680	820	690	830	930

On implementation, the Government's policy is that the polluter pays.

Environmental Research (Expenditure)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the expenditure of his Department in each of the years 1979 to 1988 inclusive on research into environmental issues.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Expenditure on environmental research covering radioactive wastes, air pollution, land wastes, toxic substances, countryside, water, planning, natural resources and local government for 1978-79 to 1987-88 is as follows:

DOE expenditure on environmental research

	Outturn £ million
1978-79	19·8
1979-80	19·4
1980-81	25·4
1981-82	25·3
1982-83	23·1
1983-84	22·2
1984-85	21·6
1985-86	26·6
1986-87	27·4
1987-88	28·8

Wildlife (Codes)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the budgets, staffing and general arrangements existing within his Department for the enforcement of all national and international codes in respect of the trade and commercial exploitation of wildlife; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Enforcement is a matter for Customs and Excise or police as appropriate. This Department is responsible for the licensing of trade under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and EC regulation 3626/82 and issues guidance to licensing authorities administering the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 and Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976.

There are 32 staff in the wildlife division of the Department concerned with these matters, not all of whom are engaged entirely on this work. They may be assisted, as required, by a panel of 90 fee-paid inspectors.

The cost of the full-time staff in some way involved in these matters for 1987-88 is estimated to be £578,553.

Wildlife (Imports)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to prohibit the import of all wildlife and derivative products from non-CITES countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Adequate measures are already taken in the application of CITES controls and stipulate that documentation from non-party states can be accepted provided it complies with the requirements of the convention. Imports from non-party states are accepted only if covered by such documents. These measures conform to resolution 3.8 of the third conference of the parties to the convention. In any event, the CITES regulation could be amended only by the European Community.

Building Research Establishment

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about future management arrangements for the Building Research Establishment.

Mr. Ridley: I propose that the Building Research Establishment (BRE) should be a candidate for executive agency status within my Department. I shall be drawing up more detailed proposals relating to the targets and operation of BRE on which I shall consult the trades unions representing BRE staff and would hope that the new agency would come into operation by 1 April 1990.

Important changes in the organisation and funding of BRE have been introduced recently as a result of a study undertaken by Lord Chilver and Sir Peter Harrop. The proposal to designate BRE as an executive agency is fully consistent with these developments, and will extend BRE's ability to compete for commissions from both the public and private sectors.

Rating Reform

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will show the percentage change from the anticipated levels of community charge published on 23 June for each authority in England and Wales for 1988-89 as a result of the implementation of reforms to housing finance proposed in the consultation paper, "A New Regime for Local Authority Housing in England and Wales".

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 19 October 1988]:*

Because of the inevitable uncertainties entailed in predicting the detailed effects at the local level of possible changes to the powers of local authorities and other changes, our practice is to publish figures based on current responsibilities and expenditure patterns.

My right hon. Friend gave details of 1987-88 contributions from the housing revenue account to the general rate fund in response to a question from the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 22 October 1987 at column *863*.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will take steps to prevent commercial agencies from setting up national databases for keeping track of community charge payers.

Mr. Ridley: The rules governing the use of information to compile and maintain community charges registers, including the sources from which such information can be requested, will be tightly controlled in regulations to be made under schedule 2 to the Local Government Finance Act 1988. Any agency offering to provide such information would also need to bear in mind the implications of the Data Protection Act 1984.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with agencies dealing with the homeless about the designation of hostels for collective community charge.

Mr. Ridley: Following discussions with such agencies, we have provided in the Local Government Finance Act 1988 that the residents of certain hostels will be exempt from the community charge. We intend to consult interested bodies shortly on our detailed proposals for identifying such hostels.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to publish advice to local authorities on the enforcement of joint and several liability for community charge.

Mr. Ridley: I hope to do so shortly. Discussions are being held with representatives of the local authority associations with a view to publishing a joint practice note on this subject.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discretion local authorities will have in the enforcement of joint and several liability for community charge against deserted spouses.

Mr. Ridley: Where a community charge remains unpaid, and a couple have separated, local authorities will be able to take enforcement action against one or other, or both spouses, as appropriate.

Urban Regeneration

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what his estimate is of the amount of derelict land in need of regeneration in order to remove urban blight in England; what his estimate is of the cost of a programme of regeneration; and what plans he has to combat such urban blight.

Mr. Trippier: The 1988 survey of derelict land in England will provide an estimate of how much derelict land in urban areas justifies reclamation. It will be published in summer 1989. As I announced in the House on 20 July, when I have the results of the survey I shall reconsider the criteria for the use of derelict land grant.

Urban Blight

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what have been the amounts spent by his Department in each of the last five years in order to combat urban blight.

Mr. Trippier: Detailed figures are not available in the form requested since "urban blight" is not a definition in official use. But the resources made available by the Department for bringing back into use derelict, unused or waste land in urban areas have increased from about £100 million in 1983-84 to a forecast £180 million in the current financial year.

Local Planning Authorities (Decisions)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against the decisions of local planning authorities have been *(a)* made to him and *(b)* upheld by him in each of the years 1979 to 1988 inclusive.

Mr. Chope: The total numbers of appeals received against local planning authorities' decisions, or against their failure to make a decision within the statutory period, and the numbers upheld were as follows:

Year	*Appeals received*	*Appeals allowed*
1979	12,990	2,602
1980	16,208	4,044
1981	16,637	4,721
1982	13,900	4,003
1983	13,699	3,633
1984	16,192	3,773
1985	17,053	5,477
1985-86	17,839	5,581
1986-87	19,856	6,208
1987-88	22,482	6,955

Local Authority Accounts

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any authority which had closed its accounts and had them audited by 7 July produced figures different from those held by his Department as at midnight on 6 July

Mr. Ridley: One authority's accounts for 1985-86 which were closed and audited by 7 July showed total expenditure £4,299 lower than the figures held by my Department by 7 July. Two other authorities' accounts for 1986-87 were closed and audited by 7 July, but the results have not yet been sent to my Department.

Rate Support Grant

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from authorities following his announcement on 7 July freezing the rate support grant system on the basis of data held by him at midnght on 6 July.

Mr. Ridley: I have received representations from about 60 local authorities on my proposals to introduce a Bill to Parliament to implement the policy put forward on 7 July. My officials have also had two meetings with the local authority associations at which representations were made.

Non-Domestic Property (Revaluation)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to announce the preliminary results of the revaluation of non-domestic property.

Mr. Ridley: I propose to announce shortly the results of a sample survey by the Inland Revenue of the likely outcome of the non-domestic revaluation for the main categories of properties and for individual regions.

Capital Expenditure and Finance

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish a summary of responses to the document "Capital Expenditure and Finance: A Consultation Paper", issued by him on 7 July.

Mr. Ridley: I shall consider whether this is necessary since responses are frequently published by those who submit them, and copies of almost all responses are placed in the Library.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what effect the proposal contained in the document entitled "Capital Expenditure and Finance: A Consultation Paper" for local authorities to repay debt in equal instalments of principal will have on local authorities' housing revenue accounts and general funds in 1990-91.

Mr. Ridley: The proposal that local authorities should provide for debt repayment by equal instalments of principal would ensure that from 1990-91 their housing revenue accounts and general funds reflect on a consistent basis the debt that local authorities have incurred.

Non-Domestic Rates

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce his detailed plans for phasing-in the effects of the national non-domestic rate and the revaluation of non-domestic property.

Mr. Ridley: I propose to issue a consultation paper shortly.

Local Government Finance Act

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions his Department has had with *(a)* the Central Office of Information, *(b)* commercial advertising agencies and *(c)* the Independent Broadcasting Authority about future publicity campaigns on the implementation of the Local Government Finance Act.

Mr. Ridley: The COI is currently producing an update of the existing booklet explaining the community charge, following Royal Assent to the Local Government Finance Act 1988. My Department has had no discussions with commercial advertising agencies or with the IBA.

Public Representations

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which subject within his Department's range of responsibilities has generated most representations from the public in the past 12 months; and if he is able to estimate the numbers by correspondence and telephone calls.

Mr. Ridley: The Department receives a large number of representations from the public on a wide range of subjects. The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate costs.

Dwellings (Unlawful Occupation)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the most recent figures he has for the number of local authority dwellings unlawfully occupied in each London borough.

Mr. Trippier: The numbers of local authority dwellings in unlicensed occupation at April 1988, as reported by London boroughs in their housing investment programme returns, are as follows:

	Numbers
City of London	0
Barking and Dagenham	6
Barnet	0
Bexley	0
Brent	229
Bromley	7
Camden	340
Croydon	2
Ealing	79
Enfield	22
Greenwich	27
Hackney	953
Hammersmith and Fulham	143
Haringey	165
Harrow	0
Havering	0
Hillingdon	0
Hounslow	18
Islington	449
Kensington and Chelsea	6
Kingston upon Thames	8
Lambeth	1,170
Lewisham	163
Merton	18
Newham	52
Redbridge	7
Richmond upon Thames	5
Southwark	1,672
Sutton	0
Tower Hamlets	426
Waltham Forest	48
Wandsworth	65
Westminster	98

Castleford Town Centre Redevelopment

Mr. Loftbouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make a decision on Wakefield metropolitan district council's application for urban development grant in respect of the Castleford town centre redevelopment scheme.

Mr. Trippier: I expect to be able to announce a decision shortly.

Disabled People (Adapted Dwellings)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has about the total number of specially adapted dwellings for the disabled built in England and Wales;

(2) what records he has relating to the number of specially adapted dwellings for the disabled built in the private sector in 1987;

(3) what information he has regarding the number of major adaptations for the disabled to council dwellings carried out by housing and social services authorities in England and Wales since 1979;

(4) if he has records relating to the number of specially adapted dwellings for the disabled built by local authorities in 1987.

Mr. Trippier: Numbers of new dwellings built in England for the chronically sick and disabled by local authorities and new towns and the private sector are published in table 6.7 of "Housing and Construction Statistics: 1977-1987". Table 7.5 of the same publication gives numbers of conversions or improvements in England and Wales carried out on local authority dwellings to provide accommodation for the disabled. Local authorities give estimates of the stock of dwellings designed or adapted for the disabled in their annual housing investment programme returns. Figures for April 1987 appear in the "Grossed HIP print for 1986-87". Copies of all these documents are in the Library.

Council Tenancies (Transfers)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards the voting method to be used for the transfer of council tenancies to private landlords, as proposed in the Housing Bill.

Mr. Trippier: Arrangements for voting on tenants' choice are set out in clauses 101 and 102 of the Housing Bill. Our policy, which will be given effect by the Bill itself, by regulations governing tenant consultation and through conditions which the Housing Corporation will impose when approving prospective new landlords, is as follows. Tenants should have all the information they need to register a considered view on a proposal for transfer. The proposal will include an offer which is contractually binding on the prospective new landlord, which covers tenancy terms, including rent levels and arrangements for reviewing it. The ballot itself should be run fairly and effectively by an independent teller. Appropriate safeguards are proposed for tenants whether or not they wish to transfer so that no secure tenant who does not wish to transfer need do so against his or her will. In addition, my noble Friend the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside has just tabled an amendment for debate in another place to make the prospective new landlord's ability to proceed following a vote dependent on achieving a minimum turnout by 50 per cent. of eligible tenants.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the latest figures for the number of those in England and Wales who are in bed-and-breakfast accommodation paid for by a local authority; and if he will give the figures from 1978 onwards.

Mr. Trippier: Estimates of the number of households temporarily placed in bed and breakfast accommodation, by English local authorities under the homelessness provisions of Housing Acts, are as follows:

Number of Households in Bed and Breakfast at the end of the year

Year	*Number*
1978	1,260
1979	2,030
1980	1,330
1981	1,520
1982	1,640
1983	2,700
1984	3,670
1985	5,360
1986	8,990
1987	10,370
1988[1]	11,270

[1] June

Some of the cost of providing this accommodation may be offset by contributions from the household or by DHSS allowances.

For information about Welsh authorities I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Market Rents

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate has been made by his Department of the numbers currently on local authority housing waiting lists who will have the financial means to pay market rents in the privately rented sector when the Housing Bill becomes law.

Mr. Trippier: We have made no such estimate.

Council House Starts

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council dwellings starts have occurred in England and Wales so far in the current year; and if he will give the figures for council starts in 1978 and each successive full year.

Mr. Trippier: It is provisionally estimated that in the eight months to August 1988 local authority and new town housebuilding starts amounted to 9,400 in England and 500 in Wales. Figures for 1978 to 1987 are published in tables 6*(a)* and 6*(b)*, respectively, of "Housing and Construction Statistics, 1977-1987", a copy of which is available in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Education (Strangford)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many pupils there are at each primary school in the constituency of Strangford; and how many pupils there are at each secondary and grammar school in the constituency of Strangford, on the most recent date for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

Enrolment (at January 1988)

Primary Schools	*Numbers*
Alexander Dickson, Newtownards	171
Andrews Memorial, Comber	507
Ballyeasborough, Portavogie	58
Ballykeigle, Comber	51
Ballyvester, Donaghadee	75
Ballywalter, Newtownards	140
Belvoir, Belfast	313
Braniel, Belfast	342
Cairnshill, Newtownbreda	357
Carrowdore, Newtownards	158
Castle Gardens, Newtownards	630
Carrickmannon, Ballygowan	68
Comber, Newtownards	484
Cottown, Bangor	41
Donaghadee, Donaghadee	343
Greyabbey, Newtownards	71
Kircubbin, Newtownards	52
Kirkistown, Cloughey, Newtownards	53
Killinchy, Comber	225
Leadhill, Belfast	191
Londonderry Model, Newtownards	259
Loughries, Newtownards	67
Millisle, Newtownards	198
Moneyrea, Newtownards	134
Newtownards Model, Newtownards	415
Newtownbreda, Belfast	245
O'Neill Memorial, Belfast	54
Portaferry, Newtownards	42
Portavogie, Newtownards	136
St. Anne's, Donaghadee	54
St. Finian's, Newtownards	233
St. Mary's, Ballygowan	66
St. Mary's, Comber	30
St. Mary's, Kircubbin	206
St. Mary's, Portaferry	352

Primary Schools	*Numbers*
St. Patrick's, Portaferry	88
Victoria, Newtownards	804
Victoria, Ballyhalbert, Newtownards	71
West Winds, Newtownards	258
Secondary Intermediate Schools	
Comber, Newtownards	630
Donaghadee, Donaghadee	330
Glastry, Newtownards	486
Lagan College, Belfast	500
Movilla, Newtownards	707
Newtownbreda, Belfast	741
Scrabo, Newtownards	502
St. Columba's, Portaferry	404
Grammar Schools	
Regent House, Newtownards	1,542

Education (Armagh)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of all primary schools in the city of Armagh and the number of pupils at each primary school.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

Enrolment (at January 1988)

Primary schools	*Number*
Armagh Christian Brothers'	467
Armstrong	419
Drelincourt Infants	44
Mount St. Catherine's Convent	475
St. Malachy's Boys'	195
St. Patrick's	475

Regent House School, Newtownards

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many pupils are attending Regent House school, Newtownards; how many new non-fee-paying pupils were accepted for this academic year; how many new fee-paying pupils were accepted for this academic year; how many applicants for places at the school were rejected for this academic year; and how many of these were for non-fee-paying places.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

1,609 pupils are attending Regent House school; 1,411 in the secondary department and 198 in the preparatory department;

219 non-fee-paying pupils and no fee-paying pupils were accepted into first form this academic year;

15 first preference applicants, of whom 14 were eligible for non-fee-paying places, were not allocated places this academic year.

Mourne Mountains

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to report to the House, in accordance with the requirements of section 18(8) of the Agriculture Act 1986, on the performance of management agreements in the Mourne mountains environmentally sensitive area; and whether any such report will describe the steps taken to monitor the effect of the agreements on wildlife and the landscape in the area.

Mr. Viggers: The Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland, in accordance with article 3(8) of the Agriculture (Environmental Areas) (Northern Ireland) Order 1987, will monitor and make reports on the effects of the ESA management agreements. As it will take some time for the effects of the ESA scheme to become apparent it is likely that the first report will be made in early 1990 and it will, inter alia, describe the steps taken in monitoring the effects on the wildlife and landscape in the area.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, in respect of the Mourne mountains environmentally sensitive area (ESA) in South Down *(a)* the total extent, in hectares of the environmentally sensitive area *(b)* the extent of agricultural land within the environmentally sensitive area *(c)* the number of farmers eligible to enter into management agreements in the environmentally sensitive areas and *(d)* the total area of land covered by agreements in the environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Viggers: The information requested is as follows:

	Hectares
(a) Total extent of the ESA	57,000
(b) Extent of eligible agricultural land within the ESA	33,000
(c) Number of farmes eligible to enter into management agreements in the ESA	1,435
(d) Total area of land covered by agreements in the ESA	[1]9,227

[1] Have been offered for participation in the ESA Scheme.

Artificial Insemination

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many commercial artificial insemination services are presently licensed by the Department of Agriculture (NI).

Mr. Viggers: One.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many individuals hold farm inseminator licences granted by the Department of Agriculture (NI).

Mr. Viggers: At 10 October 1988, a total of 1,043 individuals were licensed to perform artificial insemination on cows in their own herds.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to how many licensed technicians are employed by commercial artificial insemination services licensed by the Department of Agriculture (NI).

Mr. Viggers: The Department of Agriculture has issued licences for 45 technicians and a further five licence applications are being considered.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is prepared to issue further commercial artificial insemination service licenses.

Mr. Viggers: No.

Murder Statistics

Mr. Cecil A. Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is the percentage of Irish Republican Army-attributed murders which remain unresolved in north Belfast;

(2) what is the percentage of murders attributed to Protestant paramilitary groups which remain unresolved in north Belfast.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Of the murders carried out by paramilitary organisations in the constituency of Belfast, North since June 1983 some 80 per cent. of those believed by the police to have been carried out by Republican groups remain unresolved while 70 per cent. of those thought to have been carried out by Loyalist groups remain unresolved. Police investigations continue into all unresolved murders and a number of people have recently been charged with murders in this area.

TRANSPORT

New Roads

10. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he takes to ensure that the environment impact of new roads is kept to a minimum.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We take special measures to protect wildlife. We fit schemes into the landscape, plant trees and screen traffic. We will today place in the Library copies of the second edition of the booklet "Transport and the Environment".

Infrastructure Projects

12. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to enourage private sector involvement in transport infrastructure projects.

Mr. Channon: We continue to encourage privately financed projects. The Dartford-Thurrock crossing, the Channel tunnel, the new rail link to Heathrow and the competition for the second Severn crossing all prove that the private sector can make a valuable contribution to providing transport infrastructure. We shall take every opportunity to encourage more schemes.

40. **Sir Geoffrey Finsberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many major transport infrastructure projects have been privately financed since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: Since 1979 the transport infrastructure projects, costing over £10 million, financed fully or partly by the private sector and known to my Department are:

Channel tunnel
The construction of the tunnel—Europe's largest ever private sector civil engineering project—has been entirely financed through the international capital markets. There is no Government funding or financial guarantee; this is ruled out by the treaty and the Channel Tunnel Act. The total financial requirement is £6 billion—this has been raised through £1 billion of equity and £5 billion in credit facilities with an international group of lending banks.

Ports
The privatised Associated British Ports was formed in 1983. Total capital expenditure of the 23 major port authorities from 1980 to 1987 was £534·5 million. Including the following major port developments:

	£ million
Dover	
Reclamation of camber and creation of new berths in Eastern docks (over 5 years)	20
Immingham	
Deepwater LPG terminals—new dock facilities	35
Ramsgate	
New linkspans, land reclamation and outer wall	17
Southampton	
Container handling cranes and machinery	17

Airports
British Airports Authority, privatised in 1987, invested £182 million in capital projects in the year to March 1988 including the north terminal at Gatwick and the new terminal under construction at Stansted. In addition London City airport was built by John Mowlem and Company plc at a cost of some £32 million and is owned by them. The airport opened in October 1987.

Civil Aviation Authority and British Airports Authority

14. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority; and what was discussed.

Mr. Channon: I meet the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority and British Airports Authority plc from time to time to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Railway Development

15. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what major railway development initiatives are planned by British Rail in the next five years.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail's £3·8 billion investment programme for the next five years includes major investment in Channel tunnel rail services, completion of the electrification of the east coast main line and substantial renewals and improvements, including a major programme of rolling stock replacement in the passenger sectors.

Rail Unions

18. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the general secretary of the Transport Salaried Staffs Association; and what was discussed.

35. **Ms. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen; and what was discussed.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met leaders of the TSSA, the NUR and ASLEF on 12 July when he received a deputation to discuss a report which they had commissioned on the quality of service on British Rail.

Central Transport Consultative Committee

19. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of the Central Transport Consultative Committee; and what was discussed.

Mr. Portillo: I met the chairman of the Central Transport Consultative Committee on 18 October 1988. We discussed a wide range of issues.

Road Haulage

20. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when full liberalisation of European road haulage will be achieved.

Mr. Channon: At the end of 1992.

Highway Code

21. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any further plans to revise the contents of the Highway Code.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We last revised the Highway Code in 1987. That dealt with the main changes that were required. We expect to carry out a further, more substantive revision in the light of any legislative changes following the North report on road traffic law.

Heathrow Airport

22. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last visited Heathrow airport.

Mr. Channon: I made a formal visit to Heathrow earlier this year, and used the airport as a passenger last week.

British Rail

23. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail; and what was discussed.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last met the chairman of British Rail on 5 October. A variety of railway matters were discussed, including the Government's approval of investment in new rolling stock.

57. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of British Rail; and what subjects will be discussed.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State plans to meet the chairman of British Rail next on 31 October, to discuss a variety of railway matters.

Heathrow-Paddington Rail Link

24. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the Heathrow-Paddington rail link to come into full operation.

Mr. Portillo: In 1993.

70 mph Speed Limit

25. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received recently on the subject of the 70 mph maximum speed limit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Since the announcement by the Secretary of State in April of the Department's measures to improve safety on motorways, we have received few requests for any change in the motorway speed limit. Most letters press for tighter enforcement and better driving standards generally. The 70 mph national speed limit strikes a balance between the need for fast, convenient travel and safety.

East Midlands Airport

26. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last visited East Midlands airport.

Mr. Channon: I have not yet had an opportunity to visit East Midlands airport.

Road Accident Statistics

27. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the latest figures for the number of road accident victims so far in 1988; and what were the figures for the equivalent periods in 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Details are available in DTp statistics bulletin (88) 12, "Quarterly Road Casualties Great Britain: 2nd Quarter 1988", which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Traffic increased by 6 per cent. between the first half of 1986 and first half of 1987; there was a further increase of 7 per cent. between the same periods of 1987 and 1988.

The provisional estimate for the number of deaths in the first six months of 1988 is 2,282; the same period produced 2,293 deaths in 1987 and 2,393 deaths in 1986.

The number of casualties including slight injuries in the first six months of 1988 is provisionally estimated at 149,900. The casualty figures for 1986 and 1987 are 148,200 and 141,677 respectively.

Gatwick Airport

28. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last visited Gatwick airport.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State uses the airport as a passenger from time to time. He has yet to make a formal visit.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the reasons for designating Gatwick as a hub airport; what is his assessment of the effects of the removal of such designation and of designating Stansted in its place; and what steps he intends to take to ensure that the Civil Aviation Authority, in reviewing London air traffic distribution, considers the implications of such a change.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is no formal procedure for designating airports as "hub" airports. In July 1985, in seeking the advice of the Civil Aviation Authority on London area air traffic distribution policy my right hon. Friend, the then Secretary of State, asked the CAA to have regard to a number of policy objectives including the development of Gatwick as an effective second hub. My right hon. Friend sought fresh advice from the authority in a letter to the chairman of 22 June this year (a copy is in the Library). We expect the CAA to consider fully the effect on the civil aviation industry of various patterns of development for airports in the London area.

LRT (Driver-operated Passenger Doors)

29. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents there have been on London Regional Transport buses with driver-operated passenger doors in each year since their introduction, in proportion to the number of such vehicles in service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Figures for the 24 years since such buses were introduced are not available. Listed in the table are boarding and alighting accident figures in recent years for LRT's subsidiary, London Buses Ltd. Accident rates on one-person-operated (OPO) doored buses have declined. Such buses are five times safer than open-platform crewed buses.

London Buses Ltd: Boarding and Alighting Accidents 1983-87

	Accidents	*Accidents per million passenger journeys*
1983		
OPO bus	575	1·00
Crew bus	2,127	4·15
1984		
OPO bus	807	1·24
Crew bus	2,230	4·37
1985		
OPO bus	749	1·01
Crew bus	1,662	4·15
1986		
OPO bus	737	0·91
Crew bus	1,305	4·56
1987		
OPO bus	801	0·85
Crew bus	922	4·78

Autoguide Experiment

30. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the introduction of the autoguide experiment in London.

67. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the consequences of the introduction of autoguide in London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We issued a consultation document in April setting out our proposals to invite private industry to introduce a pilot autoguide scheme in London by 1990, capable of being upgraded to a fully commercial system. We are now considering the responses and hope to invite proposals for a scheme by the end of the year.

The transport and road research laboratory has estimated that in London autoguide could help drivers to reduce their average journey times by about 10 per cent. and reduce mileage by some 6 per cent.

South London Transport Study

31. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet representatives of south London borough councils to discuss the south London transport study produced by Mott, Hay and Anderson.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is a consultative group for each assessment study comprising departmental officials, officers of the local authorities concerned, representatives of the transport operators and police, and the study consultants. The groups meet on a quarterly basis. The last meeting of the south London consultative group was held on 20 October.

Bus Services

32. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the level of passenger transport demand for bus services since deregulation.

Mr. Portillo: Since deregulation bus mileage is up sharply and operator costs are down. Local authorities outside London are spending some £100 million less a year on subsidy. Historically there has been a steep decline in bus patronage and this trend has continued. For example, in Great Britain outside London, patronage fell by 7 per cent. between 1985-86 and 1986-87. I believe, however, that with deregulation the industry now has a chance of modifying that long-term trend.

34. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the number of passengers carried and the number of route miles operated following the deregulation of bus services in England and Wales.

Mr. Portillo: Statistics on the number of route miles operated are not compiled, but bus mileage is up sharply and the bulk of it is registered as commercial. In Great Britain (outside London) the number of passengers carried fell by 7 per cent. between 1985-86 and 1986-87, continuing a long-term trend.

Passenger Rail Services

33. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will raise at his next meeting with the chairman of British Rail the investment programme for passenger rail services.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State discusses British Rail's investment programme regularly with the chairman. British Rail plans to spend around £3·8 billion over the next five years. We recently approved investment in 200 additional electric rail units to improve the quality of commuter services north of the Thames.

Settle-Carlisle Railway

36. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further representations he has received against closure of the Settle to Carlisle section of British Rail since 11 July.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have received many written representations since 11 July. I have also met representatives of the local authorities.

A59-M6 Link

37. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Government's proposal for the A59-M6 link south of Preston.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We shall consider the case for adding this link to the trunk road programme as part of the next national review.

Light Rapid Transit Railways

38. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the financing of light rapid transit railway developments.

Mr. Portillo: I want to see the maximum participation by the private sector in the development of urban light railways, and I am encouraged that the private sector has taken the initiative in proposing a light rail project in Avon. Government grant will normally be paid only when the railway generates sufficient external benefits, which cannot be captured through revenues, as was explained in the Government's recent response to the report by the Transport Select Committee on the financing of rail services. I would normally expect any such grant at least to be matched by a contribution from the local authorities, who have general duties in relation to public transport in their areas.

West Midlands (Western Orbital Motorway)

39. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further representations he has received on the proposed western orbital motorway around the west midlands.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In response to the recent public consultation exercise on the proposed western orbital route, around 3,500 letters and representations have been received. In addition 9,500 completed questionnaires have been submitted.

Association of Metropolitan Authorities

41. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities transport committee; and what matters were discussed.

49. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the Association of Metropolitan Authorities; and what was discussed.

Mr. Portillo: My predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) met the chairman and other representatives of the public transport committee of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities on 2 March. The meeting discussed the Government's proposals for the future financing arrangements for the passenger transport authorities. I am due to meet the AMA on 3 November.

48. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to meet the Association of Metropolitan Authorities; and what will be discussed.

Mr. Portillo: I shall be meeting the Association of Metropolitan Authorities on 3 November to discuss a range of issues.

Investment

42. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those private sector firms with which he has discussed transport investment, in the last three months.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State discussed this issue with about 40 companies at a seminar on 18 July and with others since.

Underground Rolling Stock

43. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will hold early discussions with London Regional Transport representatives on the pace of the Underground rolling stock renewal programme.

Mr. Portillo: It is for London Regional Transport to bring forward proposals for new rolling stock as and when it considers it appropriate. Sixteen new trains are currently being brought into service and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently approved the acquisition of 85 new trains as part of the modernisation of the Central line at a cost of over £700 million.

Private Sector Financing

44. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many public transport projects have been financed by the private sector since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: Apart from the Channel tunnel approved in January 1986, major public transport projects involving private sector funding that have been implemented or approved in principle since 1979 include:

The Docklands light railway extension to Bank.
Greater Manchester metrolink.
The Heathrow to Paddington rail link.

There has also been a number of major improvements at British Rail and London Underground stations as part of redevelopment schemes.

King's Cross Fire

45. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report of the inquiry into the King's Cross fire.

Mr. Portillo: The report was received on 21 October. Arrangements are in hand for publication as soon as practicable, probably within a month.

A69 Hexham

46. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to dual the A69 west of Hexham.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The A69 west of Hexham is being improved to a high standard single carriageway with sections of dual carriageway to facilitate overtaking. The Department has no plans for dualling throughout.

Channel Tunnel (Rail Link)

47. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received regarding the rail link from London to the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: We have received a number of representations, both from those who would like to see the construction of a new line brought forward and from those who are concerned that they would be affected by the possible alignments.

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has taken following the publication by British Rail of its capacity report on rail links to the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I have been working mainly on two issues —first, whether the private sector can be involved in the

project, and, secondly, whether the selection of BR's preferred route can be speeded up to minimise uncertainty in Kent.

Motorway Construction

50. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been spent on new motorway construction in each of the last three years at constant prices.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Expenditure this year on national roads as a whole is more than £1 billion for the first time.

The balance of the road programme has changed in recent years.

The amount spent on new motorway construction and capital maintenance in each of the last three years, adjusted to 1987-88 prices, is as follows:

	£ million
1985-86	406
1986-87	321
1987-88	305

The change in spend on motorways reflects the completion of the M25 and the priority given to other types of trunk roads, in particular to the bypass programme which brings environmental relief to residents, reduces delay to travellers and freight, and cuts casualties.

BR Board

51. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the British Railways Board; and what was discussed.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last met members of the British Railways Board, including the chairman, on 20 September. A variety of railway issues were discussed, including the Government's approval of investment in new rolling stock.

Underground System (Central London)

52. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions he has reached concerning the report which he commissioned from London Regional Transport and British Rail on congestion on the Underground system in central London.

Mr. Portillo: We hope to receive the report of the central London rail study and announce the main findings towards the end of the year.

Schools (No Parking Areas)

53. **Mr. Thorne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration has been given to making zig-zag no-parking lines outside schools mandatory.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A number of experiments have shown that existing advisory markings are generally effective. Mandatory restrictions would not be justified in most locations. It is better for schools to be considered individually, so that accident prevention measures and enforcement effort can be concentrated on problem sites.

Manchester Airport

54. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last visited Manchester airport.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Minister responsible for aviation and shipping visited the airport on 25 June.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will designate Manchester airport under sections 78 and 79 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are considering the metropolitan borough of Stockport's application and the many representations for and against designation.

Dual Carriageways (London)

55. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average cost per mile of dual carriageway building in the Greater London area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Major road improvements in London are aimed primarily at easing or eliminating severe congestion points. They often involve new junctions and structures rather than significant lengths of new carriageway. It is not possible to calculate an overall average cost per mile.

The five most recent trunk road schemes which have been completed or are currently under construction are as follows:

	Scheme cost £ million	*Length miles*	*Cost per mile £ million*
Completed schemes			
A20 Sidcup by-pass (opened November 1987)	48·1	3·853	12·48
A406 South Woodford to Barking relief road (opened December 1987)	92·8	6·5	14·28
A2 Rochester Way relief road (opened April 1988—former GLC scheme)	84·6	3·4	24·75
Schemes under construction			
A406/A10 Great Cambridge road junction	26·1	—	—
A40 Swakeleys road GSJ	12·5	—	—

A1-M1 Link

56. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what date he expects the construction of the proposed A1-M1 link road to serve the Dearne Valley area to be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This is a local road scheme for which Barnsley borough council is responsible as highway authority. I understand that the council plans to construct the scheme in stages, with the final section due for completion in the mid-1990s.

Road Schemes (Private Sector Collaboration)

58. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many new road schemes have been financed through collaborative agreements with the private sector since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The following cost-sharing road schemes agreements have been made with private sector developers:

Number of schemes and total value of agreed contributions from developers

	Number	*£ million*
1986-87	17	1
1987-88	17	3
1988-89[1]	10	5·7

[1] First six months

Information prior to 1986-87 is not readily available.

These schemes include access roads to private developments, provision of roundabouts, widening of junctions and installation of traffic signals. Local highway authorities also enter into agreements with the private sector to finance local road schemes. Some also receive transport supplementary grant.

From transport policy and programme submissions it appears that the following major schemes with private sector contributions (each costing over £1 million) have been started or are planned to start:

	Supported with TSG	*Total*
Before 1984-85	1	2
1984-85	1	3
1985-86	1	2
1986-87	1	1
1987-88	2	3
1988-89	3	9

West Drayton Air Traffic Control

59. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last visited West Drayton air traffic control.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State visited the London air traffic control centre at West Drayton on 19 February.

Aircraft Noise (Heathrow)

60. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he intends to take to reduce aircraft noise at Heathrow.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is undertaking various measures to fulfill our commitment to reduce aircraft noise around Heathrow. New restrictions on night flights at Heathrow were introduced in April, limiting the further growth of night movements. We shall be closely monitoring the effect of the new restrictions. We are reviewing with the airport the 1980 noise insulation grants scheme, so that it fully meets the criteria originally laid down, by extending the boundary slightly in one or two places. We are taking an active role in international discussions aimed at phasing out the next most noisy group of subsonic jets (the chapter 2 types), and will next year make regulations preventing the addition of any more of these aircraft to the United Kingdom fleet after 1 October 1990 in line with the ECAC recommendation.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by United Kingdom airport the steps taken to phase out the operation of noisy jets at night.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Non-noise-certificated subsonic jets have not been allowed to operate by day or night from or to United Kingdom airports since 1 January 1986 if on the United Kingdom register, or 1 January 1988 if on foreign registers. The next noisiest group of aeroplanes covers those certificated to ICAO's annex 16, volume 1 chapter 2 standards, and the Government are playing a leading role internationally in developing controls to limit their use. It is recognised that this will be a long and expensive process.

For the purposes of night restrictions at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted airports, the noise-certificated types of aircraft have been divided into three categories. Those in the noisiest category have not been allowed to make planned movements at night since 1 April 1987. From 1 April 1988 further restrictions on the middle category of aircraft have been introduced at Heathrow and Gatwick airports. Night restrictions at other airports are a matter for the airport operators.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance his Department gives to *(a)* airports and *(b)* aircraft operators on the application by pilots of full climbing power to aircraft over residential areas; and what monitoring of the observations of that guidance is conducted.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Aircraft operators using Heathrow and Gatwick airports are required to observe climb-out procedures as follows:

Departing aircraft shall be at a height of at least 1,000 ft over the relevant noise monitor: thereafter they shall maintain a gradient of climb of at least 4 per cent. to an altitude of at least 4,000 ft (Heathrow) or 3,000 ft (Gatwick). Thrust management shall ensure that progressively reducing noise levels at points on the ground under the flight path beyond the noise monitor are achieved.

We have not yet issued such guidance to operators of aircraft using Stansted airport. At other airports guidance on climb procedures is a matter for the airport operators.

Captains of airliners do not normally refer to ground features, but instrument navigational instructions for departure routes take residential areas into account so far as is practicable.

At Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted airports, periodic radar based sample surveys show the track-keeping and altitude performances of aircraft on departure routes.

Airports do not receive guidance from us on aircraft climb procedures.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on *(a)* financial and *(b)* other penalties airports (i) can and (ii) do impose on operators of excessively noisy aircraft.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is possible for airport operators to take noise performance into account when levying charges on aircraft operators. They can also make compliance with noise control measures a condition of use of airports. At Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted airports there are no financial penalties. The Department has power to require the operators of these airports to deny use of the airports. At Heathrow and Gatwick each infringement of the night take-off noise limit results in the loss of one movement slot in the quota of permitted night movements. Detailed information on practice at other airports is not available.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with Manchester airport the

inclusion on its airport consultative committee of representatives from local authorities affected by excessive aircraft noise.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The constitution of the airport consultative committee is a matter for Manchester Airport plc which is required to consult adequately by section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982.

London Regional Transport

61. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to change the funding levels of London Regional Transport.

Mr. Portillo: In common with that of other nationalised industries, the funding of London Regional Transport is reviewed annually in the Government's investment and financing review, the results of which are announced in the Chancellor's autumn statement.

British Standard Time

62. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has had on the possible reduction in road accidents that would result from a change to British standard time or a combination of British standard time and double British summer time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Twenty-three letters. Nine favoured combining British standard time and double British summer time, eight favoured harmonising the autumn end date of British summer time, one favoured both of these and five wanted to maintain the status quo.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary proposes to issue a consultation paper before deciding on future arrangements.

Air Transport Users Committee

63. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of the Air Transport Users Committee; and what was discussed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My noble Friend the Minister responsible for aviation and shipping met the chairman and members of the Air Transport Users Committee on 14 September 1988. The topics discussed included the problems of airspace congestion; capacity at the south-east airports; developments in liberalising air transport in Europe; and the prospects for new services to the United States from Manchester airport.

National Air Traffic Services

64. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the management of the National Air Traffic Services; and what was discussed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State meets the chairman and managing director of the Civil Aviation Authority and the controller of the National Air Traffic Services from time to time to discuss matters of mutual concern.

Drivers (Road Safety)

65. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has made on the road safety performance of drivers within the first year of holding their licence.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Last year the behavioural studies unit of TRRL commissioned National Opinion Polls Limited (NOP) to carry out a survey among drivers. It includes a survey of 10,000 young drivers aged between 17 and 22.

Preliminary results of the study show that 17 to 18-year-old males on average had 1·05 accidents over a three-year period, with females in that age range having 0·63 per three years—giving an average time interval between accidents of 2·9 years for males and 4·8 years for females. The TRRL is at present carrying out an in-depth analysis of the results. A full report should be ready in the spring.

This study builds on a TRRL survey in 1979 to discover more about the process of learning to drive cars, and how the drivers fared in their first year of driving after passing the driving test.

Association of County Councils

66. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to meet the Association of County Councils; and what matters he intends to discuss.

Mr. Portillo: The Association of County Councils has not requested a meeting, but we stand ready to meet it as and when the need arises.

Local Pay Additions

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide the latest available figures for his Department for *(a)* numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions, by grade, *(b)* location of those offices awarding local pay additions and *(c)* annual cost.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Local pay additions have been introduced as follows:

Grade	*Number*	*Annual Cost* £
1. Location: Inner London Weighting Pay Area		
Secretarial	140	42,000
AA	79	42,600
AO	313	181,200
2. Location: Dorking—South East Regional Office:		
Secretarial	7	4,200
AA	9	5,400
AO	36	21,600
EO	26	7,800
3. Location: Metropolitan Traffic Area		
Driving Examiners	270	162,000
Senior Driving Examiners	81	48,600

Licensed Taxi Cabs

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many licensed taxi cabs are currently operating in the Greater London area; and what is the estimated cost to public funds of administering the taxi trade.

Mr. Portillo: On 1 October there were approximately 15,000 licensed taxi cabs in London. There is no call on public funds for administering the trade since its costs are covered by driver and vehicle licence fees.

Private Car Hire (Licensing)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the licensing of private care hire firms in Greater London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Department is reviewing existing legislation relating to taxis and private hire cars. The question whether London's private hire cars should be subject to some form of licensing is part of that review.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has undertaken or plans to undertake with representatives of private car hire companies in Greater London about the introduction of a licensing system.

Mr. Portillo: In July, as part of our review of taxi and private hire legislation my predecessor my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) wrote to consumer bodies, licensing authorites, local government organisations, the police and others, inviting views on both the taxi and hire car trades. Representatives of the London private hire trade were included in that consultation process.

Bus Deregulation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what contact he has with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities regarding the effect of bus deregulation *(a)* in urban areas and *(b)* in rural areas.

Mr. Portillo: The Association of Metropolitan Authorities has sent me a copy of its recent report on bus deregulation in the metropolitan areas, and has written to me with representations on the Department's recent review of deregulated bus services. I am meeting the association on 3 November.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the specific mechanisms and instances used to monitor the working of bus deregulation, following the closure of the transport and road research laboratory.

Mr. Portillo: Bus operators provide regular returns which enable the Department's statistics directorate to monitor changes in vehicle miles, patronage, receipts, fares, unit costs, vehicle stock and staff numbers. To supplement this information in the initial period following deregulation the transport and road research laboratory constructed a data base derived from service registrations. This has now been discontinued but TRRL continues to conduct studies into specific aspects of deregulation such as passenger information, competition, operator strategies, innovation, safety and subsidies.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest information on the number of new bus operators who have entered the market as a result of deregulation.

Mr. Portillo: By 1 May 1988 there had been a net increase of 465 operators running local bus services as a result of deregulation.

Bus Registration

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the inaccuracies found in the database which the transport and road research laboratory used in its reports regarding bus registration.

Mr. Portillo: I have no evidence of any substantial inaccuracies in the database.

Safety Audits (King's Cross)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many safety audits have been carried out at King's Cross underground station since the fire; and if he will make a statement on the outcome.

Mr. Portillo: London Underground Ltd. (LUL) appointed a safety auditor in December 1987; King's Cross is one of the stations that have since been audited. The auditor is responsible for ensuring that the necessary follow-up action is taken.

In addition, the Department of Transport's railway inspectorate has visited King's Cross since the fire. I understand that the London fire brigade has also visited King's Cross on a number of occasions.

LUL has agreed safety standards for the building and reinstatement work now in progress at King's Cross with the railway inspectorate and, I understand, the London fire brigade. The completed work will be inspected by the railway inspectorate.

A33 Chandlers Ford Bypass

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to start work on upgrading the A33 Chandlers Ford bypass to motorway standards; and when he anticipates the work will be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Necessary works in advance of the main contract for the Compton-Bassett section of the M3 started last month. We hope to let the main contract next spring for completion in autumn 1991.

A12 Brentwood Bypass

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has yet received the report from the consultants appointed to investigate the case for improving traffic flow on the A12 Brentwood bypass between the M25 and the Chelmsford bypass and on the A127 Southend arterial road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The consultants' reports for the A12 and the A127 studies are both nearing completion. When received, the Department will study them urgently and consider potential improvements of the road network for inclusion in the road programme.

Air Traffic Control

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on centralising duties relating to air traffic control and control in European airspace in the hands of Eurocontrol.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We wish to see a much enhanced role for Eurocontrol, particularly in the field of flow management.

We shall be seeking agreement at Eurocontrol's permanent commission next month to the creation of a central flow management unit, to be operated by Eurocontrol in co-operation with the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

Centralising all Europe's air traffic control functions in one organisation would be an unrealistic goal.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if near miss reports made by air traffic controllers from 1 April 1989 will be made available to the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The procedure for dealing with incident reports by air traffic control officers is the responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority. We will ask the chairman to write to my hon. Friend.

Channel Tunnel

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will extend the opening hours of the Channel tunnel complaints commissioner's office to deal with complaints at weekends; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Channel tunnel complaints commissioner is appointed by and is answerable to the Kent joint consultative committee, of which I am the chairman. I shall ask the committee when it next meets, in November, to consider the opening hours of the complaints commissioner's office.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* the noise levels registered by *(a)* BAC 111 and *(b)* Boeing 727 aircraft prior to their receipt of noise certificates; and what are the current United Kingdom and international noise limitations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The table gives the internationally agreed noise levels (to which the United Kingdom subscribes) at the three measurement points that a selection of BAC 111 and B 727 aircraft have to meet. It also gives the measured noise levels for the aircraft before acoustic treatment (hushkitting) and their noise certificated levels.

	ICAO Reference Measurement Points		
	Take Off EPNdB	*Sideline EPNdB*	*Approach EPNdP*
B727-100 with JT8D-7FCD engines			
ICAO Chapter 2 limits[1]	98·8	104·3	104·3
Unhushkitted	99·2	100·0	110·1
noise certificated (hushkitted)	97·9	100·0	104·3
B727-100 with JT8D-9FCD engines			
ICAO Chapter 2 limits	98·8	104·3	104·3
Unhushkitted	98·3	100·0	108·4
noise certificated (hushkitted)	98·3	100·0	105·8
B727-200 with JT8D-7QN engines			
ICAO Chapter 2 limits	98·9	104·4	104·4
Unhushkitted	102·2	100·4	111·0
noise certificated (hushkitted)	100·0	100·4	104·9
B727-200 with JT8D-9QN engines			
ICAO Chapter 2 limits	98·9	104·4	104·4
Unhushkitted	101·2	100·4	109·5
noise certificated (hushkitted)	99·0	100·4	103·2
BAC-11-200 with spey 506 engines			
ICAO Chapter 2 limits	94·2	102·5	102·5
Unhushkitted	96·2	105·1	103·0
noise certificated (retrofit hushkit)	94·1	99·9	101·6
BAC1-11-300/400 with spey 511 engines			
ICAO Chapter 2 limits	93·4	102·2	102·2
Unhushkitted	93·7	103·3	102·3
noise certificated (retrofit hushkit)	91·1	97·7	101·5
BAC-11-500 with spey 512 engines			
ICAO Chapter 2 limits	95·1	102·8	102·8
Unhushkitted	98·0	106·0	103·5
noise certificated (retrofit hushkit)	95·6	101·6	101·7

[1]Limited trade-off between the three measured levels are permitted.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority about the move of preferred noise routings resulting from alterations in the locations of navigation beacons at Manchester airport in 1987; what reasons were given for the changes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None. Departure routes from Manchester airport are a matter for Manchester Airport plc and the Civil Aviation Authority.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what monitoring of noise levels his Department conducts in the vicinity of Manchester airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None. This is the responsibility of Manchester Airport plc.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the maximum permissible ground noise levels resulting from aircraft flights.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: At Heathrow and Gatwick airports the maximum permissible take-off noise levels, measured at the nearest noise monitor, are 110 PNdB by day and 102 by night. At Stansted airport we have not yet set take-off noise limits. At other airports noise limits are a matter for the airport operators.

Night Flights

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many night flights have *(a)* been authorised and *(b)* taken place in the current year and each of the last three years at (i) Gatwick, (ii) Heathrow and (iii) Manchester airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Quota and actual movement information for the three airports are as follows:

	Gatwick		*Heathrow*		*Manchester*	
	Quota	*Actual*	*Quota*	*Actual*	*Quota*	*Actual*
1985 Summer	4,300	4,220	3,650	2,377	5,125	4,243
1985-86 Winter	1,950	1,859	3,150	2,891	—	243
1986 Summer	4,300	4,259	3,650	2,578	5,362	5,645

	Gatwick		Heathrow		Manchester	
	Quota	Actual	Quota	Actual	Quota	Actual
1986-87 Winter	1,950	1,622	3,150	2,746	—	501
1987 Summer	4,300(60)	4,276(50)	3,650(60)	2,002(33)	5,800	6,028
1987-88 Winter	1,950(30)	1,930(20)	3,150(30)	2,696(23)	—	674
1988 Summer	4,430(60)	—(—)	2,750(60)	—(—)	6,760	—

Notes:

1. Figures in brackets are delayed noisy movements subject to special quota.
2. Figures for Manchester airport provided by Manchester Airport plc. Winter night jet operations at Manchester airport are not subject to quota restrictions.
3. The current summer season did not end until 23 October and actual movement information is not yet available.
4. At Heathrow and Gatwick the night noise restrictions permit the airport manager to exempt flights from the restrictions if they are delayed by widespread and prolonged disruption of air traffic. Gatwick Airport Ltd. approved the exemption of 612 movements in the summer season 1987. These are additional to the figures already mentioned.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will impose a ceiling on the number of night flights to and from Manchester airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. Control of night flights at Manchester Airport is the responsibility of the airport operator.

A34 Newbury Ring Road

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether responsibility for the existing A34 ring road round Newbury will remain with his Department in the event of a western bypass trunk road being built from Tot hill to the Donnington link on the current A34.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The A34 Newbury bypass proposals, currently being considered at public inquiry, provide for the detrunking of the existing A34 between the new Burghclere interchange and the Swan roundabout. We have no plans to detrunk the remainder of the A34 through Newbury as this also serves the A339 trunk route.

Staff Safety (King's Cross)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what training initiatives have been taken with respect to safety for staff serving at King's Cross station since the fire of November 1987.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that all London Underground's operations supervisory staff have received a refresher course in station fire procedures and fire fighting equipment. An on-the-job training course on fire and safety matters has been given at the stations to all station staff by the station supervisor. These courses are being repeated at regular intervals. All staff posted to stations new to them are being given familiarisation training by the station supervisor on arrival. All station supervisors are being given more simulation training in station evacuation, and additional station familiarisation training for complex stations such as King's Cross has been carried out with the emergency services.

London Underground Ltd

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the director of London Underground Ltd.; and what was discussed.

Mr. Portillo: I met the chairman of London Underground Limited on 19 October when we discussed a number of issues including the problems posed by recent and continuing growth in demand.

BAC 111 and Boeing 727 Aircraft

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will impose an early ban on the operation of *(a)* BAC 111 and *(b)* Boeing 727 aircraft at British airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. Aircraft of these types which are noise certificated to International Civil Aviation Organisation standards will be able to operate in the United Kingdom in accordance with our international obligations. Some of these aircraft which operate here are on foreign registers. The Government are playing a leading role in international negotiations towards the phasing out of the next noisiest ICAO category of aircraft, including the BAC 111 and the Boeing 727.

Air Traffic Congestion

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will urge his European Community counterparts at the meetings of 26 October to seek an urgent solution to air traffic congestion over Europe.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Transport Ministers of 22 countries belonging to the European civil aviation conference, including our partners in the EC, agreed a wide-ranging package of measures to tackle air traffic congestion at their special meeting held on 20 October.

The United Kingdom's proposal for a central flow management unit, to be operated by Eurocontrol in co-operation with ICAO, was endorsed.

Air traffic congestion is not on the agenda for substantive discussion at the EC Council of Ministers meeting on 26 October.

Foreign Reflaggings

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 19 October, what is the estimated cost of providing a reply to the question relating to reflagging following the introduction of the Armilla patrol.

Mr. Portillo: Approximately £2,000.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 25 October 1988

WALES

Departmental Staff

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest available figures for his Department in the London pay area of the number of vacancies by grade and the proportion this is of the grade complement in London.

Mr. Peter Walker: The comparatively small London office of my Department currently has two vacancies for typists and two vacancies for messengers. These posts are expected to be filled shortly.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide the latest available figures for his Department for *(a)* numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions, by grade, *(b)* location of those offices awarding local pay additions and *(c)* annual cost.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

(a) 3—2 Senior Personal Secretaries and 1 Personal Secretary
(b) Whitehall
(c) £1,200

Local Government Reform

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will construct a table in the same form as figure F3 on page 106 of Cmnd. 9714, "Paying for Local Government", showing the relationship in Wales of rateable values to net household income separately for *(a)* single pensioner households, *(b)* other single adult households, *(c)* two adult households and *(d)* three adult households.

Mr. Grist: Table F3 on page 106 of Cmnd. 9714 was constructed from data obtained from the family expenditure survey. The Welsh element of this data related to only 2,000 households. It is not possible to derive reliable estimates of the details requested, by household types, from a sample of this size.

River Loughor (Bridge Crossing)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the tender price accepted and *(b)* the final account price for the construction of the new bridge crossing of the River Loughor.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. The bridge has been constructed by Dyfed and West Glamorgan county councils; the cost is a matter for them.

Nurses

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of places available to state enrolled nurses to convert to registered general nurses in 1987, 1988 and 1989; what is the total number of applications received for these courses; what is the average waiting time for successful applicants; and if there are any plans to increase the number of places available for state enrolled nurses wishing to undertake the conversion courses to registered general nurses.

Mr. Grist: The number of places available to second level nurses to convert to first level nurses in Wales is as follows:

1987 — None; no courses were approved
1988 — 47
1989 — 98 (to date)

Information about the number of applications received for the conversion courses, and the average waiting time for successful applicants, is not held centrally.

The Government's response to Project 2000 stressed the need to increase the number of second level nurse conversion courses, and the UKCC is examining the provision for more flexible modes of conversion. Health authorities in Wales have been encouraged to increase opportunities for second level nurse conversion wherever possible.

Therapeutic Provision

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, in accordance with those parts of the Education Reform Act 1988 which allow local education authorities in Wales to make therapeutic provisions, he will investigate with Her Majesty's inspector the shortfall in speech therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy in the county of Clwyd and other Welsh local education authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Under the provisions of section 7 of the Education Act 1981, as amended by the Education Reform Act 1988, a local education authority may arrange for non-education provision such as speech therapy but it does not lay on them a duty to do so. The primary responsibility for that remains with the district health authority. Her Majesty's Inspectorate will continue to monitor the arrangements made within Wales for pupils with special educational needs including those who benefit from speech therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

Pesticides

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what steps have been taken to ensure that the eating of fruit and vegetables treated with pesticides by growers and purchased by shoppers in Wales is safe; what steps his Department has taken to examine such fruit and vegetables to determine their freedom from injurious substances; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he takes to monitor the use of pesticide residues in fruit and vegetable production in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him today by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Monitoring for pesticide residues is carried out throughout the United Kingdom by the working party on pesticide residues (WPPR). The WPPR programme includes total diet studies incorporating fruit and vegetables. In addition

targeted surveys of residues in fruit and vegetables are carried out on a routine basis. Samples from Wales are included in this monitoring.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish his findings concerning pesticide residues in fruit and vegetables in Wales and in fruit and vegetables entering Wales from other parts of the United Kingdom and from abroad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Findings of the working party on pesticide residues which monitors United Kingdom food supplies for pesticide residues are published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Where appropriate the location of a particular residue problem is indicated but results are generally consistent throughout the United Kingdom. The WPPR monitors imported produce as well as home production.

Partially Sighted Society

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what moneys he gives to the Partially Sighted Society; if he will give a special ad hoc grant to the Partially Sighted Society; and if he will make a statement; (2) if he will meet the Partially Sighted Society to discuss their future plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Welsh Office officials would be pleased to met representatives of the Partially Sighted Society if their plans relate to all-Wales activities. The society has already been advised to contact local statutory organisations for support for local initiatives. The society's national headquarters are in England and receive Government aid towards administration costs to which my Department does not contribute.

Sandycroft School

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit Sandycroft C P school to meet the staff and parents to discuss plans to rebuild the infants' department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. This is a matter for the local education authority which is responsible for the provision and maintenance of its school buildings.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a special allocation of cash to Clwyd local education authority to enable the burnt down infants' department of Sandycroft C P school to be rebuilt in the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. Capital allocations for 1988-89 have been made to Clwyd county council relating to all the services for which it is responsible, including educational building. It is for the local education authority to determine which school building project will proceed in the current financial year.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet members of the Clwyd county council, Alyn and Deeside council and Queensferry community council concerning the need to rebuild the burnt down infants' department of Sandycroft CP school; if he will also meet the parent teachers association and the school governors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. This is a matter for the local education authority which is responsible for provision and maintenance of its school buildings.

Capitation Allowances

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet the Federation of Primary School Headteachers in Clwyd to discuss capitation allowances.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. Capitation to schools is a matter for the local education authority.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a league table of capitation allowances for (i) primary schools, (ii) high schools in each of the local education authorities in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. Capitation allowances for schools are a matter for local education authorities and information about them is not held centrally. Under the Education Reform Act local education authorities are required to prepare schemes to delegate budgets to individual schools. Local education authorities will also be required to publish information on their schemes and on planned and actually incurred expenditure in individual schools.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will allocate extra finance to Clwyd local education authority to enable the capitation of primary schools of Clwyd county to be increased by 75 per cent.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Local education authority spending is funded from locally raised revenue supported by mainly unhypothecated Government grants and not from cash allocations by central Government. It is for local authorities to decide how much to spend on primary schools in the light of their resources and priorities.

M4 Motorway

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* *(a)* the starting date and *(b)* the completion date for the construction of the section of the M4 motorway between Baglan and Neath; and whether the contracts for the four contracts in the scheme will be tendered for simultaneously.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The estimated start date for the Baglan-Lonlas section of the M4 is within the "Roads in Wales 1985" timeband to the end of 1990. The duration of the individual contracts varies between two and three years and letting will be phased accordingly.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Expenditure

Mr. David Davis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for the latest years now available, identifiable public expenditure by function in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom expressed *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* as an index (United

Kingdom total identifiable public expenditure = 100), *(c)* as an amount per capita and *(d)* as an amount per capita expressed as an index (United Kingdom amount per capita = 100).

Mr. Major: The term "identifiable expenditure" refers to expenditure that can be identified from official records as having been incurred in a particular country. Total identifiable expenditure accounts for around 80 per cent. of total departmental public expenditure.

The remainder, unidentifiable expenditure, includes expenditure on defence, overseas aid and other overseas services which are deemed to have been incurred on behalf of the United Kingdom as a whole. Unidentifiable expenditure also includes Government net lending to, and the market and overseas borrowing of, the public corporations (including nationalised industries), due to the difficulty of allocating this finance to expenditure in a particular country. Privatisation proceeds are also included in unidentifiable expenditure.

Tables 1 to 5 show figures of identifiable public expenditure according to main function in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These are the only available figures comparing public expenditure by function in the four countries of the United Kingdom. The analysis covers 1983-84 to 1987-88, the only period for which data are available on a consistent basis.

Table 6 compares, for the latest year, 1987-88, expenditure in the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland programmes with the total identifiable expenditure in the respective countries by function. It shows that identifiable expenditure has a wider coverage than expenditure within the responsibilities of the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales; in the case of Northern Ireland it has a slightly wider coverage than the Northern Ireland programme in the public expenditure survey. This table also shows unidentifiable expenditure by function for 1987-88. It should be noted that the unidentifiable expenditure for housing is entirely made up of Government net lending to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive which is excluded from identifiable expenditure because it is classified as a public corporation.

In some cases expenditure which cannot be separately identified for England, Scotland or Wales can be allocated to Great Britain rather than the United Kingdom; for example, the majority of the financing of expenditure by the nationalised industries can be allocated to Great Britain. Tables 7a and 7b compare Northern Ireland allocated expenditure with that allocated to Great Britain over the five-year period.

The extent to which expenditure can be identified may vary from year to year and between countries. The coverage of particular functions can also vary between countries; for example, in Northern Ireland, expenditure on arts and libraries is contained in the education category.

The tables use the terms and definitions of the last public expenditure White Paper "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1988-89 to 1990-91" (Cm. 288) but they incorporate later information.

Table 1a Identifiable public expenditure 1983-84

	£ million					Index (United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100)			
	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*	*United Kingdom*	*England*	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	711·2	201·2	93·8	149·7	1,157·9	61·4	17·4	8·3	12·9
Trade, industry, energy and employment	3,009·3	723·7	365·4	374·9	4,473·3	67·3	16·2	8·2	8·4
Arts and libraries	515·9	63·8	27·8	—	607·5	84·9	10·5	4·6	—
Roads and transport	4,457·3	547·1	376·2	123·5	5,504·1	81·0	9·9	6·8	2·2
Housing	3,153·6	716·7	195·7	192·6	4,258·6	74·1	16·8	4·6	4·5
Other environmental services	3,465·9	530·3	264·4	176·5	4,437·1	78·1	12·0	6·0	4·0
Law, order and protective services	3,634·1	458·5	189·7	400·4	4,682·7	77·6	9·8	4·1	8·6
Education and science	12,975·6	1,964·4	816·3	581·9	16,338·2	79·4	12·0	5·0	3·6
Health and personal social services	14,711·2	2,036·2	916·2	635·2	18,298·8	80·4	11·1	5·0	3·5
Social security	29,405·6	3,329·5	1,884·7	1,094·3	35,714·1	82·3	9·3	5·3	3·1
Other public services	1,049·7	235·3	99·6	53·7	1,438·3	73·0	16·4	6·9	3·7
Common services	−145·2	−13·6	−0·8	1·9	−157·7	—	—	—	—
Planning total	76,944·2	10,793·1	5,231·0	3,784·6	96,752·9	79·5	11·2	5·4	3·9

Table 1b Identifiable public expenditure per head 1983-84

	£ per head					Index (United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100)			
	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*	*United Kingdom*	*England*	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	15·2	39·1	34·1	97·0	20·5	73·9	190·1	166·0	472·1
Trade, industry, energy and employment	64·2	140·5	130·1	242·9	79·4	80·9	177·0	163·9	306·0
Arts and libraries	11·0	12·4	9·9	—	10·8	102·1	114·9	91·8	—
Roads and transport	95·1	106·2	134·0	80·0	97·7	97·4	108·7	137·2	81·9
Housing	67·3	139·2	69·7	124·8	75·6	89·1	184·1	92·2	165·1
Other environmental services	74·0	103·0	94·2	114·4	78·7	94·0	130·8	119·6	145·2
Law, order and protective services	77·6	89·0	67·6	259·5	83·1	93·3	107·1	81·3	312·2
Education and science	277·0	381·4	290·7	377·1	290·0	95·5	131·5	100·3	130·0
Health and personal social services	314·0	395·3	326·3	411·6	324·8	96·7	121·7	100·5	126·7
Social security	627·7	646·5	671·2	709·1	633·8	99·0	102·0	105·9	111·9
Other public services	22·4	45·7	35·5	34·8	25·5	87·8	179·0	139·0	136·3

	£ per head					Index (United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100)			
	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Common services	−3·1	−2·6	−0·3	1·2	−2·8	—	—	—	—
Planning total	1,642·5	2,095·6	1,863·0	2,452·4	1,717·1	95·7	122·0	108·5	142·8

Table 2a Identifiable public expenditure 1984-85

	£ million					Index (United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100)			
	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	682·9	230·5	100·6	160·5	1,174·5	58·1	19·6	8·6	13·7
Trade, industry, energy and employment	3,218·6	766·9	382·5	420·4	4,788·4	67·2	16·0	8·0	8·8
Arts and libraries	551·4	69·1	28·9		649·4	84·9	10·6	4·5	
Roads and transport	4,681·8	563·5	328·7	121·9	5,695·9	82·2	9·9	5·8	2·1
Housing	3,266·6	656·7	136·9	210·6	4,270·8	76·5	15·4	3·2	4·9
Other environmental services	3,677·0	533·8	272·3	183·0	4,666·1	78·8	11·4	5·8	3·9
Law, order and protective services	4,121·2	498·2	209·9	430·6	5·259·9	78·4	9·5	4·0	8·2
Education and science	13,475·2	2,013·0	838·6	610·9	16,937·7	79·6	11·9	5·0	3·6
Health and personal social services	15,757·9	2,182·2	986·3	666·9	19,593·3	80·4	11·1	5·0	3·4
Social security	31·870·9	3,603·2	2,049·3	1,186·1	38,709·5	82·3	9·3	5·3	3·1
Other public services	1,163·9	247·4	102·6	57·9	1,571·8	74·0	15·7	6·5	3·7
Common services	−79·2	−8·2	4·5	2·4	−80·5				
Planning total	82,388·2	11,356·3	5,441·1	4,051·2	103,236·8	79·8	11·0	5·3	3·9

Table 2b Identifiable public expenditure per head 1984-85

	£ per head					Index (United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100)			
	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	14·5	44·8	35·8	103·5	20·8	69·9	215·3	172·3	497·6
Trade, industry, energy and employment	68·5	149·0	136·3	271·2	84·8	80·8	175·7	160·7	319·7
Arts and libraries	11·7	13·4	10·3		11·5	102·1	116·8	89·5	
Roads and transport	99·7	109·5	117·1	78·6	100·9	98·8	108·5	116·1	77·9
Housing	69·6	127·6	48·8	135·8	75·6	92·0	168·7	64·5	179·6
Other environmental services	78·3	103·7	97·0	118·0	82·6	94·8	125·5	117·4	142·8
Law, order and protective services	87·8	96·8	74·8	277·7	93·2	94·2	103·9	80·3	298·1
Education and science	287·0	391·2	298·7	394·0	300·0	95·7	130·4	99·6	131·3
Health and personal social services	335·6	424·1	351·3	430·1	347·0	96·7	122·2	101·2	124·0
Social security	678·7	700·2	730·0	765·0	685·6	99·0	102·1	106·5	111·6
Other public services	24·8	48·1	36·5	37·3	27·8	89·0	172·7	131·3	134·1
Common services	−1·7	−1·6	1·6	1·5	−1·4				
Planning total	1,754·6	2,206·9	1,938·3	2,613·0	1,828·5	96·0	120·7	106·0	142·9

Table 3a Identifiable public expenditure 1985-86

	£ million					Index (United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100)			
	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	676·0	250·6	106·7	155·1	1,188·4	56·9	21·1	9·0	13·1
Trade, industry, energy and employment	3,373·4	794·6	397·5	449·7	5,015·2	67·3	15·8	7·9	9·0
Arts and libraries	481·7	75·2	31·6	—	588·5	84·5	10·9	4·6	—
Roads and transport	4,7[illegible]3	582·3	337·2	122·6	5,801·4	82·0	10·0	5·8	2·1
Housing	2,962·0	616·2	128·1	227·0	3,933·3	75·3	15·7	3·3	5·8
Other environmental services	3,660·3	535·6	285·1	194·7	4,675·7	78·3	11·5	6·1	4·2
Law, order and protective services	4,199·9	521·0	219·5	470·0	5,410·4	77·6	9·6	4·1	8·7
Education and science	13,927·2	2,058·5	848·7	637·5	17,471·9	79·7	11·8	4·9	3·6
Health and personal social services	16,613·8	2,317·1	1,052·0	699·1	20,682·0	80·3	11·2	5·1	3·4
Social security	34,904·1	4,026·3	2,218·6	1,292·9	42,441·9	82·2	9·5	5·2	3·0
Other public services	1,284·6	254·5	106·5	63·8	1,709·4	75·1	14·9	6·2	3·7
Common services	−97·2	−10·3	1·7	2·2	−103·6	—	—	—	—
Planning total	86,845·1	12,021·6	5,733·2	4,314·6	108,914·5	79·7	11·0	5·3	4·0

Table 3b Identifiable public expenditure per head 1985-86

	£ per head					Index (United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100)			
	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	14·3	48·8	37·9	99·6	21·0	68·4	232·4	180·8	474·3
Trade, industry, energy and employment	71·6	154·7	141·4	288·7	88·6	80·8	174·6	159·6	325·9
Arts and libraries	12·3	14·6	11·2	—	12·2	101·5	120·4	92·4	—
Roads and transport	101·0	113·4	119·9	78·7	102·5	98·6	110·6	117·0	76·8
Housing	62·9	120·0	45·6	145·7	69·5	90·5	172·7	65·6	209·8
Other environmental services	77·7	104·3	101·4	125·0	82·6	94·1	126·3	122·8	151·3
Law, order and protective services	89·1	101·4	78·1	301·7	95·6	93·3	106·1	81·7	315·7
Education and science	295·6	400·8	301·8	409·2	308·6	95·8	129·9	97·8	132·6
Health and personal social services	352·6	451·1	374·1	448·8	365·3	96·5	123·5	102·4	122·9
Social security	740·9	783·9	789·0	830·0	749·6	98·8	104·6	105·3	110·7
Other public services	27·3	49·5	37·9	41·0	30·2	90·3	164·1	125·5	135·6
Common services	−2·1	−2·0	0·6	1·4	−1·8	—	—	—	—
Planning total	1,843·4	2,340·4	2,039·0	2,769·7	1,923·7	95·8	121·7	106·0	144·0

Table 4a Identifiable public expenditure 1986-87

	£ million					Index (United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100)			
	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	632·1	227·3	115·3	160·2	1,134·9	55·7	20·0	10·2	14·1
Trade, industry, energy and employment	3,802·4	938·7	509·0	395·8	5,645·9	67·3	16·6	9·0	7·0
Arts and libraries	623·6	81·7	33·1		738·4	84·5	11·1	4·5	
Roads and transport	4,666·5	586·5	362·9	126·9	5,742·8	81·3	10·2	6·3	2·2
Housing	2,597·8	635·9	174·2	238·0	3,645·9	71·3	17·4	4·8	6·5
Other environmental services	3,693·5	581·9	330·6	208·4	4,814·4	76·7	12·1	6·9	4·3
Law, order and protective services	4,641·4	567·1	230·7	517·2	5,956·4	77·9	9·5	3·9	8·7
Education and science	15,172·3	2,272·8	934·8	730·8	19,110·7	79·4	11·9	4·9	3·8
Health and personal social services	17,915·4	2,444·7	1,132·5	750·6	22,243·2	80·5	11·0	5·1	3·4
Social security	37,307·8	4,272·7	2,395·4	1,400·1	45,376·0	82·2	9·4	5·3	3·1
Other public services	1,417·7	283·5	119·4	76·0	1,896·6	74·7	14·9	6·3	4·0
Common services	−84·6	−6·3	0·2	−0·2	−90·9				
Planning total	92,385·9	12,886·5	6,338·1	4,603·8	116,214·3	79·5	11·1	5·5	4·0

Table 4b Identifiable public expenditure per head 1986-87

	£ per head					Index (United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100)			
	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	13·4	44·4	40·9	102·2	20·0	66·9	222·0	204·4	511·4
Trade, industry, energy and employment	80·5	183·3	180·4	252·6	99·5	80·9	184·3	181·4	254·0
Arts and libraries	13·2	16·0	11·7		13·0	101·4	122·6	90·2	
Roads and transport	98·8	114·5	128·6	81·0	101·2	97·6	113·2	127·2	80·1
Housing	55·0	124·2	61·8	151·9	64·2	85·6	193·3	96·1	236·5
Other environmental services	78·2	113·6	117·2	133·0	84·8	92·2	134·0	138·2	156·8
Law, order and protective services	98·2	110·7	81·8	330·1	104·9	93·6	105·5	77·9	314·6
Education and science	321·1	443·8	331·4	466·4	336·7	95·4	131·8	98·4	138·5
Health and personal social services	379·1	477·4	401·5	479·1	391·9	96·8	121·8	102·4	122·3
Social security	789·5	834·3	849·1	893·6	799·4	98·8	104·4	106·2	111·8
Other public services	30·0	55·4	42·3	48·5	33·4	89·8	165·7	126·7	145·2
Common services	−1·8	−1·2	0·1	−0·1	−1·6				
Planning total	1,955·1	2,516·4	2,246·8	2,938·3	2,047·3	95·5	122·9	109·7	143·5

Table 5a Identifiable public expenditure 1987-88

	£ million					Index (United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100)			
	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	685·4	226·8	89·6	167·0	1,168·8	58·6	19·4	7·7	14·3
Trade, industry, energy and employment	3,698·0	759·7	466·0	371·2	5,294·9	69·8	14·3	8·8	7·0
Arts and libraries	666·7	84·9	38·1		789·7	84·4	10·8	4·8	
Roads and transport	4,820·6	628·5	404·0	131·2	5,984·3	80·6	10·5	6·8	2·2
Housing	2,536·5	670·8	210·9	237·3	3,655·5	69·4	18·4	5·8	6·5
Other environmental services	3,676·2	674·0	321·9	232·2	4,904·3	75·0	13·7	6·6	4·7
Law, order and protective services	5,218·5	629·8	263·2	593·0	6,704·5	77·8	9·4	3·9	8·8
Education and science	16,601·4	2,442·4	1,040·7	786·8	20,871·3	79·5	11·7	5·0	3·8
Health and personal social services	19,677·0	2,696·3	1,257·0	812·4	24,442·7	80·5	11·0	5·1	3·3
Social security	38,660·7	4,561·9	2,500·8	1,465·4	47,188·8	81·9	9·7	5·3	3·1
Other public services	1,558·3	301·0	126·2	81·3	2,066·8	75·4	14·6	6·1	3·9
Common services	−16·4	1·7	3·9	0·6	−10·2				
Planning total	97,782·9	13,677·8	6,722·3	4,878·4	123,061·4	79·5	11·1	5·5	4·0

Table 5b Identifiable public expenditure per head 1987-88

	£ per head					Index (United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100)			
	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	14·5	44·4	31·6	106·0	20·5	70·4	216·1	153·9	516·4
Trade, industry, energy and employment	78·0	148·6	164·3	235·7	93·0	83·9	159·8	176·7	253·4
Arts and libraries	14·1	16·6	13·4		13·9	101·4	119·7	96·8	
Roads and transport	101·7	122·9	142·4	83·3	105·1	96·7	117·0	135·5	79·2
Housing	53·5	131·2	74·4	150·7	64·2	83·3	204·4	115·8	234·6
Other environmental services	77·5	131·8	113·5	147·4	86·1	90·0	153·0	131·7	171·1
Law, order and protective services	110·1	123·2	92·8	376·5	117·8	93·5	104·6	78·8	319·7
Education and science	350·2	477·8	366·9	499·5	366·6	95·5	130·3	100·1	136·3
Health and personal social services	415·1	527·4	443·2	515·8	429·3	96·7	122·8	103·2	120·1
Social security	815·5	892·4	881·7	930·4	828·9	98·4	107·7	106·4	112·2
Other public services	32·9	58·9	44·5	51·6	36·3	90·5	162·2	122·6	142·2
Common services	−0·3	0·3	1·4	0·4	−0·2				
Planning total	2,062·6	2,675·6	2,370·2	3,097·2	2,161·6	95·4	123·8	109·6	143·3

Table 6 Planning total analysed by territorial area 1987-88

£ million

	England	Scotland (Total)	Programme 15[1]	Scotland other	Wales (Total)	Programme 16[1]	Wales other	Northern Ireland (Total)	Programme 17[1]	Northern Ireland other	United Kingdom	Non identified	Total
Defence												18,662·4	18,662·4
Overseas services												3,611·1	3,611·1
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	685·4	226·8	175·1	51·7	89·6	70·9	18·7	167·0	166·8	0·2	1,168·8	1,239·0	2,407·8
Trade, industry, energy and employment	3,698·0	759·7	229·3	530·4	466·0	160·5	305·5	371·2	369·2	2·0	5,294·9	782·9	6,077·8
Arts and libraries	666·7	84·9	84·9		38·1	38·1		[2]	[2]	[2]	789·7	220·2	1,009·9
Roads and transport	4,820·6	628·5	626·1	2·4	404·0	331·8	72·2	131·2	131·2		5,984·3	−323·3	5,661·0
Housing	2,536·5	670·8	670·8		210·9	210·9		237·3	237·3		3,655·5	[3]113·8	3,769·3
Other environmental services	3,676·2	674·0	662·6	11·4	321·9	315·6	6·3	232·2	232·2		4,904·3	101·4	5,005·7
Law, order and protective services	5,218·5	629·8	613·8	16·0	263·2		263·2	593·0	569·8	23·2	6,704·5	1,056·0	7,760·5
Education and science	16,601·4	2,442·4	2,130·6	311·8	1,040·7	877·0	163·7	786·8	785·0	1·8	20,871·3	110·8	20,982·1
Health and personal social services	19,677·0	2,696·3	2,696·3		1,257·0	1,257·0		812·4	812·4		24,442·7	12·4	24,455·1
Social security	38,660·7	4,561·9		4,561·9	2,500·8		2,500·8	1,465·4	1,453·9	11·5	47,188·8	510·6	47,699·4
Other public services	1,558·3	301·0	116·6	184·4	126·2	38·6	87·6	81·3	48·7	32·6	2,066·8	551·0	2,617·8
Common services	−16·4	1·7		1·7	3·9		3·9	0·6		0·6	−10·2	1,356·6	1,346·4
Public expenditure on programmes	97,782·9	13,677·8	8,006·1	5,671·7	6,722·3	3,300·4	3,421·9	4,878·4	4,806·5	71·9	123,061·4	28,004·9	151,066·3
Privatisation proceeds												−5,108·4	−5,108·4
Planning total	97,782·9	13,677·8	8,006·1	5,671·7	6,722·3	3,300·4	3,421·9	4,878·4	4,806·5	71,9	123,061·4	22,896·5	145,957·9

[1]Programmes 15, 16 and 17 relate to the Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland programmes covered by the respective chapters of Volume II of the 1988 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 288).

[2]Expenditure on arts and libraries in Northern Ireland is contained in the education and science category.

[3]Unidentified expenditure for housing is entirely made up of Government net lending to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Table 7a
Identifiable public expenditure 1983-84 to 1987-88[1]

	£ million			Index[2]	
	Great Britain	*Northern Ireland*	*United Kingdom identified*	*Great Britain*	*Northern Ireland*
1983-84	95,359·4	3,875·2	99,234·6	96·1	3·9
1984-85	102,383·4	4,180·7	106,564·1	96·1	3·9
1985-86	106,489·0	4,430·3	110,919·3	96·0	4·0
1986-87	113,542·0	4,662·2	118,204·2	96·1	3·9
1987-88	119,228·8	4,998·8	124,227·6	96·0	4.0

[1] Financing of nationalised industries' expenditure can be allocated between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and has therefore been included in this table.
[2] United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100.

Table 7b
Identifiable public expenditure per head 1983-84 to 1987-88[1]

	£ per head			Index[2]	
	Great Britain	*Northern Ireland*	*United Kingdom identified*	*Great Britain*	*Northern Ireland*
1983-84	1,740·9	2,511·1	1,761·1	98·8	142·6
1984-85	1,864·6	2,696·5	1,887·4	98·8	142·9
1985-86	1,934·1	2,843·9	1,959·1	98·7	145·2
1986-87	2,057·1	2,975·6	2,082·4	98·8	142·9
1987-88	2,153·9	3,173·6	2,182·1	98·7	145·4

[1] Financing of nationalised industries' expenditure can be allocated between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and has therefore been included in this table.
[2] United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100.

Official Report (Price)

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the price of the *Official Report*.

Mr. Lilley: Following a review by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, I have authorised an increase of 65p in the price of the daily part and Standing Committee debates with a proportionate increase in the price of the weekly part. Bound volumes will increase by £3, the volume index by 30p and the fortnightly index by 20p. Subscription rates and the scale of charges for reprints of Members' speeches appearing in the *Official Report* will also be raised. These increases, coupled with a reduction of 7·5 per cent. in the production costs at Hansard Press during the current Session, will enable the level of central subsidy to be further reduced.

Union Texas Petroleum Corporation *v.* Critchley

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he proposes to take in the light of the recent High Court decision in the case of Union Texas Petroleum Corporation *v.* Critchley.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government propose bringing forward legislation in the 1989 Finance Bill to make clear the amount of United Kingdom tax that is deductible from United Kingdom tax credits to which non-residents may be entitled under the terms of a double taxation convention. The legislation follows the recent decision in the case of Union Texas Petroleum Corporation *v.* Critchley and its purpose would be to do no more than restore the position to what it was intended to be. It will apply so as to prevent claims to payment of additional tax credit for past years, but will not affect the decision of any commissioners or court given before today.

Fruit Machines

Miss Lestor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what revenue the Exchequer received in each of the last five years from licence fees from fruit machines.

Mr. Lilley: Revenue received from gaming machines licence duty is as follows:

	£ million
1983-84	62·9
1984-85	53·2
1985-86	86·0
1986-87	74·7
1987-88	94·2

EC (Spending Controls)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement explaining the differences between the controls on European Economic Community spending agreed at the Council meetings in 1985 and 1988, respectively.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* The meeting of the European Council in February 1988 agreed to the following major improvements in the previous arrangements for controlling EC agriculture expenditure which had been set up after the European Councils in Fontainebleau and Dublin in 1984:

(i) the guideline limit on agricultural expenditure is now embodied in a legally binding Council decision which provides for expenditure to grow at no more than 74 per cent. of the rate of growth of the Community's gross national product (previously the guideline was set out in informal Council conclusions and expenditure was permitted to grow at the same rate as the Community's own resources revenues);

(ii) the provision in the 1984 conclusions which permitted the guideline limit to be exceeded in the event of "exceptional circumstances" has been deleted and replaced by a monetary reserve of 1 billion ecu designed to compensate solely for large fluctuations in the exchange rate between the US dollar and the ecu. The revenue to fund the reserve will only be called up if it is needed (there has been no such call in 1988) and the mechanism will work symmetrically (i.e. privision will be reduced if the US dollar appreciates);

(iii) the Council's decision on budget discipline provides not only that the Commission's price proposals shall be consistent with the limits laid down by the agricultural guideline but that expenditure will be managed on a sector by sector basis to ensure that the limit will not be breached;

(iv) automatic stabiliser mechanisms have been built into the regulations governing each of the major commodity regimes. For the most part these are designed to trigger price cuts whenever production exceeds maximum quantities set by the Council;

(v) a new regulation has been introduced to provide for systematic depreciation of new intervention stocks and specific sums have been set aside outside the guideline limit to provide for the costs of depreciation and disposal of existing stocks which have not been fully depreciated in the past.

As regards non-agricultural expenditure, the inter-institutional agreement (IIA) between the Council, the Commission and the Parliament provides a procedural and financial framework for implementing the conclusions of the Brussels European Council on budgetary discipline. The financial perspective attached to the IIA represent

ceilings on Community expenditure between 1988 and 1992 which the signatories to the agreement have bound themselves to respect.

Interest Rates

Mr. Pike: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has regarding the effect of *(a)* a 1 per cent. rise in interest rates and *(b)* a 1 per cent. drop in interest rates on income to the Treasury.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 21 October 1988]:* Interest rates are set at the level necessary to maintain downward pressure on inflation. Lower inflation improves Government finances in the medium term.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Major David Walker

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Attorney-General if, in the light of new information on the blowing up of the Bularos hospital, Managua, on 6 March 1985, he will now consider prosecuting Major David Walker under the Foreign Enlistment Act 1870.

The Attorney-General: No evidence of the alleged offence to which the hon. Gentleman refers has been submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions or to the Metropolitan police. Any such evidence submitted to the Director or to the police of course will be considered carefully.

Shops Act

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Attorney-General what is the number, nature and relevant category of United Kingdom courts which have referred cases brought to them in respect of section 47 of the Shops Act 1950 to the European Court for an opinion; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The following courts in the United Kingdom have referred questions concerning section 47 of the Shops Act 1950 for preliminary rulings by the European Court of Justice in the course of criminal proceedings:

Woodbridge magistrates court
Mansfield magistrates court
Cwmbran magistrates court
Wakefield magistrates court
The Crown court at Shrewsbury
Londonderry magistrates court

The Crown court at Bodmin has stayed proceedings before it in an appeal in a criminal matter in order to make such a reference to the European Court, but notice of registration of that reference has not been received from the court.

The Government have decided to submit observations in the proceedings before the European Court in these cases. Written observations have so far been submitted in five cases.

DEFENCE

Atmospheric Nuclear Weapons Tests (Health Studies)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether, following the "Study of Health of United Kingdom Participants in the United Kingdom Atmospheric Nuclear Weapons Tests", published on 28 January, further studies of the possible effects on the risks of developing multiple myeloma and leukaemia have been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government have accepted the recommendations made by the authors of the National Radiological Protection Board report to conduct a follow-up study covering a period of 10 years from the end of 1983 (the end point of the published study) to the end of 1993. This further study will again cover the incidence of leukaemia (excluding chronic lymphatic) and multiple myeloma. The NRPB is therefore continuing to accumulate data on mortality and cancer incidence in both the study and control populations. If it is justified by an examination of this data, the Government have agreed to consider embarking on a full validation and analysis of the extra data leading to an interim report at an earlier date. No such interim study is, however under way at this moment.

Departmental Staff

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many personnel are employed in his Ministry; what percentage of them are disabled; how many persons have been taken on in the past year; and how many of them suffer from a disability.

Mr. Sainsbury: On 1 June 1988, the number of full-time equivalent United Kingdom-based civilian staff employed by MOD was 142,675. Of this number, some 126,300 were covered in the annual survey of registered disabled personnel at that date and, of those covered, 1,191 (0·94 per cent.) were registered as disabled. No information is available on unregistered disabled personnel. Identified intake of United Kingdom-based civilian staff during the year to 1 June 1988 totalled some 13,600. The annual survey of registered disabled personnel recorded recruitment of 14 registered disabled personnel during the year.

ENERGY

Sizewell C

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has for a public inquiry on Sizewell C proposals when they come forward formally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: If the CEGB were to make an application for consent to construct a power station at Sizewell 'C' my right hon. Friend would be obliged to hold a public inquiry if the local planning authority objected. Even if the local planning authority did not object he could still order an inquiry if he thought it appropriate in the light of other objections received.

British Nuclear Fuels plc

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has had any meetings with British Nuclear Fuels plc senior executives following their complaints that British Nuclear Fuels plc efforts to assist the nuclear installations inspectorate investigation into alleged operator malpractice in radiological protection procedures had deflected key British Nuclear Fuels plc health staff away from genuine and important safety matters; and what implications this staff prioritisation has for safety at Sellafield.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have noted both the report of the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate (NII) and the comments made by British Nuclear Fuels plc (BNFL) in accepting the conclusions and recommendations of the report. I am confident that BNFL continues to give the highest priority to safety and that the NII will continue to provide the essential independent check on this.

Nuclear Safety

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if any recent initiatives have been taken by the United Kingdom and Soviet Union to offer mutual assistance in international nuclear safety.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 20 April 1988 at column *434*. The information exchange arrangement between the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate and the USSR state commission on supervision of nuclear power safety, was signed on 21 September during the IAEA conference in Vienna.

I understand that Her Majesty's chief inspectorate of nuclear installations will be visiting the USSR early next year to continue discussions with the USSR state commission.

Piper Alpha

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his statement of 7 July, *Official Report*, columns 1191-98, whether the public inquiry he announced on the Piper Alpha platform disaster will review safety procedures for work in the North sea generally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson *[pursuant to his reply, 14 July 1988, c. 365-66]*: I have appointed Mr. Malcolm Ford, CBE, lately managing director of Britoil plc and Professor Frank Lees, professor of plant engineering at Loughborough university of technology to be assessors to assist Lord Cullen at the public inquiry into the Piper Alpha accident.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Upper Waiting Hall

Mr. Hanley: To ask Lord President of the Council how the partial closure of the Upper Waiting Hall will affect those Members' exhibitions usually staged there; and what alternative arrangements have been made.

Mr. Wakeham: In consultation with those authorities responsible for the control of Westminster Hall, it has been agreed that those exhibitions arranged for the period to Christmas this year should be held instead in the north east corner of Westminster Hall. Thereafter, no further exhibitions will be allowed until the Upper Waiting Hall has been repaired.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Cyprus

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much official aid given by the Government to Cyprus in each of the last four years has been devoted to projects in the Turkish-controlled sector; and how much has been devoted to projects in the remainder of Cyprus.

Mr. Chris Patten: Information for the period in question could be provided only at disproportionate cost. But as I informed the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) on 26 February, at column *34*, arrangements have been made to ensure that in future the sums expended from aid funds on each community are recorded.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia. This evening I hope to have an Audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Barr Hall, Portaferry

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether a vehicular access to the new prisoner rehabilitation centre at Barr Hall, Portaferry, has been approved in accordance with roads legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: No. Approval for such access has not been sought from the roads service of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland.

Housing Executive

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in rehabilitation in each of the housing regions in Northern Ireland in each year since 1973.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, who has advised me that, prior to 1980-81, details of rehabilitation expenditure were not maintained on a regional basis. Rehabilitation expenditure (ie, expenditure on both acquired and purpose-built stock) since 1980-81 is as follows:

Year	*Belfast* £k	*South East* £k	*South* £k	*North East* £k	*North West* £k	*West* £k
1980-81	11,879	1,059	2,142	1,324	1,501	436
1981-82	14,798	1,628	1,671	1,866	3,676	1,466
1982-83	25,777	9,794	6,285	6,168	5,900	4,474
1983-84	24,666	6,828	5,416	7,858	4,862	4,148
1984-85	22,896	6,746	5,724	9,648	5,630	2,889
1985-86	24,080	7,064	8,463	9,615	6,342	2,695
1986-87	16,890	5,913	4,725	4,398	3,655	2,271
1987-88	18,574	4,748	5,016	5,330	5,091	4,080

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent by the Housing Executive on the repair and rehabilitation of houses in the Ardoyne area of district 6 in Belfast in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, who has advised me that information on the repair of dwellings in the Ardoyne area is not readily available and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost. The total amount spent on rehabilitation and planned maintenance in the area in each of the last five years is as follows:

	Rehabilitation £	*Planned maintenance* £
1983-84	Nil	Nil
1984-85	493,657	182,672
1985-86	257,975	212,700
1986-87	756,000	43,469
1987-88	915,861	302,203

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on the Poleglass estate new build and maintenance in each year since 1973.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, who has advised me that expenditure on new build and planned maintenance in the Poleglass estate is as follows:

	New build £	*Planning maintenance* £
1972-73 to 1978-79	Nil	Nil
1979-80	427,060	Nil
1980-81	5,312,641	Nil
1981-82	4,535,700	Nil
1982-83	5,459,442	Nil
1983-84	5,824,551	61,547
1984-85	3,897,349	450
1985-86	3,960,625	77,409
1986-87	2,926,780	3,600
1987-88	2,006,923	52,032

Carriageways and Footways (Repair Costs)

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent by the Department of the Environment on the repair of carriageways and footways in north Belfast, east Belfast, and west Belfast, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Belfast Urban Area Plan

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the time scale for the publication of the report of the commissioners on the Belfast urban area plan has been the subject of slippage; and whether separate interim reports will be published covering the separate headings such as commercial, housing, recreation and transportation.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* The time scale for submission of the Commission's report and the manner of its presentation to the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) are matters for the Commission to decide after consultation with the Department. However, I am not aware of any slippage.

Debt Payments (Deductions)

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the total deductions made from *(a)* invalidity benefit, *(b)* child benefit, *(c)* widows benefit, *(d)* supplementary

benefit, *(e)* unemployment benefit, *(f)* sickness benefit and *(g)* retirement pensions in each year from 1979 to 1988 under the Payments for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1971.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* The information requested is as follows:

Amount in £s

Financial Year	*Supplementary Benefit*	*Child Benefit*	*Unemployment Benefit*	*Sickness Benefit*	*Invalidity Benefit*	*Retirement Benefit*	*Widow's Benefit*
1978-79	764,280·45	11,801·49	122,419·34	12,715·25	132,306·44	39,759·89	60,279·09
1979-80	1,015,276·95	62,124·02	105,634·97	13,261·44	182,840·67	50,894·62	71,729·47
1980-81	1,477,225·14	70,435·71	211,779·09	15,740·65	256,734·06	83,339·53	105,914·09
1981-82	263,668·48	62,794·57	265,196·95	9,524·73	436,747·48	149,433·14	155,967·05
1982-83	474,264·89	86,299·35	367,573·98	16,694·64	872,123·58	379,438·35	322,442·86
1983-84	646,155·59	92,449·35	256,869·10	13,246·89	1,073,954·86	535,781·87	407,457·58
1984-85	724,889·61	73,860·16	121,855·50	12,935·62	1,015,112·09	442,253·64	352,402·35
1985-86	824,101·13	77,374·67	134,636·92	14,159·11	1,104,443·51	541,369·58	368,682·17
1986-87	991,135·65	69,529·60	157,726·37	17,815·43	1,288,668·52	664,586·12	427,617·80
1987-88	1,044,693·97	71,168·79	139,249·94	16,134·69	1,422,780·18	678,406·70	431,945·61
1988-89[1]	328,953·65	18,836·74	30,638·85	3,088·67	404,581·18	185,306·65	117,627·04

[1] To 14 October 1988.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland from how many people deductions were made under the Payments for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1971 in each of the years from 1979 to 1988.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* The numbers of people from whom deductions have been made is not available. The total number of debt cases recorded by the four main creditor bodies was as follows:

Year	*Numbers*
1979-80	175,300
1980-81	176,300
1981-82	165,000
1982-83	158,000
1983-84	169,100
1984-85	141,400
1985-86	137,000
1986-87	127,000
1987-88	122,494

Downpatrick Race Club

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he intends introducing legislation to the Horse Racing and Betting Order 1976 in order that Downpatrick race club may be eligible for funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* It will be necessary to repeal the Horse Racing and Betting Order 1976 and seek Parliament's agreement to a new Order in Council. The Department of Agriculture has initiated the necessary legislative procedures. These could take at least two years to complete.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what level of funding will be offered to Downpatrick race club under an amended Horse Racing and Betting Order 1976.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* No decisions have been taken on the level of funding, which will only be determined following discussions with the bookmaker organisations.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether funding to Downpatrick race club will be paid retrospectively to 1976 in the event of amendment of the Horse Race and Betting Order 1976.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* No.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Tourism

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the United Kingdom's balance of payments in tourism since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is available in table 1 of the 1987 Business Monitor MA6 "Overseas travel and tourism" a copy of which can be found in the Library.

Regional Development Grants

Mr. Pike: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of total regional development grants has been paid to firms in the north-west region in *(a)* 1986-87 and *(b)* 1987-88.

Mr. Forth: The north-west region's share of regional development grants expenditure in England was 45 per cent. in 1986-87 and 36 per cent. in 1987-88.

Sub-post Offices (Wales)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what initiatives he will take to retain sub-post office facilities in Wales under their current opening hours regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: This is an operational matter for the Post Office Board.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many sub-post offices have closed in Wales in the years 1979-1988 and in 1986-1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: This is a matter for the Post Office Board. Figures are not readily available for the period before 1986. However, I understand that, according to Post Office estimates, in 1979 there were 1,752 sub-post offices in Wales and the Marches. Between 1979 and October 1986 it is estimated that 119 offices were closed; and since October 1986, 28 sub-post offices in the region have been closed. A total of 1,612 sub-post offices remain, including seven offices previously closed but now reopened as

community offices operating on a part time basis. Since the Post Office introduced the community office arrangements, the number of closures has reduced from an average of some 15 per year to five during the last 12 months.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many sub-post offices in the counties of Clwyd and Gwynedd are to be reclassified for the purposes of opening hours; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: This is an operational matter for the Post Office. However, I understand that in Gwynedd there are 226 sub-post offices of which 14 have been reclassified as community offices which open part-time. A further 96 full-time offices may be considered for conversion to community offices when they become vacant. In Clwyd there are 209 sub-post offices of which 17 are community offices. A further 50 full-time offices may be considered for conversion to community offices when they become vacant.

Citizens Advice Bureau (Bradford)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will arrange for extra funding to be made available to the Bradford citizens advice bureau, to enable it to cope with any additional demands arising from the closure of Bradford benefits shops.

Mr. Forth: No. My Department does not fund individual citizens advice bureaux direct. The Government grant to the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, which this financial year amounted to £8·386 million, is intended principally to meet the costs of providing the central support services for local bureaux, such as the information service and the training of bureau workers. The running costs of local bureaux are a matter for local funding and the majority of bureaux are funded entirely by local authorities, although part of the Government grant to NACAB is made available for use in short-term partnership arrangements between NACAB and individual local authorities. The allocation of this partnership money is at the discretion of NACAB.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Departmental Staff

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the latest figures for his Ministry in the London pay area of the number of vacancies by grade and the proportion this is of the grade complement in London.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested for the London weighting area is as follows:

Grade level	*Number of vacancies*	*Percentage of vacancies against grade complement*
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0
4	0	0
5	1	1
6	9	13
7 and equivalent	53½	15
SEO and equivalent	0	0
HEO and equivalent	53½	11
EO and equivalent	87	15
AO and equivalent	111½	14
AA and equivalent	101½	14
Total non-Industrials	417	12
Industrials	39	33

Notes:

1. The numbers of vacancies by grade equivalents are measured by comparing the figures for staff in post at 1 October 1988 with the authorised complement for the Department at the same date.
2. The figures include some specially complemented posts which may be filled at one of several grade levels. Complement information for these posts has been provided on a proportional basis.
3. Normal retirement, resignation and recruitment patterns mean that a proportion of the authorised complement is inevitably unfilled at any one time. Additionally cash limits on running costs restrict the number of posts the Department can fill.

Pesticides

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which pesticides his Department has examined as potentially injurious to health when used in the production of fruit and vegetables; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: All pesticides must be approved before they can be sold or used. Pesticides are by their very nature active against some living organisms and hence their use offers a potential risk to both human health and the environment. This is precisely why we take great care to ensure that only those products which have met stringent criteria on safety may be used.

Under part III of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 Ministers in six Government Departments must first be satisfied that a product can be used safely before any approval is given. In order to obtain approval pesticide manufacturers are require to provide a range of scientific data, which are then subjected to rigorous scrutiny by the independent experts of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides. This will include, where appropriate, assessment of studies on the short and long-term toxicity of the product, on its cumulative effects and on any delayed effects which might emerge after a latent period.

Only when Ministers are convinced, on the basis of expert advice, that the product can be used without risk to people—whether operators, consumers or those in the vicinity of spraying operations—livestock or domestic animals and with minimal risk to the environment, will authority to put it on the market be given.

As part of the approvals process all products may be subject to review at any time if new evidence arises suggesting the existence of a previously unevaluated risk. On this basis Ministers have sought the views of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides on a number of pesticides used on fruit and vegetables since the legislation took effect and products based on the active ingredients dinoseb and related products, and cyhexatin have been withdrawn from use. Other substances are either under review or the subject of consultation.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the size of the section within his Department which monitors the pesticide residues in fruit

and vegetables in the United Kingdom; if he will list the names and positions of those civil servants with such responsibilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Pesticides safety division has over 80 scientific and administrative staff, and carries out the greater part of the work relating to pesticides safety which falls to my Department. However for monitoring fruit and vegetables for pesticide residues the division's resource are supplemented by the working party on pesticide residues, which is chaired by the Director of the ADAS central science laboratory and benefits from a technical secretariat provided by food science division.

The working party has expert members drawn from other MAFF divisions, other Government Departments, from a number of laboratories in the Government service and from local authorities. A range of laboratories contribute to the monitoring programme including ADAS central science laboratory, ADAS central veterinary laboratory, MAFF food science laboratory, MAFF fisheries laboratory, laboratories at DAFS and DANI, the laboratory of the Government chemist and certain public analysts' laboratories. The working party reports both to the Standing Committee on Food Surveillance and the Advisory Committee on Pesticides. It is on the recommendation of the latter that any necessary changes are made to the conditions of approval of pesticides to ensure that residues remain within acceptable limits.

As can be seen, a large number of individuals are involved. The membership of the committees mentioned above is listed in their reports.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the likely consequences to consumers who consume fruit and vegetables containing pesticides residues which are over the recommended safety limit; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the safety of customers consuming apples and pears and vegetables containing pesticides residues for sale in outlets in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Maximum residue levels for pesticides are primarily designed to act as a check that good agricultural practice in the use of pesticides is being followed by farmers and growers. However, the approval process for pesticides ensures that the levels incorporate adequate margins of safety for consumers as well.

It is misleading to describe MRLs as "safety limits" as the hon. Member does, as that term suggests that if an MRL is exceeded the consumer's health is put at risk: in fact the safety margins which MRLs incorporate are designed to ensure that even if a person consumes extreme quantities of a particular food over a long period of time, and all that food contains residues at the MRL (which is unlikely) the overall intake of residue should cause that person no harm. It follows that the occasional consumption of food containing residues which do not greatly exceed the MRL should present no risk to health.

Sea Levels

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what contingency plans exist for combating the effects of rising sea levels; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what estimates his Department is using in considering the consequences of rising sea levels in the British Isles over the next 50 years; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will estimate the cost of improving existing sea defences and building new defences; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will assess the need for new defences inland to combat a rise in sea level and where such defences should be located; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Possible rises in sea level by the middle of the next century are being studied as part of a national research programme, linked with similar programmes throughout the European Community and worldwide; particular attention is being given to monitoring and prediction of sea level change and options for design of flood defences. At present, precise predictions cannot be made due to uncertainty regarding future temperature patterns. Nevertheless, the implications for coastal defences of a broad range of possible changes are being carefully studied.

The present design of defences allows for a rise in sea levels of 0·3 metres per century. This compares with a global increase over the last century of the order of 0·15 metres. An international programme of studies is investigating climate change; meanwhile research is exploring the implications for the United Kingdom in advance of firm predictions. Based on international reports, a range of temperature predictions was selected for these studies; these predictions suggest the possibility of sea level rise in the range 0·2 million to 1·65 million by the middle of the next century. With such an increase, it is estimated that the current annual expenditure of £50 million on coastal defences might need to more than double over this period.

The need for flood defences is kept under continual review by the Department. A team of engineers report regularly on flood defence needs in their area and maintain close contact with the responsible authorities.

Agricultural Land Classification

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about his review of the Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales.

Mr. Ryder: I am pleased to announce that the revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land are being published today. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

New data and technology have allowed us to develop a revised ALC system. This builds on the strengths of the existing system, but we have been able to take advantage of modern methods to make it more objective and definitive. The revised system reflects comments received during the consultation exercise earlier this year. It will come into operation on 1 January 1989.

Cereals

Mr. Paice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will consider changing the rules for calculating cereals co-responsibility levy in cereals sold with a high moisture content.

Mr. MacGregor: I am glad to say that we have been able to modify the rules for calculating the rate of

co-responsibility levy paid on cereals sold with a high moisture content. Up until now, levy has been payable on the delivered weight of the grain, regardless of the moisture level. This has meant that where grain has been delivered with a high moisture content the tonnage used to calculate the amount of levy due has sometimes been higher than the tonnage on which the grower has been paid. I was concerned when evidence came to light that as a result of a different interpretation of the Community rules different arrangements were in force in some other member states, we took steps straightaway to get Commission agreement to change our rules which has now been achieved.

In future, therefore if a grower is paid on a lower tonnage of grain than the delivered tonnage, levy will be payable only on that lower tonnage. These new rules come into effect immediately, and will apply to all transactions that have taken place since the beginning of the marketing year. The intervention board will issue details of the changes as soon as possible. Anyone who has paid too much levy under the previous system will be eligible for a refund; details of how to apply will be announced shortly.

These changes will ensure that our growers are not treated less favourably than any growers anywhere elsewhere in the Community; and as such will I hope be welcomed.

ENVIRONMENT

Departmental Staff

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest available figures for his Department in the London pay area of the number of vacancies by grade and the proportion this is of the grade complement in London.

Mr. Ridley: This information is not kept in the form requested and it would be disproportionately costly to collect it. There are no fixed complements for particular grades.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide the latest available figures for his Department for *(a)* numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions, by grade, *(b)* location of those offices awarding local pay additions and *(c)* annual cost.

Mr. Ridley: Local pay additions have been introduced in my Department, excluding the PSA, as follows:

Location: Inner London weighting pay area

Grade	*Number*	*Annual cost* £
Secretarial	380	114,000
Administrative Assistant	83	39,600
Administrative Officer	505	288,600

Property Services Agency (Staff)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest available figures for the Property Services Agency in the London pay area of the number of vacancies by grade and the proportion this is of the grade complement in London.

Mr. Ridley: This information is not kept in the form requested and it would be disproportionately costly to collect it. The Property Services Agency operates under a financial running costs regime and there are no fixed complements for particular grades.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide the latest available figures for the Property Services Agency for *(a)* numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions, by grade, *(b)* location of those offices awarding local pay additions and *(c)* annual cost.

Mr. Ridley: The information requested is:

(a)	Administrative Assistant (AA)		222
	Administrative Officer (AO)		628
	Executive Officer (EO)		38
	Typist	257	
	Personal Secretary	87	
	Senior Personal Secretary	20	
	Typing Manager	11	
	All typing grades	—	375

(b) Local Pay Additions (LPAs) are paid to AOs, AAs, and typing grades in the inner zone of the London Weighting Area, to typing grades in the intermediate and outer zones and to most AOs and AAs in the outer zone. EOs, AOs, AAs and typing grades are paid LPAs in District Works Offices throughout PSA's London Region. LPAS are also paid to EOs, AOs, AAs and typing grades at Reading, to AOs, AAs and typists at Daws Hill, Watford, High Wycombe, Aldershot and Farnborough and to AAs at Cambridge.

(c) The cost in a full year is £576,000.

Homelessness

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he possesses, and what action he intends to take in order to obtain further such information, showing the actual numbers of families becoming homeless consequent on default in mortgage payments and the changes in the proportion of homeless persons in this category over the last five years.

Mr. Trippier: English local authorities provide quarterly information about the number of households accepted under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985; this includes the number of households accepted where the main reason for homelessness was mortgage arrears or default.

In the 12 months to June 1988 it is estimated that 9,800 households became homeless as a result of mortgage arrears; this is some 8 per cent. of all acceptances. For corresponding information in each of the last five years, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on 27 June at column *146*.

Freehold Disposals (Westminster)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received seeking the direction of a special audit of Westminster city council in respect of the disposal by that council of the freeholds of 32 Smith Square and 67 Tufton Street, London SW1.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None, other than parliamentary questions from the hon. Members for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours).

Private Cemeteries

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on private cemeteries.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Since 1 April, besides five questions from hon. Members, we have received 46 letters from Members and 45 direct from members of the public most of which related to the three former Westminster cemeteries sold into private ownership. These included the following matters: calls for a full public inquiry, for the Secretary of State to order an extraordinary audit of the council's accounts, for him to implement a compulsory purchase order for the cemeteries, and for a licensing system for private cemetery operators, complaints about maintenance, and concern about development of unused land in the cemeteries. In addition, the Department handled 48 applications for the closure of churchyards to further burials.

EC Environment Ministers

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting of European Community Environment Ministers at Delphi, on 1 October.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My noble Friend the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside represented the United Kingdom at this informal meeting at which views were exchanged on the future of the Community's environmental policy, with particular reference to the question of financial resources. There was also a discussion on the implications of the Single European Act and the completion of the single European market in 1992.

Ministers underlined the importance of current environmental issues which cross national borders and require collaboration both at Community and at the wider international level, such as the ozone layer, the "greenhouse effect", the need to promote sustainable development and the safe disposal of waste.

The meeting was an opportunity for a frank and open exchange of views without the need for formal conclusions.

British Nuclear Fuels plc

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the statement of the nuclear installations inspectorate on operator practices at British Nuclear Fuels plc Sellafield that some workers are avoiding proper radiological monitoring procedures at Sellafield.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The issues referred to in the nuclear installations inspectorate's report, concern worker safety and are a matter for that inspectorate. Since these working practices have no waste management implications, my Department has no regulatory responsibility.

Radioactive Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the departmental representation and what papers by departmental officials or departmental consultants were presented at *(a)* the 1988 European summer school on radioactive waste management held at Christ's college, Cambridge, on 11 to 14 July, *(b)* the international conference on disposal of radioactive waste in seabed sediments held at St. Catherine's college, Oxford, on 20 and 21 September and *(c)* the international conference on decommissioning of major radioactive facilities held at the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, London, on 11 and 12 October; and if he will place copies of all departmental papers from such conferences in the Library.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Departmental representation and papers presented by departmental officials or consultants were;

(a) One official and two papers:
- (i) Monitoring Radioactivity in the Environment. Dr. F. Feates, HMIP/DOE.
- (ii) The National Research Programme. Dr. F. Feates, HMIP/DOE.

(b) Three officials and eight papers:
- (i) Modelling Emplacement and the Physical Changes to the Sediment Barrier. T. Freeman, BRE/DOE.
- (ii) Migratory Pathways in Sub-seabed Sediments. Dr. Janet Gronow, HMIP/DOE.
- (iii) The HOCUS Hole Closure Experiments. T. Freeman et al, BRE/DOE.
- (iv) The Geology and Geochemistry of Madiera Abyssal Plain Sediments. Dr. P. Weaver, Institute of Oceanographic Sciences.
- (v) Studies Relating to Faulting in the Abyssal Plain Sediments. Dr. Stone and Dr. D. Muir-Wood, Cambridge University.
- (vi) Modelling of the Coupled Heat Flow and Consolidation Around Hot Cylinders Buried in Clay. Dr. Savvidou, Cambridge University.
- (vii) Centrifuge Modelling of a Free-fall Penetrator. Drs. Poorooshasb and James, Cambridge University.
- (viii) Review of Initial HGW Deep Ocean Emplacement Disposal Studies. Milloy et al, Ove Arup and Partners.

(c) One official and no papers.

Copies of these papers will be placed in the Library when the respective conference proceedings are published.

Community Liaison

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list for each urban development corporation by name the *(a)* establishment and *(b)* number currently in post by title of staff responsible for community liaison work, giving for each urban development corporation the allocated budget in the current financial year for such purposes.

Mr. Trippier: The information available for English first and second generation urban development corporations (UDCs) is given in the table. The UDCs vary in their staffing arrangements and in the size, resident population and other characteristics of their areas. Therefore, direct comparisons are misleading. No equivalent information is available for the third generation UDCs set up this year. They are still recruiting staff and developing their policies.

UDC	Establishment	Number currently in post	Titles of posts	Work/project budget	Staff costs
London Docklands	7 plus support	7 plus support	Head of Community Development Director of Community Division 4 Community Liaison Officers Schools Liaison Teacher 3 Support Staff (plus other staff in Employment Division with some involvement)	£7·9 million[1]	£208,000 for 7 plus support
Merseyside	None full time—Corporation consults community groups as necessary.				
Black Country	1	1	Community Liaison Officer	£350,000	£27,000
Teesside	0·2	0·2	Assistant to Chief Executive (part of duties)	£50,000	£5,000
Trafford Park	None full time—Chief Executive or assistant liaise at regular meetings.				
Tyne & Wear	1	1	Community Development Advisor (Consultant)	£100,000	£30,000

[1] NB: £7·9 million is LDDC's budget for its total community support programme, including grants and awards.

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he anticipates the implementation date for the means testing of home improvement grants; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* the sliding scale that he will use.

Mr. Trippier: We hope to reform the home improvement grant system at the earliest legislative opportunity and we expect to issue a consultation paper on the proposed test of resources later this year.

Montreal Protocol

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to press for the strengthening of the Montreal protocol on the reduction of chlorofluorocarbons in the environment; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government has decided that worldwide emission of chlorofluorocarbons must be reduced by at least 85 per cent. and we are pressing the European Community as a whole to adopt this policy with a view to greatly strengthening the Montreal protocol. This was announced on 3 October by my noble Friend the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside on publication of the second report of the Department's stratospheric ozone review group, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. Our first priority remains the protocol's entry into force, as planned, on 1 January 1989. This will in turn trigger implementation in the Community by means of a regulation formally adopted on 22 September.

Conservative Party Conference

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those publications or documents produced by his Department which were distributed at the 1988 Conservative party conference.

Mr. Ridley: Copies of the following documents were available on request at the local government stand at the 1988 Conservative party conference.

Government Proposals for Housing: Housing Action Trusts
Government Proposals for Housing: Private Renting
Government Proposals for Housing: Tenants' Choice
Paying for Local Government: The Need for Change
Protecting your Environment: A Guide
Towards a Cleaner North Sea: Restoring Estuaries

All these documents are available free of charge to members of the public.

No. 1 Cannon Row

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about progress on work to convert No. 1 Cannon Row.

Mr. Chope: I am pleased to report that the contract to convert the former Cannon Row police station to temporary office accommodation has been let and work started last month. Completion is forecast for summer 1989. The Parliamentary Works Office is discussing with the Serjeant at Arms the arrangements for taking over and furnishing the building.

English House Condition Survey

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now publish the results of the English house condition survey 1986.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* I hope to publish the results of the 1986 English house condition survey next month.

Rent Arrears

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to help local authorities cope with the increase in rent arrears since the changes made in the housing benefit scheme.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* As my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) told the hon. Member on 14 July, *Official Report*, columns 301-2, it is for individual authorities to take timely and appropriate steps to control and reduce rent arrears. The assistance available from auditors and from officials of my Department was set out in circular 18/87.

Young People (Homelessness)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for assisting in the housing of young people in Halifax who are facing homelessness as a result of the changes in the law in April relating to housing benefits.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* The Government do not accept that the changes in housing benefit announced in April have resulted in homelessness among young people either in Halifax or elsewhere. The statutory responsibility for assisting or advising young

homeless people in Halifax rests entirely with the local authority, under the provisions of part III of the Housing Act 1985.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received relating to the decision of the Stoneham housing association and the local authority in Halifax to abandon a scheme providing furnished flats because changes in housing benefits would prevent young people, for whom the scheme was designed, from meeting the rents.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* None.

London Borough of Westminster and Conservative Central Office (Transactions)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will exercise his powers under section 22(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1982 to require the Audit Commission to order an extraordinary audit into the property transaction undertaken between the London borough of Westminster and Conservative Central Office.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* No.

Storm Damage Claims

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by local authority the claims from the storm damage of October 1987 he has received and the relevant grant allocations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) on 14 June 1988, *Official Report* columns *138-42*. The information in that reply for certain authorities requires updating in the light of more recent information as follows.

	Total eligible expenditure net of receipts	*Threshold*	*Eligible expenditure attracting grant*
	£	£	£
Non Metropolitan Counties			
Essex	2,723,000	2,458,000	265,000
Isle of Wight	187,073	146,250	40,823
London Boroughs			
Hammersmith and Fulham	241,000	199,000	42,000
Waltham Forest	696,200	312,000	384,200
Non Metropolitan Districts			
Harlow	113,000	21,000	92,000
Welwyn Hatfield	49,000	29,000	20,000

The Isle of Wight figures are now based on a final audited claim.

Disabled Persons (Adapted Dwellings)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has regarding the current average cost to a local authority for *(a)* installing a ramp, *(b)* a stair lift and *(c)* widening doorways to provide for wheelchair access to council homes;

(2) what information he has regarding the average waiting time for households containing a disabled person seeking adaptations to their council property;

(3) what information he has regarding the number of households containing a disabled person and awaiting adaptations for ramps, stairlifts and widening of doorways.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* Information about households awaiting adaptations, and about the average cost to local authorities of adaptations, is not held centrally. The Department's new guidance manual "Home Adaptations for People with Physical Disabilities", a copy of which is in the Library, gives details of the cost of specific adaptations in 22 case studies in England and Wales.

HEALTH

Departmental Staff

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide the latest available figures for his Department for *(a)* numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions, by grade, *(b)* location of those offices awarding local pay additions and *(c)* annual cost.

Mrs. Currie: We do not yet have accurate statistics for the Department of Health alone, following the split of the Department of Health and Social Security on 5 July. The information given is for DHSS headquarters and covers staff in the Department of Health and the Department of Social Security.

The following is the table:

(a) Numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions by grade as at 1 July 1988 (DHSS HQ):

Grade	*Number of staff in receipt*
Administrative Assistant	106
Administrative Officer	577
Personal Secretary	271
Senior Personal Secretary	21
Executive Officer	30
Higher Executive Officer	14
Others	8

(b) Location of DHSS HQ offices awarding local pay additions:
Alexander Fleming House
Avon House
Brittania House
Eileen House
Friars House
Hannibal House
St. Christophers House
Almack House
Great Titchfield Street
Hepburn House
New Court
Richmond House
Euston Tower
Russell Square
State House
Canons Park
Hinchley Wood
Thames Ditton
Market Towers
Ray House

(c) The scheme has not been operating long enough for accurate annual cost projections to be made. The cost for the first month, July, was £42,001·77.

Dentists

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the following sanctions were applied to general dental practitioners in the calendar years 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987: *(a)* withholding of money and *(b)* compliance warnings.

Mrs. Currie: Information on the number of warnings issued is not readily available but a warning is generally issued when a practitioner has been found in breach of the terms of service. Details of the number of general dental practitioners found in breach and those where my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State directed a withholding are shown below:

General dental practitioners	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Found in breach	196	343	298	209
Withholding directed	145	255	220	136

The figures for 1985 and 1986 are artificially high because a backlog of cases was being cleared in those years.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated cost of tranquillisers supplied under the National Health Service in each of the past four years for which records are available.

Mr. Mellor: Tranquillisers form part of the therapeutic group sedatives and tranquillisers and the cost of individual drugs cannot be identified within the group. For the years 1984 to 1987 the net ingredient cost of drugs in this group dispensed by pharmacists in England was:

	£ million
1984	22·3
1985	16·9
1986	14·4
1987	14·3

Information is not collected by therapeutic group as to the cost of drugs supplied in hospitals or by dispensing doctors.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the number of beds for each regional health authority in *(a)* 1986 and *(b)* 1987.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the data for 1987-88 are not yet available. I will let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Walsgrave Hospital

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much will be provided by the West Midlands regional health authority or Coventry health authority in the form of a capital grant or capital loan towards the cost of day surgery, endoscopy and in-patient facilities being established at Walsgrave hospital by Bioplan Holdings plc.

Mr. Mellor: The capital cost of the total scheme, currently estimated at £1·1 million, is to be met 60 per cent. by Coventry health authority and 40 per cent. by Bioplan, in accordance with the proposed percentage use of the facilities.

The contribution to the scheme by Coventry health authority is to be met by an annual rental contribution from Bioplan; this will effectively service the capital contribution which Coventry health authority will make.

The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of Coventry health authority if he would like any further information.

Children's Homes

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has completed revision of the regulations governing the conduct of private children's homes and local authority community homes; and whether corporal punishment has now been prohibited in these establishments and in homes registered under the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Mrs. Currie: The Residential Care Homes (Amendment) Regulations 1988 prohibited corporal punishment in homes registered under part 1 of the Registered Homes Act, 1984. A wider revision of regulations governing the conduct of local authority community homes and voluntary homes provided under the Child Care Act, 1980 and the prohibition of corporal punishment in them has not been completed. Private children's homes are the subject of the Children's Homes Act, 1982, which is unimplemented.

We are committed to introduce legislation on the law on child care and family services as soon as Parliamentary time can be found. We intend to seek through that legislation a common regulation making power covering local authority community homes and voluntary and private children's homes. Full revision of regulations will be made when that power is available.

Action to produce revised control and discipline regulations to apply to local authority community homes and voluntary homes, which will specifically prohibit the use of corporal punishment, is in hand and we plan to issue draft regulations for consultation very shortly. It remains the Department's policy that corporal punishment has no place in the management of children's homes. The authorised use of corporal punishment in children's homes is thought to be virtually extinct.

Abortion

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of abortions performed in 1987 at *(a)* under 12, *(b)* 12 to 18, *(c)* 18 to 24 and *(d)* over 24 weeks' gestation by health authority area in England and Wales; and if he will give the numbers performed by National Health Service and private facilities by the same time limit categories.

Mrs. Currie *[pursuant to the reply, 1 July 1988, c. 395-96]:* I regret that there were errors in the statistics provided.

The correct information is shown in the following table.

Number of notifications of abortions to residents of England and Wales—1987[2]
Regional Health Authority of usual residence by gestation weeks and category of premises

Area of usual residence	Total[1]		Gestation weeks: Under 12		12-17		18-26		25 and over	
	NHS	Non-NHS	NHS	Non-NHS	NHS	Non-NHS	NHS	Non-NHS	NHS	Non-NHS
England and Wales	69,442	86,749	51,969	69,614	16,239	13,098	1,212	4,024	22	2
England	65,354	84,032	49,207	67,523	14,994	12,628	1,132	3,868	21	2
Wales	4,088	2,717	2,762	2,091	1,245	470	80	156	1	0
Regional Health Authority										
Northern	5,486	954	4,424	659	972	204	89	91	1	0
Yorkshire	3,327	5,801	2,511	4,716	720	821	95	264	1	0
Trent	6,367	4,892	4,503	4,085	1,764	561	98	245	2	1
East Anglian	3,782	989	2,716	746	1,010	170	55	73	1	0
North West Thames	5,953	10,556	4,493	8,961	1,328	1,219	132	375	0	0
North East Thames	8,873	10,030	6,703	8,351	2,018	1,282	148	397	4	0
South East Thames	5,740	9,081	4,257	7,146	1,382	1,544	99	389	2	1
South West Thames	3,411	7,050	2,726	5,804	637	991	47	254	1	0
Wessex	2,879	4,280	2,132	2,826	684	1,207	62	241	1	0
Oxford	3,382	3,903	2,704	3,168	601	524	76	211	1	0
South Western	5,415	1,902	4,113	1,323	1,234	425	66	152	2	0
West Midlands	2,827	13,920	2,098	11,954	677	2,059	51	807	1	0
Mersey	3,177	3,887	2,395	3,092	743	658	37	137	2	0
North Western	4,735	6,787	3,432	5,592	1,224	963	77	232	2	0

[1] Including not stated.
[2] Provisional.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits

137. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what number and proportion of the work force are ineligible for national insurance benefits.

138. **Mrs. Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what number and proportion of the work force are ineligible for national insurance benefits.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This information is not available. Entitlement to National Insurance benefits depends on meeting certain conditions applicable to the benefit involved, and these are tested only when a claim is made.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest figures available for his Department in the London pay area of the number of vacancies by grade and the proportion this is of the grade complement in London.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of vacancies by grade, and the proportion this is of the grade complement, is set out in the table for local and regional offices in the social security regional organisation. The figures give the overall position as at 1 October 1988. Individual offices are provided with a manpower budget and flexibilities in operating this budget mean that there can be surpluses in other grades and management may not be seeking to fill all these vacancies.

	SEO	HEO	EO	Typist	Security guard
Number of vacancies	4	22·5	42	14·5	6
Proportion of complement (Per cent.)	5·9	8·9	1·5	7·2	3·3

The headquarters organisation of the Department controls manpower by running costs budgets. The following table gives the number of staff headquarters divisions are seeking to recruit externally and the proportion this is of the staff in post and recruitment vacancies for that grade. The figures give the position as at 1 October 1988 and, because the process of splitting the Department of Health and Social Security is not yet complete, are an estimate of those staff who will form the headquarters of the Department of Social Security.

	Number of vacancies	Proportion of staff-in-post/vacancies (per cent.)
Principal	2	1·8
EO	8	2·8
AO	12	4·6
AA	10	9·9
PES	15	18·3
Typist	4	3·8
Economic Adviser	2	50
Legal Officer	2	15
Senior Research Officer	1	50
Information Officer	3	23
Assistant Statistician	2	50
Senior Scientific Officer (OR)	2	33

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide the latest available figures for his Department for *(a)* numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions, by grade, *(b)* location of those offices awarding local pay additions and *(c)* annual cost.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We do not yet have accurate statistics for the Department of Social Security alone, following the split of the Department of Health and Social Security on 25 July. The information given is for the Department's local offices. Information for DHSS Headquarters which covers staff in the Department of Social Security and the Department of Health are being provided today in reply to the hon. Member's similar question to the Secretary of State for Health.

(a) Numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions by grade as at 1 July 1988 (DSS local offices)

Grade	Number of staff in receipt
Administrative Assistant	46
Administrative Officer	279
Personal Secretary	9
Local Officer I	2,642
Local Officer II	3,666
Executive Officer	243
Typing Manager	8
Higher Executive Officer	592
Others	8

(b) Location of DSS offices awarding local pay additions

Acton	Leytonstone
Balham	Mitcham
Barking	Neasden
Battersea	Notting Hill
Bloomsbury	Oval
Bracknell	Paddington
Brixton	Peckham
Camberwell	Plaistow
Canning Town	Poplar
Chelsea	Reading
City	Richmond
Cricklewood	Shoreditch
Croydon	Slough
Crystal Palace	Southall
Ealing	Southwark
Edgware	Stepney
Edmonton	Stoke Newington
Eltham	Streatham
Epsom	Surbiton
Euston	Sutton
Finsbury Park	Thames North
Grays	Thames South
Greenwich Park	Tottenham
Guildford	Walthamstow
Hackney	Wandsworth
Harlesden	Westminster
Harrow	Wimbledon
Hendon	Woking
Highgate	Woodgrange Park
Hither Green	Wood Green
Hoxton	Woolwich
Ilford	OPSSAT
Kennington Park	London North Regional
Kensington	Office
Kingston upon Thames	London South Regional
Lewisham	Office

(c) The scheme has not been operating long enough for accurate annual cost projections to be made. The cost for the first month, July, was £294,534.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the complement of staff at his Department's Stanmore office.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department does not have a Stanmore office. The area is covered by the office at Harrow. Its present complement is 142.

Grants and Loans

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of applications for *(a)* community care grants, *(b)* budget loans and *(c)* crisis loans have been turned down in (i) the Burnley constituency, (ii) the Rossendale and Darwen constituency and (iii) the Hyndburn constituency.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Burnley constituency is covered by Burnley local office, Rossendale and Darwen constituency is covered by Rossendale local office and Hyndburn constituency is covered by Blackburn local office but their boundaries and not conterminous.

Information on social fund grants and loans processed and awarded, listed by local office, is available in the Library.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state for each of the last five years for which figures are available for mobility allowance applications *(a)* the number of applications, *(b)* the number of approvals, *(c)* the number of appeals and *(d)* the number of successful appeals.

Mr. Scott: The available information is as follows. It relates to decisions given in the relevant years, not to the results of claims made in those years.

1. Claims

	Number of claims decided	Decided in claimant's favour
1983	126,300	86,300
	*(19,500)	*(16,450)
1984	132,000	93,500
	*(23,950)	*(19,900)
1985	157,250	101,890
	*(27,520)	*(22,500)
1986	175,010	109,220
	*(29,530	*(24,420)
1987	177,250	110,460
	*(31,790)	*(26,220)

Note: Figures for renewal claims are shown separately in brackets marked * but included in the total.

2. Appeals

	Appeals and references decided by medical boards		Appeals decided by medical appeal tribunals	
	Number decided	Decisions in favour of claimant	Number decided	Decisions in favour of claimant
1983	12,970	3,890	3,070	1,000
1984	14,750	4,800	3,933	1,107
1985	16,800	5,410	4,316	850
1986	20,370	6,930	5,382	1,235
1987	21,208	6,369	5,753	1,545

Note: Figures include renewal claims.

Rents and Rates

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what payments were made by his Department for *(a)* rate rebates, *(b)* rent rebates and *(c)* rent allowances in 1986-87, and what are his latest estimates for those figures in 1987-88, for (i) Burnley borough council, (ii) Pendle borough council, (iii) Hyndburn borough council and (iv) Rossendale borough council.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is given in the table.

Housing Benefit Expenditure

	1986-87 £ 000	1987-88 £ 000
Burnley		
Rate Rebates	1,628	1,763
Rent Rebates	3,353	3,436
Rent Allowances	1,398	1,426

	1986-87 £ 000	1987-88 £ 000
Pendle		
Rate Rebates	1,348	1,597
Rent Rebates	2,914	3,106
Rent Allowances	799	653
Hyndburn		
Rate Rebates	1,326	1,407
Rent Rebates	2,600	2,773
Rent Allowances	1,022	887
Rossendale		
Rate Rebates	1,142	1,192
Rent Rebates	2,890	3,039
Rent Allowances	564	487

Source: Housing benefit subsidy final claims 1986/87.
Housing benefit subsidy latest estimates 1987-88.

Housing Rental Purchase

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if his Department has plans to bring forward any measures with regard to housing rental purchase.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My predecessor announced on 28 January at columns *382-3* that the benefit arrangements for providing help with payments under rental purchase agreements were under review. That review is not yet completed.

Family Credit

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide an estimate of the latest figure of the number of people claiming family credit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At the end of September, about 242,000 families were receiving family credit, and a further 62,000 claims were awaiting determination.

Benefit Shops (Bradford)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the closure of Bradford council's benefits shops; and what assessment he has made of the impact of such closures on his Department's local offices in Bradford.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Representations have been made by two hon. Members to the managers of the social security offices in Bradford about the closures. Local management have said they expect to be able to absorb any increase in traffic in inquiries without affecting standards of service.

Income Support

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security under what statutory powers his Department acts in seeking to recover from fuel boards overpayments of income support made under schedule 9, paragraph 6, of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987, in cases where responsibility for the overpayment lies with his Department as a result of an office error.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: These over-payments are not income support. They occur as a result of a mistake of fact when, for example, a claimant has ceased to be entitled to benefit although payment has continued to be made to the fuel board. In these cases, the Department's right of recovery rests in common law.

Social Fund

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to review the social fund budget for the Liverpool Edgehill local office.

Mr. Scott: I regret there was an error in my reply of 15 April at column *267*. The social fund loans budget for Liverpool (Edgehill) local office should be £614,013 rather than £714,113. As some six months had passed before this error was discovered, this year's budget has been reduced by £50,000. The revised letter of allocation sets the revised loans budget at £664,113.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Malaysia

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Malaysia on violations of human rights in that country; and if he has specifically taken up the cases of Lim Kit Siang and other leading members of the opposition.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend raised the issue of detentions during a visit to Malaysia in April this year. The Twelve have also made known to the Malaysian authorities our collective concern.

Corporal Punishment

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any agreement has yet been achieved between Her Majesty's Government and the European Commission of Human Rights on the complaint lodged by the parents of 15 children caned at state schools prior to the implementation of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: There were 16 applications to the European Commission of Human Rights concerning corporal punishment in state schools prior to the implementation of the 1986 Act. These were discontinued in May 1988 following the Government's offer to make ex gratia payments to the applicants. Settlements had earlier been reached in three other cases.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mrs. Chalker *[pursuant to her oral reply, 19 October 1988, column 876]:* The Foreign Affairs Council met on 26 September. I represented the United Kingdom, accompanied by my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development.

The Council discussed the Community's negotiating mandate for the renegotiation of the ACP/EEC convention—Lomé IV. The mandate was subsequently finalised, and negotiations with the ACP countries formally opened on 12 October. My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development represented the United Kingdom.

The Presidency gave a progress report on the negotiations on the implementing regulations for the structural funds. There was no discussion.

The French Minister made a statement on audiovisual co-operation among member states, arguing for adoption

of a directive on broadcasting; progress in developing high definition television; and an industry-led programme jointly funded by Governments, similar to the present EUREKA arrangements for joint projects in industrial development.

A conference of the representatives of the member states considered the order of rotation of the 13th judge of the European Court of Justice, and concluded that Spain should take the next place followed by Italy and the United Kingdom. Other ECJ appointments, including those of Sir Gordon Slynn as judge and Professor Francis Jacobs as advocate-general, were approved, and took effect from 6 October.

SCOTLAND

Local Government Finance

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will construct a table in the same form as figure F3 on page 106 of Cmnd. 9714, "Paying for Local Government", showing the relationship in Scotland of rateable values to net household income separately for *(a)* single pensioner households, *(b)* other single adult households, *(c)* two adult households and *(d)* three adult households.

Mr. Lang: Because of the sample size an analysis in this form for Scotland is not available.

Vacancies (London)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest available figures for his Department in the London pay area of the number of vacancies by grade and the proportion this is of the grade complement in London.

Mr. Rifkind: My Department has only a small number of posts in London. There is a vacancy for an administrative officer representing rather more than 10 per cent. of the posts in that grade in the Scottish Office in London.

Local Pay Additions

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the latest figures for his Department for *(a)* numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions, by grade, *(b)* location of those offices awarding local pay additions and *(c)* annual cost.

Mr. Rifkind: My Department has not introduced local pay additions.

Rating Reform

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of complaints made against community charge registration officers in Scotland by persons who consider that the enforcement of registration officers' powers have been carried out in a manner which has caused offence or distress:

(2) if he will publish figures for the current cost of pursuing persons who are refusing or delaying to supply information required by registration officers drawing up the community charge register, showing the costs for Scotland broken down by local authority area.

Mr. Lang: This information is not available.

Personal Accident Insurance

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy in regard to the policy of education departments encouraging parents to take out extra personal accident insurance for their children; and what assessment has been made of the effects on those school pupils whose parents are unable to pay.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: All education authorities have public liability insurance cover for the extent of their own legal liability. It is for authorities to decide whether to advise parents to take out personal accident insurance to cover instances where no such liability arises; and it is entirely for parents to decide whether to take such advice. I understand that the premiums for an individual pupil are of the order of £1·50 to £2 per school term.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of the unemployed people in Scotland who found new jobs in 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1988 are again unemployed.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* This information is not collected.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide figures on regional selective assistance for *(a)* the total number of applications received since 1 April, *(b)* the number of the above applications that have been processed and *(c)* the total amount of money paid out since 1 April.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* In the period 1 April to 30 September, 118 applications for regional selective assistance were received in Scotland. Of these, 88 have been fully processed. The remaining 30 are being processed. Total payments of regional selective assistance in Scotland in the same period have amounted to £14·4 million.

Regional Development Grant

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide figures on regional development grants for *(a)* the number of applications outstanding on 31 March, *(b)* the number of those outstanding applications that have subsequently been processed, *(c)* the number of those applications that are still outstanding and *(d)* the total amount of money paid out since 31 March in regional development grants to those applications.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* The figures requested for applications in Scotland under the revised regional development grant scheme are as follows:

	Number
Number of applications outstanding at 31 March	5,117
Number of these processed by 19 October	2,499
Number still outstanding at 19 October	2,618
	Payment £ million
Payment authorisations made by 19 October on these applications	5·1

HOME DEPARTMENT

Data Protection Act

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to extend the Data Protection Act to cover the handling of personal information by local authorities for the purpose of the collection of poll tax.

Mr. Renton: No. We do not consider that the community charge proposals raise issues which require amendment of the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to amend the Data Protection Act to prevent the disclosure by banks of confidential information about customers without the customers' knowledge.

Mr. Renton: None. Banking confidentiality is a matter of banking law and the question of disclosure is one that is currently being examined by the review of banking services law under the chairmanship of Professor Robert Jack. The Government expect the review committee to complete its report by the end of the year and will issue its response shortly thereafter.

Naturalisation and Registration

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time now being taken in dealing with an application for *(a)* naturalisation and *(b)* registration.

Mr. Renton: The average time taken to complete applications for naturalisation and registration in September 1988 was 21 months and 13 months respectively.

Untried Prisoners

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average number of days spent in custody by untried prisoners in 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The estimated average number of days spent in prison service custody by untried prisoners in 1987 was 56 for males and 45 for females. These figures will be published in table 2.1 of "Prison Statistics England and Wales 1987".

Women Police Officers

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of women police officers in the Lancashire constabulary area and the ranks held, showing the appropriate percentage in each case.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information based on force strength at 31 July is as follows:

Rank	*Number*	*Percentage of strength in rank*
Superintendent	1	2·4
Chief Inspector	1	1·4
Inspector	2	1·2
Sergeant	16	3·1
Constable	271	11·4
Total	291	

Fresh Start

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the middle-management grades 6 and 7 are staffed below the Fresh Start 87 levels at Blundeston prison, Suffolk.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 21 October, HMP Blundeston was staffed to complement in grade VI officers. There is a general shortage of grade VII officers, but one is shortly to be posted to the prison. More officers will become available for posting in spring 1989, after the next promotion board. Meanwhile, in common with all establishments, Blundeston is working to ensure that the best use is made of its staff resources under Fresh Start.

Bramshill Police College

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers from each force have attended command courses at Bramshill police college in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The police staff college at Bramshill runs four command courses—the senior command course, the intermediate command course, the junior command course and the overseas command course. The tables below give the figures requested.

Senior command course

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
1. Avon and Somerset	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	2	—	—
2. Bedfordshire Police	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
3. Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4. Cheshire	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	1	—	1
5. City of London Police	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
6. Cleveland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
7. Cumbria	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
8. Derbyshire	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
9. Devon and Cornwall	1	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
10. Dorset Police	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—
11. Durham	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
12. Dyfed Powys Police	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
13. Essex Police	—	1	1	1	—	—	1	—	1	—
14. Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
15. Greater Manchester Police	—	3	2	3	1	—	3	4	1	1

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
16. Gwent	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17. Hampshire	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
18. Hertfordshire	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
19. Humberside Police	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
20. Kent County	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
21. Lancashire	—	1	—	1	2	—	—	—	—	—
22. Leicester	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
23. Lincolnshire Police	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
24. Merseyside Police	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
25. Metropolitan Police	5	5	8	5	4	9	5	4	5	8
26. Norfolk	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
27. Northamptonshire Police	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
28. Northumbria	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
29. North Wales Police	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1
30. North Yorkshire Police	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
31. Nottinghamshire	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
32. South Wales	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
33. South Yorkshire Police	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
34. Staffordshire Police	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
35. Suffolk	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
36. Surrey	—	1	1	2	—	1	—	1	1	—
37. Sussex Police	—	1	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	4
38. Thames Valley Police	—	1	—	1	1	—	—	—	1	1
39. Warwickshire	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
40. West Mercia	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
41. West Midlands Police	2	2	1	3	—	2	1	1	—	—
42. West Yorkshire Police	2	1	1	—	1	—	1	—	1	—
43. Wiltshire	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
44. Central Scotland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
45. Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
46. Fife	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
47. Grampian	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
48. Lothian and Borders	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
49. Northern	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
50. Strathclyde	2	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	1	1
51. Tayside	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
52. Royal Ulster Constabulary	1	1	1	2	—	—	—	1	1	—

Intermediate command course

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
1. Avon and Somerset	5	6	5	4	4	4	3	3	2	4
2. Bedfordshire Police	1	3	3	1	—	1	2	1	2	2
3. Cambridgeshire	1	3	3	1	2	1	2	2	2	1
4. Cheshire	2	2	1	1	—	—	1	2	1	1
5. City of London Police	4	2	2	1	—	1	1	—	1	2
6. Cleveland	1	3	3	1	2	1	1	2	3	2
7. Cumbria	1	2	2	—	1	1	2	1	1	1
8. Derbyshire	4	4	3	1	2	2	3	3	2	2
9. Devon and Cornwall	1	3	2	2	3	2	3	1	4	2
10. Dorset Police	3	4	2	—	1	1	2	2	1	1
11. Durham	3	3	2	3	1	1	3	1	2	2
12. Dyfed Powys Police	—	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
13. Essex Police	3	4	3	1	1	5	2	4	3	3
14. Gloucestershire	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	1
15. Greater Manchester Police	11	10	9	5	5	5	3	5	7	6
16. Gwent	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1
17. Hampshire	4	5	3	3	3	2	—	3	3	2
18. Hertfordshire	4	3	2	2	2	3	3	5	4	3
19. Humberside Police	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	3
20. Kent County	7	4	1	1	3	2	3	2	3	3
21. Lancashire	7	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	2
22. Leicester	2	4	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
23. Lincolnshire Police	1	2	—	1	2	—	1	—	1	2
24. Merseyside Police	6	9	7	4	4	4	3	3	4	2
25. Metropolitan Police	48	33	43	29	35	31	32	29	33	24
26. Norfolk	1	2	2	1	1	—	1	1	1	1
27. Northamptonshire Police	—	1	1	—	1	1	1	2	1	1
28. Northumbria	7	4	3	1	3	3	3	2	4	4
29. North Wales Police	—	1	4	2	1	2	2	2	2	3
30. North Yorkshire Police	1	3	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	1
31. Nottinghamshire	2	2	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
32. South Wales	1	3	5	2	2	3	3	3	3	2
33. South Yorkshire Police	3	3	4	4	2	3	2	2	2	3
34. Staffordshire Police	4	3	2	1	1	—	1	2	1	2
35. Suffolk	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
36. Surrey	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	1
37. Sussex Police	5	3	2	2	3	3	4	3	3	4
38. Thames Valley Police	6	6	3	3	3	7	6	6	3	6
39. Warwickshire	1	3	3	—	1	—	1	1	2	1
40. West Mercia	5	7	4	3	1	1	2	2	3	2
41. West Midlands Police	9	8	7	2	2	2	3	3	5	9
42. West Yorkshire Police	9	6	5	2	6	4	3	4	3	3
43. Wiltshire	—	2	2	2	1	3	2	2	1	2
44. RUC	4	4	4	2	4	3	2	3	3	4
45. MOD	2	1	1	—	1	1	1	3	1	2
46. British Transport	2	1	2	—	2	2	2	1	2	1
47. Guernsey	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
48. Jersey	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
49. UKAEAC	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
50. RAF	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	1
51. Royal Hong Kong Police	2	—	1	2	—	1	1	3	8	8
52. ICAC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	2
53. Singapore	1	—	2	—	1	1	1	1	1	1
54. Gibraltar	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	2
55. Fiji	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—
56. India	1	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Junior command course

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
1. Avon and Somerset	7	8	8	6	5	5	5	5	5	2
2. Bedfordshire Police	2	3	3	2	2	2	4	3	1	4
3. Cambridgeshire	3	2	3	1	2	2	2	4	4	4
4. Cheshire	5	2	3	2	2	1	2	1	—	5
5. City of London Police	4	4	3	—	1	1	2	2	2	2
6. Cleveland	4	1	4	5	2	3	1	3	4	4
7. Cumbria	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	4	3	4
8. Derbyshire	5	4	4	3	3	3	2	4	2	4
9. Devon and Cornwall	5	5	5	4	4	3	4	4	7	7
10. Dorset Police	3	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	3	5
11. Durham	4	6	4	3	2	2	5	2	4	2
12. Dyfed Powys Police	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	3
13. Essex Police	5	4	5	4	4	6	3	4	5	14
14. Gloucestershire	3	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
15. Greater Manchester Police	15	12	16	13	12	12	8	8	9	14
16. Gwent	2	4	4	3	3	3	2	1	1	4
17. Hampshire	8	9	6	4	4	2	2	5	3	3
18. Hertfordshire	4	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	7
19. Humberside Police	4	3	5	3	2	5	6	3	3	3
20. Kent County	7	9	7	5	1	3	4	6	7	7
21. Lancashire	13	11	10	6	4	4	8	7	7	9
22. Leicester	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	6
23. Lincolnshire Police	2	1	4	4	5	3	1	3	3	6
24. Merseyside Police	8	7	9	9	5	3	12	7	6	7
25. Metropolitan Police	64	66	57	51	52	47	39	48	49	105
26. Norfolk	1	3	4	4	4	4	2	2	2	4
27. Northamptonshire Police	1	—	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	4
28. Northumbria	9	9	6	3	7	6	6	5	9	9
29. North Wales Police	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3
30. North Yorkshire Police	2	2	3	3	3	4	2	3	2	2
31. Nottinghamshire	5	3	6	4	6	6	5	4	2	7
32. South Wales	7	5	6	3	3	4	4	4	6	9
33. South Yorkshire Police	4	7	8	2	3	3	4	1	6	6
34. Staffordshire Police	4	4	4	—	2	1	1	2	2	6
35. Suffolk	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	3
36. Surrey	3	4	7	4	3	2	3	3	2	3
37. Sussex Police	6	5	7	3	4	4	4	4	5	7
38. Thames Valley Police	6	10	4	4	7	9	8	10	10	12
39. Warwickshire	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
40. West Mercia	5	3	8	7	4	3	3	3	3	2
41. West Midlands Police	17	17	14	8	6	9	9	9	11	10
42. West Yorkshire Police	12	9	6	3	4	4	4	4	5	11
43. Wiltshire	1	2	3	4	5	6	3	1	2	5
44. RUC	5	5	4	2	3	3	2	2	2	9
45. MOD	3	2	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	3
46. British Transport	1	—	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	2
47. Guernsey	1	—	—	1	1	—	1	1	1	—
48. Jersey	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1
49. Royal Parks	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
50. UKAEAL	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—
51. Royal Hong Kong Police	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	3	10
52. ICAC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
53. Fiji	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
54. Isle of Man	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—

Overseas command courses

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
1. Anguilla	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. Antigua/Barbuda	—	1	2	—	1	1	—	—	—	—
3. Bahamas	—	1	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	2
4. Bahrain	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5. Bangladesh	—	1	3	1	1	3	2	1	5	1
6. Barbados	—	2	1	—	—	—	2	—	2	1
7. Belize	—	1	—	4	—	—	—	—	2	—
8. Bermuda	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
9. Botswana	2	2	—	—	1	1	4	—	—	1
10. Brunei	4	6	6	3	3	—	1	1	—	—
11. Cameroon	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—
12. Cayman Island	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
13. Cook Island	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
14. Cyprus	4	—	2	—	1	—	1	—	—	—
15. Dominica	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
16. Egypt	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—
17. Fiji	2	—	2	1	1	1	—	—	1	—
18. Gambia	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
19. Chana	—	—	1	2	—	1	—	—	—	—
20. Gibraltar	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
21. Grenada	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	1	—	1
22. Guyana	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
23. Hong Kong	4	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—
24. India	—	—	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
25. Indonesia	2	—	—	1	4	2	2	1	1	—
26. Jamaica	5	—	3	2	2	2	1	2	—	—
27. Jordan	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—
28. Kenya	—	—	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	1
29. Kiribati	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	1	—
30. Lesotho	1	2	—	3	—	1	—	—	—	2
31. Malawi	2	2	—	—	—	2	—	2	5	3
32. Maldives	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
33. Monserrat	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
34. Mauritius	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
35. Nigeria	—	—	—	1	1	—	1	—	—	—
36. Oman	—	2	1	2	2	5	4	5	5	3
37. Pakistan	1	1	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
38. Papua New Guinea	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
39. Philippines	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	3
40. St Helena	1	—	1	1	—	—	1	—	—	—
41. St Kitts & Nevis	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
42. St Lucia	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
43. St Vincent/Grenadines	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	1	1
44. Seychelles	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
45. Sierra Leone	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	1
46. Singapore	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
47. Solomon Island	—	—	2	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
48. Sri Lanka	—	—	—	1	—	2	1	2	—	—
49. Swaziland	—	—	—	—	3	—	2	5	3	—
50. Tanzania	—	1	—	—	2	2	2	—	—	1
51. Thailand	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
52. Tonga	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	1	—	3
53. Turks & Caicos Islands	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
54. Uganda	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	3
55. United Arab Emirates	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
56. Vanuatu	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	—
57. Western Samoa	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
58. Zambia	2	1	—	—	2	2	1	—	—	—
59. Zimbabwe	—	7	2	2	2	2	2	4	6	4
60. Malaysia	—	—	2	1	—	—	—	2	—	—

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers have been selected to attend the command courses at Bramshill police college in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Police officers attending the junior command course, the intermediate command course and the overseas command course at the police staff college are nominated by the chief officers of the forces in which they are serving. The numbers of officers selected to attend the senior command course are as follows:

	Number
1978	23
1979	25
1980	23

	Number
1981	23
1982	15
1983	14
1984	14
1985	20
1986	20
1987	22

The selection for the senior command course normally takes place in November, and the courses themselves run from April to September. Officers selected in one year do not invariably take their place on the following year's course, but may attend one in a later year. The figures given relate to the year of selection, not the year of eventual attendance.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the positions of those serving senior police officers and the forces from which they came who were involved in each of the last 10 years in the selection of officers chosen to attend command courses at the police college, Bramshill.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The senior police officers involved in the selection of officers to attend the senior command centre at the police staff college were:

1978
Chief Constable, Avon and Somerset.
Chief Constable, Essex.
Chief Constable, North Wales.
Chief Constable, North Yorkshire.
Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.
Chief Constable, Nottinghamshire.
Chief Constable, West Midlands.
Chief Constable, Humberside.
Chief Constable, Kent.
Chief Constable, Staffordshire.
Chief Constable, Cleveland.
Commissioner, City of London.

1979
Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.
Chief Constable, Essex.
Chief Constable, Kent.
Chief Constable, Lincolnshire.
Chief Constable, North Wales.
Chief Constable, Cumbria.
Chief Constable, South Wales.
Chief Constable, Cheshire.
Chief Constable, Warwickshire.
Chief Constable, Cleveland.
Chief Constable, Staffordshire.
Chief Constable, Nottinghamshire.
Chief Constable, Humberside.
Chief Constable, West Midlands.
Chief Constable, Avon and Somerset.
Chief Constable, Lancashire.
Chief Constable, Thames Valley.

1980
Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.
Chief Constable, Lancashire.
Chief Constable, Kent
Chief Constable, Lincolnshire.
HMIC
Chief Constable, North Wales.
Chief Constable, South Wales.
Chief Constable, Staffordshire.
Chief Constable, Essex.
Chief Constable, Bedfordshire.

1981
Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.
Chief Constable, South Yorkshire.
Chief Constable, Lancashire.
Chief Constable, Essex.
Chief Constable, West Midlands.
Chief Constable, Bedfordshire.
Chief Constable, Cheshire.
Chief Constable, Gloucestershire.
Chief Constable, North Wales.
Chief Constable, Humberside.
Chief Constable, Staffordshire.
HMIC
Chief Constable, Cleveland.
Chief Constable, Avon and Somerset.
Chief Constable, Warwickshire.
Chief Constable, Cumbria.

1982
Chief Constable, Cleveland.
Chief Constable, Gwent.
Chief Constable, Humberside.
Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.
Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.
Chief Constable, Devon and Cornwall.
Chief Constable, Cheshire.
Chief Constable, Avon and Somerset.
Chief Constable, Essex.
Chief Constable, Northamptonshire.
Chief Constable, South Wales.
Chief Constable, Bedfordshire.
Chief Constable, West Midlands.
Chief Constable, Thames Valley.
Chief Constable, Warwickshire.
Chief Constable, Cumbria.

1983
Chief Constable, West Midlands.
Deputy Chief Constable, Greater Manchester.
Deputy Chief Constable, Hertfordshire.
Chief Constable, Essex.
Chief Constable, Gwent.
Chief Constable, Cleveland.
Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.
Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.
Chief Constable, Cheshire.
Chief Constable, Surrey.
Chief Constable, Northamptonshire.
Chief Constable, Warwickshire.
Chief Constable, Cumbria.
Chief Constable, West Mercia.
Chief Constable, Thames Valley.

1984
Chief Constable, Humberside.
Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.
Chief Constable, Essex.
Chief Constable, Devon and Cornwall.
Deputy Chief Constable, Greater Manchester.
Chief Constable, West Mercia.
Chief Constable, Surrey.
Chief Constable, Cheshire.
Deputy Chief Constable, Essex.
Deputy Chief Constable, Cleveland.
Chief Constable, Cleveland.
Chief Constable, Northamptonshire.
Chief Constable, Cumbria.
Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.
Chief Constable, Gwent.
Chief Constable, Warwickshire.
Chief Constable, South Yorkshire.
Chief Constable, Hertfordshire.
Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.

1985
Chief Constable, Essex.
Deputy Chief Constable, Hampshire.
Chief Constable, Humberside.
Chief Constable, Thames Valley.
Deputy Chief Constable, Cleveland.
Chief Constable, Cumbria.
Chief Constable, Cheshire.
Chief Constable, West Midlands.
Deputy Chief Constable, Essex.
Chief Constable, Gwent.
Deputy Chief Constable, Merseyside.

Chief Constable, Hertfordshire.
Chief Constable, Cleveland.
Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.
Chief Constable, Northamptonshire.
Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.
Chief Constable, Warwickshire.

1986
Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.
Chief Constable, Cheshire.
Deputy Chief Constable, Hampshire.
Chief Constable, Essex.
Chief Constable, Bedfordshire.
Chief Constable, Humberside.
Chief Constable, Thames Valley.
Chief Constable, Gwent.
Chief Constable, Warwickshire.
Deputy Chief Constable, Cleveland.
Chief Constable, Cleveland.
Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.
Chief Constable, Surrey.
Chief Constable, West Midlands.
Deputy Chief Constable, Merseyside.
Chief Constable, Gloucestershire.
Chief Constable, South Wales.
Chief Constable, Cumbria.
Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.

1987
Chief Constable, Cleveland.
Chief Constable, Northamptonshire.
Chief Constable, Cheshire.
Assistant Commissioner, City of London.
Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.
Chief Constable, Humberside.
Deputy Chief Constable, Hampshire.
Chief Constable, Thames Valley.
Chief Constable, Dyfed-Powys.
Chief Constable, West Midlands.
Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.
Chief Constable, Warwickshire.
Chief Constable, Bedfordshire.
Chief Constable, Gloucestershire.
Chief Constable, Gwent.
Deputy Chief Constable, Cleveland.
Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police.
Chief Constable, Essex.

Officers attending the junior command course, the intermediate command course and the overseas command course are nominated by the chief officer of the force in which they are serving.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Chiropody Students

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the cost to public funds of students from *(a)* Northern Ireland and *(b)* the Irish Republic attending courses at the school of chiropody, New College, Durham.

Mr. Jackson: The cost to public funds of providing a place at New college, Durham, for a student from Northern Ireland or elsewhere in the United Kingdom to study ancillary health in the current academic year is approximately £2,600. The cost will be the same for a student from the Irish Republic or any other European Community country, provided he or she qualifies for reimbursement of tuition fees.

College Mergers

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is his policy on increasing the unit of resource for a public sector college to match that of the university with which it is merging as a result of the Education Reform Bill;

(2) what is his policy, in the wake of the Education Reform Bill, on mergers between universities and public sector colleges;

(3) what is his policy on mergers between universities and small public sector colleges.

Mr. Jackson: There is no new policy on inter-sectoral mergers. Any case proposed by the institutions concerned would be considered on its merits. The Government would not apply any additional public funds in respect of such a merged institution which should, in any case, yield efficiency gains.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out in the *Official Report* a table showing teachers' salaries in 1978-79 and those in 1988-89 in real terms.

Mrs. Rumbold: The table gives the information requested for selected points on the teachers' pay scales:

Category[1]	*April 1988 salary, cash prices £*	*April 1978 salary at constant (April 1988) prices*[2] *£*	*Real terms increase per cent.*
Good Honours Graduate entrant	8,859	7,862	13
Scale 3—Incentive "B" Teacher	15,063	12,777	18
Scale 4—Incentive "D" Teacher	17,064	14,199	20
Senior—Incentive "E" Teacher	18,264	15,189	20
Deputy Head School Group 4	15,636	11,876	32
Head School Group 4	17,721	13,961	27
Deputy Head School Group 11	20,586	16,779	23
Head School Group 11	27,102	21,391	27

[1] All teachers, with the exception of good honours graduate entrants, are assumed to be at their salary maximum.
[2] Constant price figures are derived using the retail price index.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total cost of teachers' salaries in 1978-79; what it is now; and what is the increase in real terms.

Mrs. Rumbold: In 1978-79, the total cost of salaries [1]of teachers in maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools in England was £2,710 million. The estimate of expenditure on teachers' salaries in the same sectors for 1988-89 is approximately £6,950 million. This represents an increase in real terms [2]of nearly 20 per cent.

1. The cost of salaries includes allowances and employers' contributions towards national insurance and superannuation.

2. The 1978-79 cash terms have been converted into 1988-89 real terms using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.

Teachers

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers were employed in England and Wales in 1978-79 and in 1988-89.

Mr. Butcher: There were 440,800 teachers employed for service in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England at January 1979. The corresponding figure for January 1988 (the latest date for which data are available) is 401,500. Comparable figures for Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Pupil Numbers

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children were being taught in England and Wales in 1978-79 and 1988-89.

Mr. Butcher: Information for the academic year 1988-89 is not yet available. The total number of pupils on roll in all maintained and non-maintained schools in England in January 1979 and January 1988 were 9·094 million and 7·610 million respectively. Information for Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Teacher Training

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list, by each initial training institute, the number and percentage of students on initial teacher training courses who had discontinued their training by the end of *(a)* the first year, and *(b)* the second year, in 1978 and 1987, together with the number and percentage at each institute in these years who completed the course but failed their final examinations.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information in the form requested is not collected centrally. The patterns of wastage and other movements within initial teacher training are complex; some students repeat years of their course while others may join courses part way through. The Department calculates that on average about 25 per cent. of those who enter an undergraduate course of initial teacher training do not complete that course successfully, for whatever reason.

Ecology Research

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, during his recent visit to the Soviet Union, he concluded any agreement with the Soviet Academy of Sciences to develop joint ecology research programmes.

Mr. Jackson: During my right hon. Friend's visit to the Academy of Sciences in Moscow, he discussed possible collaboration in ecology research with the deputy director, Dr. Frolov. The Government believe it may be possible to intensify working relationships between USSR and United Kingdom institutions in this area, and Dr. Frolov undertook to provide a list of institutions with whom links could be developed. We would be happy to continue, and enhance, scientific collaboration with the USSR provided it is practical, effective, well directed and with clear objectives.

Greenhouse Effect

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made in the research study conducted by the Natural Environment Research Council Plymouth marine laboratory into the use of the phytoplankton coccolithophores to mitigate the greenhouse effect in the atmosphere.

Mr. Jackson: Progress has been made on determining from satellite images the distribution and abundance of coccolithophores. Further studies are planned on their importance in removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Research at the Plymouth marine laboratory is not specifically directed at using coccolithophores to influence the global climate.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken to give schools which are subject to reorganisation proposals under sections 12 and 13 of the Education Act 1980 an opportunity to apply for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: On 4 August this year, I determined under section 73 of the Education Act 1988 that all section 12 and 13 proposals in respect of schools eligible for grant-maintained status which were undecided at that date were suspended until 30 November. On 12 October I made a similar determination in respect of section 12 and 13 proposals published in the period 4 August to 30 September 1988. These determinations apply both to proposals which fall to me to decide and those determinable by local education authorities.

Youth Service

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what the National Advisory Council for the Youth Service has achieved over its last three-year term; what arrangements he intends to make for future consultation with the youth service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I appointed the National Advisory Council for the Youth Service in 1985 to serve for three years. The council's term comes to an end in December this year, having completed a body of useful work, up-dating and taking forward that of the previous national committee. Building on this work, new arrangements will be introduced next year for periodic consultations between Ministers and the youth service in England about selected major issues of common concern. These will take the form of national conferences to which representatives from local authorities and from national voluntary youth organisations will be invited. The detailed arrangements will be announced early next year.

The existing arrangements in Wales whereby representatives of the statutory and voluntary sectors have regular meetings with the Welsh Office will continue and will build on the work of the council.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training Scheme

13. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from Bristol city council on the employment training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: We have received no representations from Bristol city council. Its decision not to move forward into employment training is regrettable, but employment training is nevertheless operating fully in Bristol, so the job prospects of unemployed people in Bristol will not be harmed by the city council's negative attitude.

19. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on implementation of the employment training scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: Employment training got off to a good start on 5 September. More than 1,000 training managers and over 150 training agents are now in operation, and there has already been tremendous interest amongst unemployed people. So far more than 133,000 people have been referred to training agents and 60,000 people have started their training with training managers.

43. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently participating in employment training.

86. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently participating in employment training.

134. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently participating in employment training.

Mr. Fowler: I refer to the hon. Members to my reply given earlier to the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis).

51. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from the Transport and General Workers Union, National Union of Public Employees and National Association of Local Government Officers concerning the employment training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: None. It is very regrettable that unions like the TGWU, NUPE and NALGO have decided to oppose employment training, and thereby to attempt to deny long-term unemployed people the opportunity of high-quality training which will help them back into jobs.

54. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from the Sheffield city council on the employment training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: None.

110. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the Training Commission to discuss employment training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No. On 15 September my right hon. Friend took back from the commission its responsibilities for running the Government's training programmes, including employment training. These functions are now being carried out by a new training agency within the Department of Employment group.

31. **Mr. Thornton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from the Liverpool city council on the employment training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has received no representations from Liverpool city council. My right hon. Friend has been granted leave to bring proceedings for judicial review in the High Court against Liverpool city council. In addition he is seeking a declaration that the decisions of the council to take action against organisations which participate in employment training are unlawful and an injunction restraining the council from implementing those decisions.

127. **Mr. Jamnan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union to discuss the employment training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no such plans.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

14. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people classed as long-term unemployed have found jobs since January 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Between January 1986 and July 1988 over 2 million people who had been claiming benefits for a year or more ceased to be unemployed in the United Kingdom. Information on the destination of those leaving the count is not available.

15. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current rate of unemployment; and what was the rate in June 1983.

21. **Mr. Tracey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current levels of unemployment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Fowler: In September 1988, the unemployment rate in the United Kingdom was 8 per cent. The comparable rate for June 1983 was 10·8 per cent. By the June 1987 general election the rate had already fallen to 10·4 per cent. The fall since then has been larger than in any other industrial country.

27. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide unemployment figures for the 12 months ending September 1987 and the 12 months ended September 1988.

Mr. Lee: The table shows seasonally adjusted unemployment excluding school leavers in the United Kingdom for the 12 months ending September 1987 and for the 12 months ending September 1988. The September figure includes some temporary over recording.

Seasonally adjusted unemployment, excluding school leavers.

thousands

	Number	*Change over previous 12 months*
September 1986	3,185·7	+63·0
September 1987	2,772·2	−413·5
September 1988	2,266·9	−505·3

30. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest unemployment figures for the constituency of Basildon and for the same period in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in the parliamentary constituency of Basildon in September of each year since 1983. The comparison is affected by the change in the compilation of the unemployment statistics in March 1986. The September 1988 figure includes some temporary over recording.

Number of unemployed claimants in the parliamentary constituency of Basildon

Month	*Year*	*Number*
September	1983	6,532
September	1984	7,050
September	1985	6,634
September	1986	6,157
September	1987	5,032
September	1988	3,495

50. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the levels of unemployment in the south-west of England.

Mr. Lee: In September 1988 seasonally adjusted unemployment excluding school leavers in the south-west was 131,000 compared with 167,700 in September 1987, a fall of 36,000 or 21·8 per cent. over the last 12 months. The September 1988 figure includes some temporary over-recording due to the postal strike.

53. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the rate of unemployment among school leavers in Lancashire in 1987; and what was the figure for the preceding five years.

Mr. Lee: Following is the available information. The table shows the annual average number of unemployed claimants in Lancashire aged under 18 who had not entered employment since leaving full-time education for each year from 1983 to 1987.

Unemployment rates for school-leavers are not available

	Unemployed claimants
1983	2,548
1984	2,159
1985	2,251
1986	2,004
1987	1,282

57. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the levels of unemployment in the northern region of England.

Mr. Lee: In September 1988 seasonally adjusted unemployment excluding school leavers was 171,000 in the north region, compared with 200,900 in September of 1987, a fall of 29,000 or 14·9 per cent. over the last 12 months. The September 1988 figure includes some temporary over-recording due to the postal strike.

60. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently employed in the east midlands region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In June 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 1,782,000 people in the civilian work force in employment in the east midlands region. This represents a net increase of 198,000, or 13 per cent. over the last five years. The civilian work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

62. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for unemployment in the west midlands and what were the figures 12 months ago.

Mr. Lee: In September 1988 seasonally adjusted unemployment excluding school leavers in the west midlands region was 224,700, compared with 284,200 in September 1987, a fall of 59,500 over the last 12 months

and the lowest since January 1981. The September 1988 figure includes some temporary over-recording due to the postal strike.

69. **Sir Marcus Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on unemployment in Yorkshire.

Mr. Lee: In September 1988, the number of unemployed claimants in the counties of South Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire was 189,503, a fall of 40,127 compared with a year ago. The September 1988 figure includes some temporary over-recording due to the postal strike.

73. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people unemployed in the United Kingdom.

104. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently unemployed in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

136. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment.

Mr. Lee: In September 1988 the level of seasonally adjusted unemployment excluding school leavers in the United Kingdom was 2,267,000, the lowest level on a consistent basis since May 1981. The September figure includes some temporary over-recording but even so unemployment has now fallen for 26 consecutive months, by over 940,000 in total since July 1986, the longest and largest continuous fall on record since 1945.

80. **Mr. Haselhurst:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the level of unemployment in East Anglia.

Mr. Lee: In September 1988 seasonally adjusted unemployment excluding school leavers in the East Anglia region was 49,200, compared with 68,100 in September 1987, a fall of 18,900 over the last twelve months and the lowest since January 1981. The September 1988 figure includes some temporary over-recording due to the postal strike.

87. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which three counties in England and Wales have the lowest levels of unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the three counties with the lowest number of unemployed claimants in England and Wales in September 1988. The September figure includes some temporary over-recording.

Counties in England and Wales with the lowest unemployment levels

County	*Unemployed claimants*
Powys	3,112
Isle of Wight	4,101
Oxfordshire	8,412

103. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the work force were part-time *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* at the latest available date.

123. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of *(a)* male and *(b)* female workers were part-time in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* at the latest available date.

126. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the work force were part-time *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* at the latest available date.

Mr. Lee: In June 1979 a total of 19 per cent. of the work force in employment in Great Britain (6 per cent. of males and 41 per cent. of females) were working part time. In June 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, 25 per cent. (9 per cent. of males and 45 per cent. of females) were working part time.

The work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed, members of Her Majesty's forces and participants in work-related Government training programmes. In classifying the workforce between full and part-time all programme participants are counted as in part-time employment.

105. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of 16 to 19-year-olds were working part-time in 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier to the hon. Member for Newcastle-Under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding).

108. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the reduction of long-term unemployment since January 1986.

Mr. Lee: On 14 July 1988 the number of unemployed claimants who had been unemployed for one year or more was 948,232 a fall of 423,426 or 44·7 per cent. since January 1986. The change will be affected by seasonal factors, and slightly by the change in the compilation in March 1986.

111. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of *(a)* men and *(b)* women were unemployed in Lewisham in 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available. Unemployment rates are not calculated for areas smaller than travel-to-work areas.

122. **Mr. Gale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the current levels of employment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: Between March 1983 and June 1988 the work force in employment in the United Kingdom increased by 2,178,000 to 25,739,000, the highest level on record. This rising trend has now continued for more than five years. The figures have been adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations. The work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed, Her Majesty's forces, and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

129. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of women workers were working less than 16 hours per week in 1976 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated from the labour force survey that 14·2 per cent. of women in employment in Great

Britain usually worked 16 hours or less per week in spring 1979 (the earliest year for which data is available). An equivalent figure for the spring of 1987 was 19·2 per cent.

135. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the level of unemployment in South Yorkshire in 1987; and how this compares with 1978.

Mr. Lee: In 1987 the annual average number of unemployed claimants in South Yorkshire was 97,530. Consistent figures are not available for 1978, but there were 36,325 people registered unemployed at jobcentres in that year.

Tourism

16. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the English Tourist Board to discuss the development of tourism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I have no such meeting planned at present.

83. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made as to whether the tourist potential of Northumberland is being adequately marketed and co-ordinated.

Mr. Lee: I understand that Northumberland tourist board is planning to produce by the end of this year a comprehensive tourism marketing and development strategy for Northumberland, Durham, and Cleveland. I look forward with interest to seeing it.

133. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the amount of funds from the European regional development fund invested to date in tourism projects in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: The total assistance committed by the European regional development fund to projects in England which will benefit tourism, up to 7 October 1988, is £177·6 million. Data are not available on a compatible basis for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

41. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are employed in tourism in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated that in June 1988 there were 1·4 million employees in employment in tourism-related industries in Great Britain. There is no directly comparable estimate for the number of self-employed, but the latest available information from the labour force survey shows that in the spring of 1987 there were an estimated 0·2 million self-employed workers in the hotel and catering industry.

47. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many United States tourists visited the United Kingdom between April and September 1988; how much they spent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The most up-to-date estimates available show that between April and July of 1988, residents of north America (which includes Canada as well as the United States) made 1,320,000 visits to the United Kingdom. An estimate of their spending is not yet available.

63. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the British Tourist Authority to discuss promotion of British tourism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met the chairman and board of the British Tourist Authority on 12 July. He has no plans to meet them again in the immediate future.

72. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of section 4 tourist grants awarded to date by the English tourist board in 1988.

Mr. Lee: Between January and September 1988 the English Tourist Board offered section 4 assistance totalling £8·5 million to 359 projects.

76. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many tourism and leisure building developments are under construction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The English Tourist Board's "Tourism Investment Monitor" identifies the following tourism and leisure developments valued at over £0·5 million, under construction during June 1988:

	Number
Hotels	58
Hotel Extensions	50
Hotel Refurbishments	45
Timeshare Developments	9
Self-Catering/Holiday Village Developments	7
Marinas	10
Themed Attractions	5
Leisure/Sport Facilities	35
Heritage/Museums	35
Visitor Facilities	8
Conference/Theatre	9
Major Mixed Developments	24
Total	295

Part-time Workers

17. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to seek to improve the protection of part-time workers against unfair dismissal.

Mr. Nicholls: No.

22. **Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to seek to improve the pay, pensions, holiday entitlement and protection against unfair dismissal of part-time workers.

Mr. Nicholls: No. Terms and conditions of employment are a matter for employers and employees or their representatives to determine. Pension rights are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

26. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of part-time workers receive wages below the national insurance threshold.

106. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of part-time workers receive wages below the national insurance threshold.

128. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of part-time workers receive wages below the national insurance threshold.

Mr. Lee: The available information from the new earnings survey for April 1988 can only provide an indication of the maximum proportion of part-time employees whose gross weekly earnings, not affected by absence, were below the threshold. It is estimated that the proportion was less than 45 per cent. of all part-time employees in employment at the time of the survey.

33. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to improve the maternity rights of part-time workers.

Mr. Nicholls: No.

45. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to improve the rights of part-time workers to paid holidays and pensions.

Mr. Nicholls: No. Terms and conditions of employment are a matter for employers and employees or their representatives to determine. Pension rights are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

64. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number and proportion of part-time workers without paid holiday entitlement.

Mr. Lee: Data on holiday entitlements are not regularly collected. However, information reported for the sample in the 1987 new earnings survey showed about 22 per cent. of part-time employees as having no paid annual holiday entitlement during the calendar year, excluding public holidays or days in lieu.

65. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to seek to improve the protection of part-time workers against unfair dismissal.

131. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to seek to improve the protection of part-time workers against unfair dismissal.

Mr. Nicholls: No.

67. **Ms. Richardson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of part-time workers earn less than £3·30 per hour.

125. **Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of part-time workers earn less than £3·30 per hour.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated from the new earnings survey that about 70 per cent. of part-time workers earn less than £3·30 per hour in April 1988.

81. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the work force work part-time.

113. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the work force works part-time.

Mr. Lee: In June 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, 25 per cent. of the work force in employment in Great Britain were working part-time.

The work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed, members of Her Majesty's forces and participants in work-related Government training programmes. In classifying the work force between full and part time, all programme participants are counted as in part-time employment.

93. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made as to the proportion of *(a)* men and *(b)* unmarried women currently in part-time work who have expressed preference for full-time employment.

101. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made as to the proportion of *(a)* men, and *(b)* unmarried women in part-time work who have expressed a preference for full-time employment.

Mr. Lee: It is not possible to make a full assessment of the preference for full-time work. However, some information is available from the labour force survey.

It is estimated that in spring 1987 a total of 27·7 per cent. of the 736,000 men in Great Britain who regarded their jobs as part time, said they had taken a part-time job because they could not find a full-time job.

Similarly, 14·9 per cent. of the 822,000 unmarried women in Great Britain who regarded their job as part time, said they had taken a part-time job because they could not find a full-time job.

Job Training

18. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time workers receive job training provided by their employers excluding YTS trainees.

96. **Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time workers receive job training provided by their employers excluding YTS trainees.

Mr. Cope: The funding study carried out by the then MSC showed that in the full year 1986-87, nearly half of employees working over 10 hours a week had received some job-related training provided by their employers. The labour force survey carried out in the spring of 1987, showed that 13 per cent. of full-time employees and 8 per cent. of part-time employees had received job-related training in the four weeks before their interview.

Skill Shortages (London)

20. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action his Department is taking to tackle skill shortages in south and east London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The continuing strength of the economy is leading to increasing demand for skills. It is primarily the responsibility of employers to meet their needs. The Government have increased its investment in training massively since 1979 both generally and in areas like the south and east of London. For example the London Docklands development corporation has supported 3,000 training places and this Department is supporting two school industry compacts.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

23. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the progress of the loan guarantee scheme.

Mr. Cope: Since 1981 a total of 20,300 guarantees have been issued for loans to a value of £674 million under the loan guarantee scheme. In January this year simplified administrative procedures for loans up to £15,000 were introduced. As part of the Action for Cities initiative an increase in the guarantee from 70 to 85 per cent. was introduced in June 1988 for businesses based in, or moving into, inner cities task force areas. Partly as a result of these measures, the rate of applications has doubled to nearly 200 a month by comparison with the same period in 1987.

Trades Union Congress

24. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to meet the Trades Union Congress; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to meet the TUC.

48. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he next plans to meet the Trades Union Congress; and what subjects he proposes to discuss.

82. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he next plans to meet the Trades Union Congress; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no such plans.

49. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the Trades Union Congress; and what matters were discussed.

55. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the Trades Union Congress; and what subjects were discussed.

90. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the Trades Union Congress; and what subjects were discussed.

97. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the Trades Union Congress; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend last met representatives of the Trades Union Congress on 18 May when he discussed the new programme, employment training. Following that meeting, the TUC general council decided to give employment training its support, a decision which very regrettably was overturned by the TUC last month.

66. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last discussed the Government's training proposals with the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last met the general secretary and other representatives of the Trades Union Congress on 18 May, when he discussed the new programme, employment training. Following that meeting, the TUC general council decided to give employment training its support, a decision which very regrettably was overturned by the TUC last month.

95. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress to discuss the current levels of unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress to discuss industrial relations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: I have no immediate plans to meet the TUC.

Jobcentres

25. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the development of jobcentres in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Cope: As with any other Government activity the jobcentre network is kept under continuous review.

Jobcentres (Advice)

28. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people who sought the advice of jobcentres in 1987.

Mr. Lee: We do not have precise information for 1987. However, I would expect the total to be broadly similar to the 29 million enquiries recorded in 1985-86, the last year for which comprehensive information is available.

Job Vacancies

29. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the level of job vacancies in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: In September 1988 the number of unfilled vacancies registered at jobcentres in the United Kingdom, seasonally adjusted and excluding community programme vacancies was 242,200 compared with 246,600 in September 1987, a decrease of 1·8 per cent. over the last 12 months. It is estimated that about a third of all vacancies are notified to jobcentres.

Small Firms Database

32. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the development of the small firms database.

Mr. Cope: The small firms service's database of national information was made available for purchase from 5 July this year, and over 100 copies have now been sold. The database contains information and contacts useful to businesses under a wide range of subject headings. The majority of orders have been placed by other small business advisory organisations.

Small Firms Service

34. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inquiries were dealt with by the small firms service during the last 12 months.

40. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the small firms service.

124. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many small firms in 1987-88 consulted the small firms service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: In 1987-88 the small firms service answered 266,000 inquiries, helped over 27,000 small businesses by counselling, and held over 39,000 counselling sessions.

The service continues to increase its links with, and support for, other agencies in the small firms support network. Its database of national information is now available to agencies and others for their own use in advising clients.

The service has opened six new inner city offices and is appointing inner city business advisers, to promote self-employment and small business development in inner city areas. In December 1987, as part of a European Commission initiative, the service opened a centre for European business information.

Further details of the service's achievements are contained in the small firms service 1987-88 annual report, which was circulated to all hon. Members and placed in the House of Commons Library.

118. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received following the publication of the 1987-88 small firms service report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The 1987-88 annual report of the small firms service was published on 5 July, and was circulated widely to Members of Parliament, major banks, accountants, solicitors, local enterprise agencies and other business organisations and individuals. Many of them have and commented favourably on its content and the work of the small firms service.

Weekly Earnings (National Insurance)

35. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effect on the labour market of the current level of weekly earnings at which workers are exempt from national insurance liability.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend has made no specific assessment of the effects on the labour market of the lower earnings limit for national insurance contributions.

Channel Tunnel

36. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the impact on tourism of the opening of the Channel tunnel in 1993.

Mr. Lee: The completion of the Channel tunnel in 1993 represents a major opportunity for the tourism industry in Great Britain. Estimates suggest that about 15 million people will use the tunnel in its first year of operation. It is important that the United Kingdom tourism industry now considers what needs to be done to ensure that the full potential of the tunnel to bring visitors to Britain is realised.

Hourly Rates

37. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average hourly rate of *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time workers.

85. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average hourly rate of *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time workers.

Mr. Lee: Average gross hourly earnings excluding overtime in April 1988 were £3·25 for part-time employees and £5·26 for full-time employees. These data relate to employees on adult rates whose pay was not affected by absence.

Business Women (Cornwall)

38. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to receive the study funded by the Training Commission on problems facing women in business in Cornwall.

Mr. Cope: This project should be completed by the end of December 1988.

Small Businesses (Loans)

39. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to discuss with the European Investment Bank global loans to small business; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: European Investment Bank loans are generally available to small and medium-sized enterprises only through financial intermediaries such as the clearing banks. It is for the banks to decide whether there is advantage in borrowing global loans from the EIB to lend on to small firms.

Industrial Tourism

42. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further plans he has to promote industrial tourism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I am pleased to say that the CBI-Department of Employment-English tourist board conference on industrial tourism which I attended on 15 September aroused considerable interest. I hope that, as a result, many more companies will seriously consider opening their doors to more visitors; and I shall continue to take every opportunity to highlight the benefits that this can bring.

84. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the CBI-ETB industrial tourism conference.

Mr. Lee: The conference held on 15 September attracted almost 200 delegates, representing some 140 public and private sector organisations. It received considerable publicity and has, I am certain, resulted in raising the awareness of the advantages to companies of opening their doors to visitors. The English tourist board is compiling a database of firms involved in industrial tourism as part of future marketing initiatives.

Hotel and Catering (Training)

44. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further plans he has to promote training opportunities in the hotel and catering trade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The hotel and catering training board has the leading role in promoting training provision in the industry, particularly through its 8,000-place YTS managing agency and the development of Caterbase, a modular testing and certification system for all occupations in the sector. I also welcome the board's recent involvment in employment training, which has a significant contribution to make to the supply of skilled workers in a growing industry.

West Midlands

46. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the level of unemployment in the west midlands.

Mr. Lee: In September 1988 seasonally adjusted unemployment excluding school leavers in the west midlands was 224,700, compared with 284,200 in September 1987, a fall of 59,000 or 20·9 per cent. over the last 12 months. The September 1988 figure includes some temporary over recording due to the postal strike.

Earnings

52. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the increase in earnings since 1979 of the highest paid and lowest paid 10 per cent. of the work force.

119. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the increase in earnings since 1979 of the highest paid and lowest paid 10 per cent. of the work force.

132. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the increase in earnings since 1979 of the highest paid and lowest paid 10 per cent. of the work force.

Mr. Lee: Between April 1979 and April 1988 the highest decile of the gross weekly earnings distribution for full-time adult employees increased by 164 per cent. for males and by 178 per cent. for females. Over the same period the lowest decile increased by 113 per cent. for males and 125 per cent. for females.

88. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the adult work force earn less than £3·30 per hour.

130. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the adult work force earn less than £3·30 per hour.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated from the new earnings survey that about 30 per cent. of the adult work force, including both full-time and part-time employees, earned less than £3·30 per hour in April 1988.

British Venture Capital Association

56. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the British Venture Capital Association to discuss the expansion of small businesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: I have accepted an invitation from Mr. John Nash, chairman of the British Venture Capital Association to open the British Venture Capital Association financial forum on 1 December.

Enterprise Allowance

58. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Cope: Since the enterprise allowance scheme began in 1982 a total of 384,000 unemployed people have been helped to start their own businesses. These businesses have also created jobs for others: for every 100 businesses operating after three years, an additional 114 jobs have been created.

Equal Pay

59. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to introduce further changes in the field of equal pay legislation.

Mr. Nicholls: Certain changes to this legislation will be necessary to implement our obligations under the EC directive on equal treatment in occupational social security schemes. The proposed changes were set out in a consultation document issued by the Department of Social Security on 22 July 1988.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will continue to keep the working of the Equal Pay Act under review.

European Single Market

61. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further plans he has to promote the completion of the European single market in 1992 to small firms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The Government's "Europe Open For Business" campaign, is aimed at small and large firms. This Department, with the Department of Trade and Industry which is responsible for the overall campaign, is in contact with organisations representing small firms about ways of bringing the importance of the single market to their attention. We are also considering ways of extending the training available to cover this issue. Ministers and officials from both Departments have addressed many conferences about the importance for small and larger firms of the completion of the single market.

I have recently agreed that the contract with the European Commission for the London Centre for European Business Information should be renewed. The centre provides information and advice to small firms on developments and opportunities in the European Community particularly in relation to the completion of the single market.

78. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give an estimate of the number of new jobs likely to be created on completion of the single European market in 1992.

Mr. Cope: The freeing of trade and the increased competitiveness that will result from the single European market will generate economic growth which will benefit the economy of the Community including that of the United Kingdom. It is extremely difficult to translate this into numbers of new jobs.

The Cecchini report on the likely impact of the single market suggested that 1·25 to 2·25 million jobs might be created in the Community as a whole after 1992.

The numbers of extra jobs in the United Kingdom will depend on the response of our industry and commerce to the opportunities that the single market will provide for business in the community and in the rest of the world.

School Leavers

79. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many school leavers seeking jobs there will be in 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1995; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Projected numbers of school leavers in Great Britain available for employment for academic years from 1989-90 to 1994-95 are as follows:

Academic year of leaving school (ending August 31)	*Projected number of school leavers in Great Britain available for employment[1] (thousands)*
1989-90	480
1990-91	460
1991-92	440
1992-93	420
1993-94	440
1994-95	450

[1] Rounded to the nearest 10,000.

Mental Health Services

68. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will meet the national officer of MIND to discuss the impact of the new employment training scheme upon community-based mental health services.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no present plans to meet representatives of MIND, but would be happy to consider doing so if asked.

Tourism (Inner Cities)

70. **Mr. Redwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what his Department has done to promote tourism in the inner cities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The network of city action teams (CATS) have supported a significant number of initiatives and projects designed to develop inner city tourism potential. In addition my Department's regional enterprise units, working with the English tourist board and the regional tourist boards, have continued to give priority to inner city areas in promoting and developing tourism in this country.

Unemployment Benefit Offices

71. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people consulted the unemployment benefit offices in 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: No records are kept for the number of people who consult unempoloyment benefit offices; however during 1987 there were a total of 4,777,575 claims made to unemployment benefit.

Restart

74. **Mr. Neale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the restart interview programme.

Mr. Lee: Since July 1986 almost 4·5 million interviews have been carried out under the restart programme, of which just under 90 per cent. have resulted in an offer of positive help being made.

The restart programme now offers interviews at six-monthly intervals to everyone who has been out of work for six months or more. In addition, certain clients are now offered follow-up interviews to discuss the outcome of their main interviews in order to provide further guidance and support.

From September 1988, the programme is delivering the Government's guarantee to people aged between 18-24 who have been unemployed for between six and 12 months, of the offer of a place on employment training, in a jobclub or on the enterprise allowance scheme.

77. **Mr. Hurt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many long-term unemployed have been offered help under the restart programme to date.

Mr. Lee: Since 1 July 1986, almost 4·5 million interviews have taken place under the restart programme, of which just under 90 per cent. have resulted in an offer of postive help being made. There is no record of the actual number of individuals interviewed.

Youth Training Scheme

75. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 to 18-year-olds are undertaking training on the youth training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: At the end of September 435,500 young people were in training on the youth training scheme, of whom only a small number (about 1·4 per cent.) were aged 19 or over. I am delighted that so many young people are taking the opportunity to acquire through YTS the skills they will need for their future working lives.

91. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people are currently training on the two-year YTS.

Mr. Cope: At the end of September 1988, YTS records show 435,500 young people in training on YTS. Of these 411,900 were on a two-year training programme and 23,600 were on a one-year training programme.

117. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the progress of two-year YTS.

Mr. Cope: Since the launch of two-year YTS in 1986, the programme has become firmly established as the normal route from school to work for 16-year-olds and some 17-year-olds in much of the country. The attractiveness of the programme to young people is

demonstrated by the fact that the two millionth trainee will enter YTS by the end of October 1988. The demographic drop in the numbers of young people and employer's growing demands for higher level skills underline the vital role which YTS should play in securing a well-trained and flexible work force.

Women Workers

89. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of part-time workers are women; and what proportion have statutory maternity rights, at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholls: Estimates from the 1987 labour force survey show that in spring 1987, a total of 86·3 per cent. of part-time workers were women, of whom 48·4 per cent. met the qualifying conditions for the right to return to work after maternity absence and protection against dismissal because of pregnancy. The right not to be unreasonably refused time off work for ante-natal care is available equally to part-time and full-time employees, irrespective of length of service and hours worked.

Temporary Work

92. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the work force were in temporary, seasonal or casual work *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* at the latest available date.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated from the Labour Force Survey that 3·6 per cent. of the economically active in Great Britain were in seasonal, temporary or casual jobs in spring 1983 (the earliest year for which data is available). An equivalent figure for the spring of 1987 was 4 per cent.

Lost Days

94. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many days were lost in industrial disputes *(a)* in the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available and *(b)* in 1978.

Mr. Lee: The number of working days lost through stoppages of work due to industrial disputes is provisionally estimated at 2,591,000 for the 12-month period ending August 1988. In 1978, 9,405,000 working days were lost.

Job Creation

98. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of new jobs created in the service industries in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: There are no figures for job gains and job losses. Between June 1987 and June 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, there was a net increase of 446,000 in the numbers of employees in employment and self-employed people in the service industries of Great Britain. The figures have been adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations.

100. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the new jobs created since 1980 has been *(a)* part-time, and *(b)* full-time.

114. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the new jobs created since 1980 have been *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time.

116. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the new jobs created since 1980 has been *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time.

Mr. Lee: There are no figures for job gains and job losses. Between June 1980 and June 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, there was a net increase of 469,000 in the size of the workforce in employment in Great Britain. This was attributable to a net increase of 1,239,000 in part-time employment (of which 337,000 were participants on work-related Government training programmes), offset by a net decrease of 824,000 in full-time employment.

The work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed, members of HM forces and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

Enterprise Agencies

99. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the number of enterprise agencies operating in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Cope: There are currently 425 local enterprise agencies operating throughout the United Kingdom. Of these, 385 are approved under the terms of the Finance Act 1982, which allows business sector sponsors tax relief on their contributions to such bodies.

Skill Shortages

102. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action his Department is taking to deal with skill shortages in the south-east of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The continuing strength of the economy is leading to increasing demand for skills. But it is primarily the responsibility of employers to meet their skill needs. The Government has increased their investment in training massively since 1979, particularly for young people with YTS and for the unemployed with employment training.

National Dock Labour Scheme

107. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet representatives of the National Association of Port Employers to discuss the future of the national dock labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no present plans for such a meeting.

Part-time Work

109. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to implement the 1982 European Economic Community draft directive on part-time work.

Mr. Nicholls: No.

School Compacts

112. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on school compacts.

Mr. Cope: The number and quality of applications for development funding from potential compact partners in the urban programme areas has exceeded initial expectations. The Government therefore announced on 17 August that 30 partnerships, double the number originally planned, would receive up to £50,000 each to develop their compact proposals. Bids for full operational funding of up to £100,000 a year for four years will be submitted by these partnerships in early 1989.

Inner Cities

115. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to review the policies of Her Majesty's Government to reduce the level of unemployment in the inner cities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The Government's Action for Cities programme aims to develop a climate in which businesses can flourish and new jobs can be created. It includes a wide range of employment, training and enterprise measures provided by this Department. The new employment training programme helps unemployed people obtain the skills they need to get jobs; the employment service, through its network of over 500 inner city offices and nearly 500 inner city jobclubs, helps unemployed people find jobs; the enterprise allowance scheme, helps unemployed people start a business. The small firms service is opening new offices and engaging new counsellors to serve the inner cities. The measures we are taking to achieve these aims are constantly under review to ensure that they bring maximum benefit to inner city residents.

Single Union Agreements

120. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations he has received about single union agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations. The Government's view is that single union agreements can have a valuable part to play in improving future industrial relations. It is for the parties directly concerned to decide what arrangements best suit their own circumstances.

European Community Employment Ministers

121. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he will next meet the European Community Employment Ministers; what he expects to be discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The next formal meeting of the Council of Employment Ministers will be on 16 December. The agenda has not yet been decided; but we will be continuing our efforts to ensure that job creation and training remain the key issues.

TRANSPORT

Vacancies (London)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the latest available figures for his Department in the London pay area of the number of vacancies by grade and the proportion this is of the grade complement in London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not kept in the form requested and it would be disproportionately costly to collect it.

Vale of Rheidd Railway

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the price that Brecon Mountain Railway Ltd. proposes to pay British Rail upon its acquisition of the Vale of Rheidd railway.

Mr. Portillo: This information is commercially confidential.

Merchant Shipping

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the United Kingdom's balance of payments in merchant shipping since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the publication "United Kingdom Balance of Payments 1988 Edition—the CSO Pink Book" published by HMSO for the Government Statistical Service, a copy of which is in the Library.

Table 3.3 is the sea transport account.

Motorways

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much was spent in constant 1983-84 prices on motorway construction in *(a)* 1985-86, *(b)* 1986-87 and *(c)* 1987-88; and what will be provisional spending for 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Expenditure this year on national roads as a whole is more than £1 billion for the first time. The balance of the road programme has changed in recent years.

The amount spent on new motorway construction and capital maintenance in each of the last three years, adjusted to 1983-84 prices, is as follows:

	£ million
1985-86	338
1986-87	267
1987-88	254

Provisional spending for 1988-89, also at 1983-84 prices, is £244 million.

The change in spend on motorways reflects the completion of the M25 and the priority given to other types of trunk road improvements, in particular to the bypass programme which brings environmental relief, reduces delay to travellers and freight, and cuts casualties.

Motor-cycle Couriers (Accidents)

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give figures for each year for the last five years, of how many accidents have been reported involving motor-cycle couriers who have not passed their driving test.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information collected by the Department on road injury accidents does not record whether the rider of a motor cycle was a courier or whether the rider had passed the driving test.

The number of accidents involving motor cycles in 1987 was 46,059. In 3 per cent. of these, the motor cycle was recorded as having L plates. Similar figures for 1983 were 64,175 accidents, in 7 per cent. of which the presence of L plates was recorded.

The fact that a vehicle has L plates attached does not always necessarily mean the rider is a learner. Also, the non-recording of L plates does not mean the rider has passed the test.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects work to start on the construction of the east London river crossing; and when the road is expected to be open for use.

Mr. Channon: I hope it will be possible to start construction in 1991 and open the road in 1994.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the most recent estimate of the cost of the east London river crossing, broken down between *(a)* property acquisition, *(b)* road construction, *(c)* bridge building and *(d)* other structures.

Mr. Channon: The estimated costs at average 1984 prices, as presented at the inquiries, are:

	£ million
1. Land and property acquisition	25·2
2. Road construction	38·4
3. Thames bridge	56·0
4. Other structures	48·7

The figures exclude site preparation and supervision, estimated at £14·7 million.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the additional cost of building the east London river crossing in cut and cover through Oxleas Wood as recommended by the inspector who conducted the public inquiry into the scheme.

Mr. Channon: I am satisfied that the additional cost would be at least the £10 million estimated by the inspector.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the number of families needing alternative rented housing as a result of the construction of the east London river crossing; and who will be responsible for providing the necessary accommodation.

Mr. Channon: At present it is estimated that some 70 households will have to be rehoused. The responsibility for rehousing the majority will lie with the London borough of Greenwich.

Plutonium (Air Transport)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek to obtain *(a)* a transcript and *(b)* a video cassette for his departmental library of the Thames Television "This Week" programme on the dangers of air transport of plutonium, broadcast on 29 September.

Mr. Portillo: This has been done.

Airport Property (Transfer)

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that property at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted proposed to be transferred by British Airports Authority plc to Lynton plc for development on a commercial basis will not be developed in such a way as to limit his options for increasing passenger capacity at these airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. Development of land surplus to operational requirements is primarily a matter for the airport operator.

European Clearway (Fire)

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he ordered an investigation into the fire on the ferry European Clearway; under what regulation it is being conducted; when he expects to receive the report; and if he will make it publicly available.

Mr. Portillo: We ordered an investigation into this accident on 18 July 1988. One of the Department's marine surveyors was appointed under section 728 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894 to conduct the investigation, which is now complete. We are now considering the findings. But since there may be a question of prosecution, it would not be proper to comment on the content of the report at this stage.

Drink-driving Offences

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the number of drink-driving offences committed in each of the areas of the United Kingdom for each of the past 36 months.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 25 July 1988]:* I have been asked to reply.

The available information relates to convictions for drink-driving offences, which for England and Wales is published annually, by police force area, in "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables", at table 16 of the issue for 1986, copies of which are in the Library. Information is not collected centrally on the date on which the offences occurred and a breakdown of these figures by month of court appearance would involve disproportionate cost. Information for 1987 will be published later this year.

I understand from my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that the corresponding information on convictions in Scotland and Northern Ireland is as shown in the following table.

Numbers

	Scotland[1]	*Northern Ireland*[2]
1984	13,600	n/a
1985	13,600	3,100
1986	13,100	3,000
1987	[3]12,400	3,000

n/a—Not available.
[1] Number of offences where the charge was proved.
[2] Number found guilty where this was the principal offence.
[3] Provisional figure.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 26 October 1988

PRIME MINISTER

European Community and National Parliaments

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the nature of the development of the Community in relation to the powers of national Parliaments; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. I am satisfied with the procedure for ensuring that the views of this House are taken into account in the formulation of Her Majesty's Government's policy on Community measures.

NATO (Spanish Airbase Facilities)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her visit to Spain in September, she discussed with the Spanish Prime Minister the implications for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation of Spain's withdrawal of airbase facilities for F-111 aircraft of the United States air force.

The Prime Minister: No.

Southern Africa

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to launch any initiatives on economic development and political stabilisation for Southern Africa.

The Prime Minister: Our objective remains the replacement of apartheid by a non-racial, representative system of government in South Africa. We take every opportunity to encourage progress in that direction. We shall also continue our programme of practical assistance to black South Africans.

Australia (Visit)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her visit to Australia in August, she discussed with members of the Australian Government and Parliament the prospects for nuclear co-operation in the fields of uranium provision, uranium processing, nuclear waste disposal and nuclear materials transport.

The Prime Minister: No.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her visit to Australia in August, she discussed with Ministers of the Australian Government outstanding compensation claims from *(a)* British and Australian service men and *(b)* Aboriginal peoples following radiation fallout from British atmospheric atomic weapons tests on Australian territories in the 1950s.

The Prime Minister: No.

Nuclear Emergencies (Planning)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she has received any communication during the summer recess from the County Emergency Planning Officers' Society requesting the establishment of a permanent advisory committee chaired by the Cabinet Office to co-ordinate the development of planning for nuclear emergencies.

The Prime Minister: As far as I am aware no such communication has been received.

Environment and Development

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government have any further plans to take international initiatives on environmental and development issues following the response to the World Commission on Environment and Development in the report "Our Common Future" provided in July.

The Prime Minister: As I said in my foreword to the Government's response, all relevant Departments of State have been invited to examine their policies in the light of the recommendations of the World Commission's report. The Government are also considering what further environmental initiatives should be taken on a wider, international basis.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister what information she has received from the United States Government on conclusions reached at the review conference of the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) treaty of 1972, which began on 24 August in Geneva between the United States of America and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, in relation to agreements reached in Washington DC in December 1984, at her meeting with the United States President on the Anglo-American interpretation of development of the strategic defence initiative in the context of existing treaties.

The Prime Minister: The United States Administration has given a full briefing to its NATO Allies on the results of the ABM treaty review. The meeting concentrated on issues of compliance with the ABM treaty, notably the Soviet large phased-array radar at Krasnoyarsk on which the Soviet Union did not resolve United States concerns. The four points that I agreed with President Reagan at Camp David in December 1984 did not bear directly on issues raised at the review.

European Community

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the occasions she has attended the European Community summit since 1979; and on how many of these occasions she has been accompanied by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

The Prime Minister: The following is the information.

	Country
1979	
June	France
November	Republic of Ireland
1980	
April	Luxembourg
June	Italy
December	Luxembourg

	Country
1981	
March	Netherlands
June	Luxembourg
November	United Kingdom
1982	
March	Belgium
June	Belgium
December	Denmark
1983	
March	Belgium
June	Federal Republic of Germany
December	Greece
1984	
March	Belgium
June	France
December	Republic of Ireland
1985	
March	Belgium
June	Italy
December	Luxembourg
1986	
June	Netherlands
December	United Kingdom
1987	
June	Belgium
December	Denmark
1988	
February	Belgium
June	Federal Republic of Germany

These meetings are for Heads of Government and Foreign Secretaries only. I have not therefore been accompanied on any such occasion by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Advertising Contracts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if she will publish a list of all advertising contracts awarded by the Government in the years 1986, 1987 and 1988, indicating *(a)* whom the contract was awarded to, *(b)* in which media the advertising appeared and *(c)* the value of each contract;

(2) if she will list in 1988 prices the value, in descending order, of all advertising contracts awarded by the Government since 1980 showing (i) the year of the advertising campaign, (ii) the subject of the campaign, (iii) the value of the contract and (iv) the agencies carrying out the work.

The Prime Minister: Information on publicity, including advertising, is not held centrally except where the expenditure incurred was through the Central Office of Information and can be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Details of departmental expenditure on publicity for the financial years 1979-80 to 1987-88 were supplied by Ministers in response to questions from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and published in the *Official Report* November-December 1986, July 1987 and December 1987-January 1988.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list all advertising campaigns commissioned by the Government since 1980 which have involved, in whole or in part, the distribution of unsolicited material to the public.

The Prime Minister: Information on publicity, including advertising is not held centrally, except where the expenditure incurred was through the Central Office of Information.

The advertising campaigns carried out by COI on behalf of other Government Departments since 1980 which have involved, in whole or in part, the distribution of unsolicited material to the public are as follows:

DOE	—	Right to Buy, Houses	(1984-85)
DOE	—	Right to Buy, Flats and Maisonettes	(1986-87)
DOE	—	Metropolitan Counties	(1985-86)
Energy	—	Monergy News	(1985-86)
Energy	—	Monergy News	(1986-87)
DHSS	—	AIDS	(1986-87)

SOCIAL SECURITY

Residential Homes

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has on the extent to which the levels of charges in private residential and nursing homes require current Departments of Health and Social Security allowances to be topped up by social services departments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Local authorities are not required to top up income support payments for people in independent residential care homes. Where the charge for someone in a home exceeds the amount of the appropriate income support limit for help with fees, local authorities have discretionary powers to top up the balance of the charge for people under pension age. These powers do not extend to people in nursing homes. Information is not therefore available in the form requested.

Benefits and Allowances

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown by sex and standard age cohorts of recipients of invalidity benefit at the last date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: At April 1987, the latest date for which information is available, the following were in receipt of invalidity benefit.

Age	*Men*	*Women*
Under 20	300	300
20-24	5,700	8,300
25-29	13,800	17,700
30-34	19,300	19,100
35-39	31,700	20,600
40-44	41,800	19,800
45-49	56,500	27,800
50-54	88,400	38,600
55-59	137,100	44,600
60-64	250,200	16,700
65 and over	109,600	—

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown by sex and standard age cohorts of recipients of severe disablement allowance at the last date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The latest available information is as follows.

Severe disablement allowance claimants incapacitated on 4 April 1987 analysed by age at 31 March 1987

	Men	Women
All ages	102,300	157,900
Under 20	12,300	8,300
20-24	15,700	10,200
25-29	13,100	10,800
30-34	8,800	10,800
35-39	9,200	13,100
40-44	9,300	14,900
45-49	6,400	16,700
50-54	5,500	21,700
55-59	7,500	28,500
60-64	8,400	15,900
65 and over	6,100	7,000

Note: The figures are quoted to the nearest 100.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown by sex and standard age cohorts of recipients of attendance allowance at *(a)* the higher rate and *(b)* the lower rate at the last date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The requested information is in the table:

Attendance Allowance: Estimate of numbers of recipients at 31 March 1987 by age, sex and rate

Age (years)	Males		Females	
	Higher Rate	Lower Rate	Higher Rate	Lower Rate
All ages[1]	93,000	148,000	166,000	234,000
2-4	3,000	5,000	3,000	4,000
5-9	6,000	9,000	4,000	6,000
10-15	5,000	9,000	4,000	7,000
16-19	3,000	5,000	2,000	4,000
20-29	5,000	11,000	5,000	10,000
30-39	4,000	8,000	5,000	8,000
40-49	5,000	8,000	7,000	8,000
50-59	8,000	12,000	11,000	13,000
60-64	8,000	11,000	9,000	11,000
65-69	8,000	12,000	10,000	14,000
70-74	10,000	14,000	15,000	20,000
75-79	11,000	15,000	20,000	29,000
80 +	16,000	29,000	71,000	101,000

Note

[1] Due to rounding figures under age cohorts may not sum to those for "all ages".

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown by sex and standard age cohorts of recipients of mobility allowance *(a)* who have reserved rights under the former vehicle scheme and *(b)* who do not have reserved rights, at the last date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The available information about mobility allowance recipients, at 7 October 1988, is as follows:

Age Groups	Recipients who Transferred from Vehicle Scheme		Other Recipients	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
5-9	—	—	4,908	3,975
10-14	—	—	4,625	3,709
15-19	1	2	6,188	5,318
20-24	7	4	7,283	6,280
25-29	74	58	7,542	6,807
30-34	578	346	7,342	7,648
35-39	953	652	9,467	10,370
40-44	1,253	941	13,566	15,142
45-49	1,101	845	16,895	18,529
50-54	1,160	919	25,939	26,313
55-59	1,571	1,000	40,287	38,392
60-64	1,986	1,146	62,336	51,131
65-69	2,317	1,386	56,767	45,771
70-74	1,768	947	10,425	9,397
75-79	1,301	768	—	—
80-84	499	467	—	—
85 and over	224	180	—	—

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown by sex and standard age cohorts of recipients of invalid care allowance at the last date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The requested information is in the table:

Invalid care allowance: Numbers of recipients at 28 September 1988 by age and sex

Age (Years)	Males	Females
All ages	14,279	90,474
Under 20	78	300
20-24	173	1,680
25-29	319	6,311
30-34	565	10,889
35-39	929	12,814
40-44	1,370	13,948
45-49	1,645	12,322
50-54	2,181	13,457
55-59	3,103	14,153
60-64	3,550	[1]4,600
65 and over	366	

[1] *Note:* Separate figures are not collected for the numbers of female recipients aged 60-64 and 65 and over.

Housing Benefit

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of applicants, in each of the Scottish local authority housing areas, who have received payments from the transitional payments unit, Glasgow; and what is the average weekly payment which is to be made to those applicants.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested could be obtained only by a special computer run which would be very lengthy and would divert machine resources from the top priority task of processing payments. In any event the data change daily and at this stage would not provide a comprehensive picture. In due course, once the majority of payments have been made, we will publish national figures showing a breakdown of the numbers of payments made to people in each local authority area.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* Asian bilingual counter staff are employed and *(b)* staff Asian language interpreters are available, at local offices of his Department in Bradford.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Five Asian bilingual staff are currently employed as counter staff in the Department's local offices in Bradford, and two full time and one part-time Asian language interpreters are available in the Department's local offices in Bradford.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what training in welfare rights advice staff

engaged in answering personal inquiries in local offices of his Department in Bradford possess; and what proportion of such staff are bilingual in an Asian language.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: All benefits staff in the Department's local offices receive a minimum of 13 weeks training before being allowed to deal with personal inquiries from members of the public.

In the Bradford offices, 12 per cent. of staff who regularly deal with personal inquiries are bilingual in an Asian language.

Social Security Appeals

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many staff in local offices of his Department in Bradford are available to represent claimants at appeals.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department does not represent claimants at social security appeal tribunal hearings. It is normal for claimants to arrange their own representation.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals have been upheld in Bradford since the social security changes introduced last April; and in how many successful appeals the claimant was represented.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The office of the president of social security appeal tribunals advises that the latest available administrative statistics for the north-eastern region, which covers the Bradford area, show that for the period 5 April 1988 to 20 September 1988, 17,751 appeals were heard, of which 4,383, or 24·7 per cent., were decided in the claimants' favour.

Information on the number of successful appeals where the claimant was represented is not readily available for the period in question, and could be extracted only at disproportionate cost.

Contingency Arrangements (Bradford)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether any contingency arrangements are being made to assist people who became voluntarily or compulsorily redundant from Bradford council.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department has well established contingency plans for dealing with large numbers of claims to benefit. These will be introduced quickly if the need arises.

Family Credit

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he is able to provide an estimate of the latest figure of the number of people claiming family credit, broken down into (i) two-parent and one-parent families, (ii) regions and (iii) income bands.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply on 25 October to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour). A breakdown of the figures in the way requested is not available.

Benefits (Take-up)

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the take-up figures of means-tested benefits from the family expenditure survey 1985 to be available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We expect to publish 1985 take-up estimates for the main income-related benefits around the end of the year.

Child Benefit

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much it costs to raise child benefit for every 10p increase in gross and net terms.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The annual cost of raising child benefit by 10p per week from April 1989 would be £63 million gross and about £45 million net.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Departmental Staff

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Attorney-General what are the latest available figures for Her Majesty's Land Registry in the London pay area of the number of vacancies by grade and the proportion this is of the grade complement in London.

The Attorney-General: The table below provides details of current vacancies by grade and the proportion that this represents of the grade complement for the London area.

Grade	*Number of vacancies*	*Vacancies as proportion of complement (per cent.)*
SEO	5·5	7·4
HEO	9·5	10·1
EO	5·0	2·3
AO	1·5	0·2
AA	2·5	1·19
Typist	27·5	23·2

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Attorney-General what are the latest available figures for the Lord Chancellor's Department in the London pay area of the number of vacancies by grade and the proportion this is of the grade complement in London.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor's Department does not have grade complements and it is in budget holders' discretion whether to fill a vacancy. The table below shows the number of vacant posts which budget holders have indicated they wish to fill and the percentage that represents of the total number of available posts. The information is given as accurately as possible without incurring disproportionate cost.

Grade	*Number of vacant posts*	*Vacant posts as a percentage of available posts*
Grade 7	2	3·0
SEO	23	13·4
HEO	57	12·7
EO	62	8·0
AO	67	5·7
AA	30	11·6
Personal Secretary	3	8·7
Typist	19·5	11·6
Typing Manager	1	9·1
Security Officer	18	18·4
Ushers	22	7·5
Telephonist	1	25·0
Messenger	4	4·1

Grade	Number of vacant posts	Vacant posts as a percentage of available posts
Office Keeper	1	7·7
Senior Paperkeeper	2	25·0
Paperkeeper	3	5·1
Reprographic Officer	2	28·6

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Attorney-General if he will provide the latest available figures for the Lord Chancellor's Department for *(a)* numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions, by grade, *(b)* location of those offices awarding local pay additions and *(c)* annual cost.

The Attorney-General: The latest available figures for the Lord Chancellor's Department for the numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions by grade are:

	Number
Executive Officers	769
Administrative Officers	1,313
Administrative Assistants	227
Typing Manager	13
Senior Personal Secretary	12
Personal Secretary	41
Typist	190
Trainee Typist	2

The location of those offices awarding local pay additions is shown on the following list.

The annual cost is approximately £898,600.

List of locations awarding local pay additions

	Number of offices where payments being made
A. Inner London weighting pay area	
Local authority	
London Borough of Camden	3
City of London	4
City of Westminster	20
London Borough of Hammersmith	1
London Borough of Islington	2
London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	1
London Borough of Lambeth	1
London Borough of Southwark	3
London Borough of Wandsworth	1
B. Elsewhere	
Local authority	
London Borough of Bromley	1
London Borough of Croydon	1
London Borough of Greenwich	1
Dartford	1
Epson and Ewell	1
Gravesham	1
Guildford	1
Reigate and Banstead	1
Tunbridge Wells	1
London Borough of Brent	1
London Borough of Ealing	1
London Borough of Hillingdon	3
London Borough of Hounslow	4
London Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames	3
Chiltern	1
Reading	2
Slough	1
Wycombe	1
London Borough of Barnet	1
London Borough of Enfield	1
London Borough of Haringey	1
London Borough of Havering	1
London Borough of Newham	1
London Borough of Redbridge	2
Aylesbury Vale	2
Brentwood	1
Dacorum	1
East Hertfordshire	1
Harlow	1
Luton	1
North Hertfordshire	1
St. Albans	2
Thurrock	1
Watford	1
Rushmoor	1
Basingstoke and Deane	1

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Attorney General if he will provide the latest available figures for Her Majesty's Land Registry for *(a)* numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions, by grade, *(b)* location of those offices awarding local pay additions and *(c)* annual cost.

The Attorney-General: *(a)* The following Land Registry staff are in receipt of, or after 1 year's service will become eligible for, a local pay addition:

	Number
Executive Officer (aged 18 to 20)	10
Administrative Officer	921
Administrative Assistant	452
Senior Personal Secretary	1
Personal Secretary	4
Typing Managers	4
Typists	198
TOTAL	1,590

(b) These staff are located in Central London, Croydon, Harrow, Stevenage and Tunbridge Wells.

(c) The estimated annual cost is £683,000.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Attorney-General if he will provide the latest available figures for the Crown Prosecution Service for *(a)* numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions, by grade, *(b)* location of those offices awarding local pay additions and *(c)* annual cost.

The Attorney-General: A total of 642 members of staff employed by the Crown Prosecution Service receive local pay additions, as follows:

Grade	Number in receipt of local pay additions
EO	239
AO	306
AA	54
PS	16
Typist	24
SPS	3

Local pay additions are paid to eligible staff employed in the London pay area, but excluding St. Albans and Guildford. The total annual cost is estimated at £315,600.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Attorney-General what are the latest available figures for the Crown Prosecution Service in the London pay area of the number of vacancies by grade and the proportion this is of the grade complement in London.

The Attorney-General: At 30 September 1988 the Crown Prosecution Service had the following vacancies

within the London pay area. The proportion of the complement which these vacancies represent is shown in the third column of the table.

Grade	*Vacancies*	*Proportion of complement (per cent.)*
5 (Legal)	2	10
6 (Legal)	5	11·4
SCP	23·5	22·4
CP	79	40
SEO	4·5	11
HEO	17	13·8
EO	67	21·1
AO	5·5	2·2
AA	35	44·9
PS	10	34·5
Typing Manager	1	50
Typist	45·5	64

Child Abuse

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Attorney-General if he will take steps to ensure that when a court establishes during wardship or child care hearings that a child has been abused, the child's alleged abuser will be subsequently prosecuted and denied access to the abused child and other children in the family.

The Attorney-General: In all wardship and child care hearings the best interests of the child or children shall be the paramount concern, and the courts will consider carefully in each case whether the child's abuser should be permitted to have access to the child or children. The Crown Prosecution Service will, when considering a possible prosecution, give careful consideration to the findings of any court that a child has been abused.

Matrimonial Proceedings

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General whether, in the light of the case of Board v Checkland (1987) 17 Family Law 236, he will introduce legislation to validate orders made in matrimonial proceedings where in error the order for a lump sum or transfer of property pre-dates the date of the decree nisi.

The Attorney-General: No. The provisions of section 23 of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 are satisfactory and necessary. The invalidity of the order in the case of Board v Checkland was the result of a failure to comply with those provisions.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Table Office (Computer)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council what further progress has been made in purchasing a computer to assist with the processing of early-day motions and questions in the Table Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: The computer facilities were installed during the summer recess and are now being run in. It is hoped that they will be in full operation for early-day motions on the first day of next Session.

Parliamentary Papers

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will seek to ensure that embargoed Parliamentary Papers are made available in the Norman Shaw North Issue Office at the same time as in the basement Vote Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: No. It is a long-standing custom of this House that embargoed documents remain in the custody of the Deliverer of the Vote in the Main Vote Office until the time specified for release by the Minister responsible for the document's production, so as to ensure that such documents receive the secure handling they require.

Documents which are not embargoed but have a special release time on them are normally available simultaneously in both the Norman Shaw North and the Main Vote Office.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will seek to ensure that Her Majesty's Stationery Office deliver Parliamentary Papers direct to the Norman Shaw North Issue Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: A direct delivery service from Her Majesty's Stationery Office to Norman Shaw North has been instituted from 19 October 1988.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council what was the cost of suppiying the Norman Shaw North Issue Office with Parliamentary Papers in 1987 and to date; and how this compares with each year since 1979.

Mr. Wakeham: No breakdown of costs for individual issue points in the Vote Office is available.

The total cost of providing stationery and printing supplies to the House is contained in the Supply Estimates Class XIX Vote 6.

Procedure Committee

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to reply to the Second Report from the Procedure Committee on the Use of Time on the Floor of the House (HC 350 1986-87); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: This report covered a wide range of important recommendations dealing with many complex aspects of our procedures for primary and delegated legislation. I have held a number of discussions through the usual channels and with individual hon. Members with the aim of arriving at as broad a measure of agreement as possible about the best way ahead. I hope that these can soon be concluded.

Private Members' Bills

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will move to refer the procedure for private Members' Bills to the Select Committee on Procedure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: The procedure for private Members' Bills is already within the terms of reference of the Select Committee on Procedure.

Norman Shaw North

Mr. Amess: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons

Commission, if he will list, by grade, the total number of officials currently employed in the Norman Shaw North Issue Office; and how this compares with each year since 1979.

Mr. Beith: The total number of permanent staff of the Norman Shaw North Issue Office is one Vote Office Assistant and one Senior Office Clerk. This number has remained the same since 1979.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much public money has been earmarked over the next three years for city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: Total planned public expenditure including recurrent and capital grant is £86 million over the three financial years 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many officers within his Department have been reserved to deal with city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are currently 14 officials in Schools Branch, 4 working on the city technology programme. Of those, six have other responsibilities unconnected with CTCs. Additionally eight officials in architects and buildings branch undertake some work on the design and refurbishment of buildings for CTCs.

Student Unions

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of his Department's review of student union membership.

Mr. Jackson: As foreshadowed in my reply of 28 July to my hon. Friend at column *405*, a questionnaire was issued to 70 institutions on 29 July. Questionnaires are due for return by 31 October.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations his Department has received concerning membership of student unions; how many supported abolition of automatic membership; how many were opposed; and what percentage the latter is of the former.

Mr. Jackson: Since the end of July we have received seven letters from hon. Members and members of the public about membership of local unions and a further two letters which touched on membership of the National Union of Students. Of the former two (29 per cent.) supported and five (71 per cent.) opposed automatic membership while of the latter one (50 per cent.) supported and one (50 per cent.) opposed current arrangements for NUS membership.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last discussed membership of student unions with the National Union of Students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has not discussed the matter recently with the NUS but I did so on 29 February.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of individuals and organisations who gave oral evidence to his review of membership of student unions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many student unions submitted *(a)* oral evidence and *(b)* written evidence to his Department's review on student unions; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will place in the Library the evidence submitted to his Department's review on student unions if the author consents to it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: We have received a small number of contributions from individuals and one non-union organisation which may be regarded as prompted by the invitation to submit views made by my right hon. Friend in his reply of 18 April to my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman). I can see no reason to distinguish these from the more general representations which we continue to receive and which, in my reply of 10 June to my hon. Friend (c. 690-91), I said I did not consider it appropriate to make public.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects the results of his review on student unions will be announced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: We shall analyse responses to the questionnaire issued on 29 July when these are received. Thereafter, as indicated by my right hon. Friend in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) on 18 April at column *292*, we shall reach conclusions on the best action to take and consult all concerned about those conclusions. I cannot at present predict how long this will take.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information his Department has provided to members of the public about his review of student unions; how many members of the public have requested information about his proposed review of student unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My Department issued press notices when we announced our intention to conduct a survey on 18 April and when the questionnaire was sent to institutions on 29 July. In addition to inquiries from a small number of individuals who have subsequently submitted views, we have received four letters requesting information about our survey.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many petitions his Department has received from individuals and organisations concerning membership of student unions; how many supported abolition of automatic membership and how many were opposed; and what percentage the latter is of the former.

Mr. Jackson: No petitions have been submitted but since the general election we have received four letters written on behalf of a group. Of those one (25 per cent.) was opposed to and three (75 per cent.) supported the current arrangements for NUS membership.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to send a copy of his Department's questionnaire on student membership to the National Secretary of the National Union of Students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: A copy was sent to the National Union of Students on 29 July when it was issued.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations his Department has received suggesting *(a)* increasing and *(b)* limiting the amount paid to the National Union of Students; what proportional relationship the latter bears to the former; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not readily available.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his Department's estimate of the current total student membership of the National Union of Students, and in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jackson: The NUS is a confederation of affiliated local student unions. Members of local unions are not directly members of the NUS.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) why he considers it inappropriate to list those organisations which have made representations to his Department concerning his review of student unions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) why he considers it inappropriate to place in the Library details of representations he has received concerning automatic membership of student unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I consider it inappropriate because the correspondence was not submitted in the expectation that it would be made public.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assistance he has requested from outside bodies during his Department's review of student unions; if he will list those concerned and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Before issuing the questionnaire on 29 July my right hon. Friend arranged for it to be shown to the Chairmen of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and of the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has held with institutions of higher and further education concerning automatic student union membership and his Department's review of student unions; which institutions expressed support for abolition of automatic membership of student unions; which were opposed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has held no such discussions with institutions.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many institutions of higher and further education have expressed their *(a)* support of or *(b)* opposition to automatic membership of student unions, expressing the latter as a proportion of the former.

Mr. Jackson: None.

Student Finance

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if his Department proposes any new initiatives on student loans; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he now expects to announce the results of his review on student finance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The Government are considering the introduction of top-up loans for student maintenance. They will publish their proposals for the future of student support in due course.

Vandalism and Arson

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice or guidance his Department is providing to assist local education authorities to reduce the incidence of vandalism and arson in schools and colleges in England and Wales.

Mr. Butcher: Advice and guidance to reduce the incidence of vandalism and arson is provided in building bulletins which are distributed to local education authorities. These publications describe measures for improved management, design, fire safety and risk analysis.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps his Department is taking to establish the extent of vandalism and arson in schools and colleges in England and Wales; and what is his estimate of the annual cost of such damage.

Mr. Butcher: The Department obtained data from local education authorities, the insurance industry, and the Home Office in 1986 concerning vandalism and arson in maintained schools. It was estimated that the total annual cost in England and Wales was £26 million for vandalism and £23 million for arson. Data for colleges of further and higher education were not available. This level of damage and cost is unacceptable. I plan to meet representatives of local education authorities shortly to consider further joint action to reduce this unnecessary outflow of expenditure. In addition the Department will be initiating a further study to monitor the extent of vandalism and arson in schools and colleges in 1988 and in successive years.

Ozone Layer

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his policy on the share of publicly funded research on the ozone layer and its depletion allocated respectively to the Science and Engineering Research Council and the Natural Environment Research Council.

Mr. Jackson: Basic research into the scientific issues arising from stratospheric ozone and its properties is conducted both by the Natural Environment Research Council and the Science and Engineering Research Council. It is for each of them to determine the level of resources to be allocated to this topic within their respective shares of the science budget and in the present financial year, the two councils each expect to spend about £700,000.

The seasonal depletion in ozone over Antarctica was first discovered by scientists at the British antarctic survey, a NERC establishment, and BAS based research continues to be a major component of the council's funding of work on this topic. The majority of the SERC expenditure is in respect of an improved atmospheric and mesospheric sounder instrument, costing about £7·5 million in total

over 10 years, which will fly on the NASA upper atmosphere research satellite due for launch in 1991. Both research councils also support other work at universities and polytechnics. There is cross representation on committees on the two councils to co-ordinate activities and to ensure that the field is adequately covered.

School Inspections

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) of 26 July, *Official Report*, column *154-55*, he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of years it would take Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools to undertake a thorough formal inspection leading to the publication of a report, for each school in the maintained system.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is not possible to provide an answer in exactly the form requested since many factors, some of which are impossible to quantify, come into play. As explained to the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), the inspectorate does not in any case set out to inspect and produce a report on every school on a regular basis, as there are some 23,000 schools and only about 50 schools inspectors.

However, using a simple mathematical model incorporating the new streamlined inspection procedures which Her Majesty's inspectorate has recently introduced, it would theoretically take around 100 years to produce a report on every school in the maintained sector with present manpower levels. But that figure is based on the artificial assumption that schools are available for inspection for 52 weeks in the year, and takes no account of the many priorities that determine Her Majesty's inspectorate inspection programme, mainly to do with Government policy needs, that are in no way based on a presumption that every school in the land will be formally and regularly inspected.

Realistically, Her Majesty's inspectorate seeks to inspect fully a sufficiently wide and representative sample of schools in order that sound and cost-efficient judgments may be made about the state of education nationally, and that professional advice based on the findings of these inspections may be provided to the Secretary of State and others who need to know.

In addition, as has been made clear, those full inspections are supplemented by thousands of visits to schools each year which do not result in issued reports. On average, each primary school in England receives an Her Majesty's inspectorate visit every six years and each secondary school every two years. These visits are just as important a part of the inspectorate's intelligence gathering functions as are those inspections which lead to published reports.

Testing and Assessment

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to establish any independent evaluation of the impact upon educational standards of the progressive introduction of the system of national testing and assessment at seven, 11, 14, and 16 years.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have invited the School Examinations and Assessment council, as part of its remit, to advise on an evaluation strategy and associated policy on research and development to enable it to assess the efficacy of the national curriculum assessment arrangements.

GCSE Results

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list by general certificate secondary education examination group and subject the number of 1988 GCSE results outstanding at 1 October; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not held centrally. GCSE examination results are the responsibility of the independent GCSE examining groups. I will write to my hon. Friend on this matter when information is available from the groups.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Facilities (South Africa)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions have been held between officials of his Department, their counterparts in the United States of America and the Soviet Union, and Government Ministers and officials of the Republic of South Africa concerning *(a)* South African membership of the International Atomic Energy Agency; *(b)* conditions of South African membership of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and *(c)* application of International Atomic Energy Agency nuclear safeguards to South African nuclear facilities and materials.

Mrs. Chalker: In Vienna on 12 August the United Kingdom with the United States and the Soviet Union held talks with South Africa at which they urged South Africa to accede to the non-proliferation treaty and to place all her nuclear facilities under full scope safeguards. The United Kingdom has always opposed moves to suspend South African membership of the International Atomic Energy Agency because of the importance we attach to the principle of universality for United Nations technical agencies.

Nuclear Test

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonweath Affairs what information he has on the United States nuclear test exploded on 17 August monitored by Soviet military verification experts near the Nevada test site.

Mr. Waldegrave: An underground nuclear explosion took place on 17 August at the Nevada test site. It was the first leg of a United States/Soviet joint verification experiment, the second element of which was an explosion at the Semipalatinsk test site on 14 September. Each explosion was monitored by both United States and Soviet experts. The purpose of the experiment was to demonstrate hydrodynamic and seismic methods of verification as an aid to the conclusion of a verification protocol to the 1974 threshold test ban treaty. The results of the joint verification experiment are being analysed by each side.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a table showing, from the date of United Kingdom entry into the European Economic Community, the member states which have occupied the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and that of the European summit, indicating periods and dates for the occupancy of each.

Mrs. Chalker: The information requested is as follows:

Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the European Community

1973	*1981*
Belgium	Netherlands
Denmark	United Kingdom
1974	*1982*
Federal Republic of Germany	Belgium
France	Denmark
1975	*1983*
Ireland	Federal Republic of Germany
Italy	Greece
1976	*1984*
Luxembourg	France
Netherlands	Ireland
1977	*1985*
United Kingdom	Italy
Belgium	Luxembourg
1978	*1986*
Denmark	Netherlands
Federal Republic of Germany	United Kingdom
1979	*1987*
France	Belgium
Ireland	Denmark
1980	*1988*
Italy	Federal Republic of Germany
Luxembourg	Greece

The first Presidency of each year is from 1 January to 30 June, and the second from 1 July to 31 December. The President of the Council of Ministers chairs the European Council.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the number of times the Republic of Ireland, Luxembourg, Belgium and Denmark have chaired the Council of Ministers and the European summit since 1972; and if he will indicate for each period the issues addressed and conclusions reached by the Community.

Mrs. Chalker: Since 1972 Belgium, Denmark and Luxembourg have each held the office of President of the Council of Ministers on four different occasions: Ireland has held it on three. The member state holding this office chairs the European Council. The issues addressed and the conclusions reached at the European Council are contained in Prime Ministers' statements to the House and in the European Communities series of White Papers on developments in the European Community.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on according to small member states of the European Community similar rights to large member states to act as President of the Community and to chair the Council of Ministers and European summits.

Mrs. Chalker: On acceding to the treaty of Rome the United Kingdom fully accepted its provisions. The treaty states that the office of President of the Council shall be held for a term of six months by each member in turn.

SCOTLAND

Housing

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether he will consider exempting council houses held for the specific purpose of decanting existing tenants during rehabilitation of public sector houses from payment of the standard community charge for a period greater than three months;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the present number of holiday homes and the present number of houses empty for a period in excess of three months in each local government housing authority in Scotland;

(3) if he will estimate the amounts each local government housing authority will require to pay in financial year 1988-89 in standard community charges for empty public sector houses in their area, assuming the level for the personal community charge is that already estimated by Her Majesty's Government as the level necessary in such area to raise the revenue currently raised by domestic rates and also assuming the multiplier in each area is set at a rate of two times the personal community charge.

Mr. Lang: Figures are not available in the form requested. An estimate of the numbers of second homes and of local authority houses empty for a period in excess of three months is set out, for each district and islands council area, in the table. The estimates of second homes are as at 30 June 1986, and those of empty local authority houses are as at 31 March 1987. In both cases they derive from information supplied by local authorities.

Under section 10(8)(b) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, levying authorities (regional and islands councils) have discretion to extend the three-month period during which the standard community charges not payable in respect of unoccupied and unfurnished premises. The amounts of standard community charge which will be payable in respect of empty public sector houses will therefore depend on how levying authorities exercise their discretion. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to make special arrangements for council houses held for decanting. Houses which are uninhabitable because they are undergoing reconstruction already give rise to an exemption from standard community charge liability under the Standard and Collective Community Charges (Scotland) Regulations 1988.

District/Island authorities	*Second homes*	*Local authority houses unoccupied for more than three months*
Berwickshire	184	0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	257	1
Roxburgh	313	11

District/Island authorities	Second homes	Local authority houses unoccupied for more than three months
Tweeddale	200	0
Clackmannan	37	1
Falkirk	125	4
Stirling	162	36
Annandale and Eskdale	171	0
Nithsdale	283	1
Stewartry	478	0
Wigtown	331	0
Dunfermline	68	4
Kirkcaldy	126	19
North East Fife	801	17
Aberdeen City	312	102
Banff and Buchan	393	27
Gordon	355	0
Kincardine and Deeside	293	0
Moray	515	8
Badenoch and Strathspey	565	0
Caithness	205	0
Inverness	304	0
Lochaber	374	0
Nairn	55	0
Ross and Cromarty	663	0
Skye and Lochalsh	527	0
Sutherland	428	0
East Lothian	564	42
Edinburgh City	726	119
Midlothian	44	0
West Lothian	44	4
Argyll and Bute	2,763	9
Bearsden and Milngavie	3	2
Clydebank	35	84
Clydesdale	155	27
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	27	10
Cumnock and Doon Valley	38	7
Cunninghame	1,884	8
Dumbarton	311	20
East Kilbride	42	0
Eastwood	16	0
Glasgow City	674	98
Hamilton	51	56
Inverclyde	84	54
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	70	31
Kyle and Carrick	539	8
Monklands	65	0
Motherwell	16	44
Renfrew	141	105
Strathkelvin	38	7
Angus	599	1
Dundee City	208	249
Perth and Kinross	994	4
Orkney	166	3
Shetland	166	4
Western Isles	460	9
Scotland Total	19,446	1,236

Cleaning and Catering Contracts

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the number of staff monitoring cleaning and catering contracts.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Nurses

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many nurses in Scotland will be on a lower level of salary than they are at present as a result of the new grading structure.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. All nurses will receive a pay award of at least 4 per cent. as from 1 April this year and the range of increase, following implementation of the new clinical grading structure, will be up to 33·6 per cent. or even higher in some cases. Where, exceptionally, an individual's post is regraded to a level which attracts a salary lower than that formerly earned, his or her salary will be protected at the 1 April level, including the 4 per cent. pay rise.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the health boards asked to revise their nurses' clinical grading profiles; and if he will give the reasons why such revisions were asked for.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No health board has been asked to revise its nurses' clinical grading profile.

Solicitors

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what conclusions he has reached on the responses to his discussion paper on the solicitor profession in Scotland, issued in November 1987.

Mr. Rifkind: Some of the proposals published in my discussion paper, "The Practice of the Solicitor Profession in Scotland," have already been given effect in the Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1988. I am considering responses to the other proposals and I also intend to seek views early in 1989 on further proposals on the future work and organisation of the legal profession in Scotland.

Prisons (Reports)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has received from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland his reports on Friarton prison and Penninghame prison.

Mr. Rifkind: I have received from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland his reports on his inspections of Friarton prison and Penninghame prison. I have today placed copies of the reports, including my responses, in the Library, and I have sent a copy to the Members in whose constituencies the establishments are located, to the chairman of the Scottish parliamentary all-party penal affairs group, and to other interested bodies. Copies may also be purchased from my Department.

Urban Policy

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made by the partnerships in taking forward the Government's initiative in the four peripheral estates referred to in his statement on 29 March, *Official Report*, column 903.

Mr. Rifkind: Partnerships have been established in each of the four estates chosen under the initiative. Work on the production of strategies for the regeneration of each estate is now under way. In order to further the work of the partnerships, I propose to make provision of £300,000 this year to pump-prime desirable local projects, to give information about the initiative to residents in the four estates, and to meet the costs of studies which will enable the strategies to be monitored and evaluated. Parliamentary approval to these payments will be sought

in a Supplementary Supply Estimate for the new towns and the urban programme, Scotland Vote (XVI 9). Pending its approval, expenditure estimated at £150,000 is being met by a repayable advance already issued from the contingencies fund. For future years, further funding will be sought in the normal course of Supply Estimates.

WALES

Physically Handicapped Persons

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to launch an all-Wales strategy for the physically handicapped.

Mr. Grist: Our officials are currently considering provision for the physically handicapped in Wales.

Bathing Waters

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library *(a)* a list of all bathing beaches in Wales that complied in 1988 with the EEC directive on bathing waters and *(b)* a list of those that did not.

Mr. Grist: The data collected by the water authorities during the 1988 bathing season are not due to be submitted to the Department until the end of November. In due course I shall, in conjunction with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, arrange for a copy of the results to be placed in the Library.

Pont Abraham—Carmarthen Link

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the expected starting date for the construction of the dual carriageway link between Pont Abraham and Carmarthen.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: All but three miles of the A48 between Pont Abraham and Carmarthen is already dual carriageway. The starting date for the remaining Nant-y-Caws-Coed Hirion section is under review.

University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number and categories of posts deemed to be required to staff the new paediatric cardiology department at the University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff.

Mr. Grist: The Department has approved in principle the proposals of South Glamorgan health authority for the development of a paediatric cardiac unit at the University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff. The numbers and categories of staff posts are currently being assessed by the authority and will be reviewed by the Department in the light of the report of the cardiology committee of the Royal College of Physicians and other developments.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library details of the advertisements that have been placed in seeking to fill the newly created posts for paediatric cardiology at the University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff, together with the responses received and appointments made.

Mr. Grist: Advertisements for the post of consultant paediatric cardiologist at the University Hospital of Wales were placed by South Glamorgan health authority with the *British Medical Journal* and the *Lancet* and appeared in those journals on 4 April 1987 and 13 February 1988. No appointment was made.

The information requested as to responses received is not held centrally.

Housing for Senior Management

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to amend circular 30/86, "Housing for Senior Management", in line with the contents of circular 44/87.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to amend circular 30/86, "Housing for Senior Management", which continues in force.

Gipsy Sites

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects his decision to be made regarding the proposed gipsy site on Fairwood Common, Gower, Swansea.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend expects to be in a position to announce his decision by the end of November.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit the proposed Clwyd county council permanent site for itinerants at Queensferry and Rockcliffe in the district of Alyn and Deeside; if he will meet the town councils of Queensferry and Connah's Quay and the district council of Alyn and Deeside to receive responses on the reaction of residents and councillors concerning the proposed sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: No.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future organisation of the Welsh Development Agency; what is his policy towards maintaining the free standing and unmerged status of the Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have no plans to change the present status of the Welsh Development Agency. The Agency's enterprise promotion activities will be further co-ordinated with industrial training in Wales as part of the longer term arrangements being developed following the withdrawal of the Training Commission's responsibilities in that area.

Advance Factories

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will sanction the building of six 15,000 sq. ft. advance factories at Deeside industrial park; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will meet the Deeside Enterprise Trust, Clwyd to discuss with the trust members and the Alyn-Deeside council the case for more advance factories on Deeside industrial park; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Within the framework of a property development programme agreed annually by me, the

Welsh Development Agency has operational responsibility for determining the number and size of advance factories built in individual locations in Wales. In dong so it takes account of the views of interested bodies. The case for more advance factories on Deeside industrial park should therefore be made direct to the agency.

Toxic Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what advice was sought by his Department from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution over plans by the owners of the Karin B cargo vessel to offload its cargo of 2,000 tonnes of toxic waste at Neath.

Mr. Grist: My Department was in touch with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution from the time it was informed of the plans.

Homes for the Elderly (Leasing)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy regarding the leasing out by county authorities of county council homes for the elderly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: It is for local authorities in making provision for the residential care of elderly people to make such arrangements with private and voluntary agencies as seem to them best to meet local needs and circumstances.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has been notified by Clwyd county council of plans to lease to private companies some of the Clwyd county council homes for the elderly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: No.

HEALTH

Dental Services

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what are the current calculations of his Department as to future dental manpower needs in the United Kingdom;

(2) how many registered dentists there are currently practising in the general dental service in England and Wales; and how many are on the dental register.

Mrs. Currie: The total number of general dental practitioners providing general dental services in England and Wales as at 30 September 1988 was 15,868. The number of dentists on the United Kingdom dental register at 31 January 1988 was 25,286. Many dentists remain on the register after retirement while others are taking career breaks.

The Department published in 1987 its projections of supply and demand for dental manpower in the report "Dental Manpower". A copy is available in the Library. The report recommended that in order to achieve a desirable level of supply it is necessary to reduce the intake to United Kingdom dental schools by 10 per cent. The Government have accepted that recommendation.

Nurses

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of places available to state enrolled nurses to convert to registered general nurses in 1987, 1988 and 1989; what is the total number of applications received for these courses; what is the average waiting time for successful applicants; and if there are any plans to increase the number of places available for state enrolled nurses wishing to undertake the conversion courses to registered general nurses.

Mr. Mellor: Not all the information required is available centrally.

Since April 1986, the number of schools of nursing approved by the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting to run the 52-week enrolled nurse to registered general nurse conversion course has increased from three to 83. We understand from regional health authorities that, as at the end of August, a further 26 courses were in the planning stage. In addition, there is a smaller number of courses enabling enrolled nurses to convert to registered mental nurse or registered nurse for the mentally handicapped.

The United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting has recently published consultative proposals for more flexible modes of conversion, which we welcome. In addition, as part of their initial implementation plans for the Project 2000 proposals for the reform of nurse education and training, health authorities have been asked to produce plans and targets for further enrolled nurse conversion.

Lithotripters

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the number and location of lithotripters in use in the National Health Service, the capital and revenue costs of a lithotripter, the number of patients each lithotripter can treat in the course of a year, and the cost per patient of the alternative surgical and other treatments to lithotripsy.

Mrs. Currie: I am aware of six extra corporeal shock wave lithotripters in use within the National Health Service in England. These are located at:

The General Infirmary, Leeds
The Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield
St. Peter's Hospital, London
St. Thomas's Hospital, London
Southmead Hospital, Bristol
Withington Hospital, Manchester

There are also facilities in Scotland, which are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and in the private sector.

The detailed information requested is not available centrally.

Nuclear Plants

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been undertaken by his Department to ascertain if there are any causal links between the discharge of toxic wastes containing the micro-organisms desulfovibrios from the nuclear fuel reprocessing plants at Sellafield and Dounreay, and the incidences of unusually high childhood leukaemias found in the vicinity of those plants.

Mrs. Currie: The Department has not undertaken or funded studies in this area. Any specific research proposals eligible for funding by the Department would be considered on their merits.

Nurses Pay

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are being made to handle appeals over post allocations in the new nurses' pay structure.

Mr. Mellor: Appeals against grading decisions will be determined under the terms of the agreement set out in section 32 of the "General Whitley Council Conditions of Service Handbook," a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish his definition of the term "continued responsibility" in relation to sisters in charge of hospital wards in the new nurses' pay structure.

Mr. Mellor: The term "continuing responsibility" is defined in annex D of the management guidance on implementation of the new grading structure for nurses and midwives (EL(88)P67) which the Department issued to health authorities in May. A copy of the guidance is in the Library.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide health authorities with additional funds to meet the cost of any successful appeals against post allocations in the new nurses pay structure.

Mr. Mellor: The funds allocated to health authorities are intended to cover all pay costs arising in the current financial year, including any costs arising from successful appeals about pay or grading.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for health if nurses will be graded in the new pay structure by the job they were doing on 1 April.

Mr. Mellor: Nurses will be assimilated to the new structure on the basis of their duties and responsibilities at 1 April 1988.

Clinical Grading

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the clinical grading profile for each district health authority.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. I will do so as soon as possible.

Private Residential Care

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to transfer the monitoring of private residential care to social services departments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Local social services authorities are already responsible for registering and inspecting private and voluntary residential care homes under part I of the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Children

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish estimates of the number of families with dependent children, distinguishing between *(a)* married couples, *(b)* unmarried couples and *(c)* lone parents, and also showing the number of families where one parent is not the natural parent.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that not all the information requested is available. The estimated numbers of families with dependent children in Great Britain in 1985 were as follows:

Type of family with dependent children[1]	*Estimated Number (millions)*
Married Couples (including those stating they were living as a married couple)	6·3
Lone Parents (including any who were cohabiting but did not state they were living as a married couple)	1·0
TOTAL	7·3

Source: 1985 Labour Force Survey

[1] Dependent children are those aged under 19 years, never married and either in full time education or else on a Government scheme.

ENVIRONMENT

Industrial Development (Rural Areas)

61. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his plans for the development of industry in rural areas.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government's aim is to encourage growth and diversification in the rural economy in ways that will enhance the quality of life in rural communities and conserve our heritage. Various forms of assistance are available for that purpose, in particular from the Rural Development Commission.

Asbestos Fibres (Commons Court)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make an assessment of the level of asbestos fibres in the air of Commons Court.

Mr. Chope: After completion of work to remove the asbestos in this part of the House, air sampling test were undertaken in over 40 locations on five separate dates between 26 August and 9 September 1988. On each occasion the reading was below the minimum safety level, that is less than 0·01 fibres/ml.

Water Supplies

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the proportion of sampled water supplies in England which are found to be unfit.

Mr. Moynihan: All public supplies of drinking water in the United Kingdom are safe to drink. A number of supplies regularly exceed limits set by the EC drinking water directive for certain parameters, but medical advisers consider that these supplies do not constitute a danger to public health.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans the Northumbria water authority has to take over the statutory water companies in the northern region; and what assessment he has made of the implications of this for the Government's privatisation proposals.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend is not aware of any plans for such a takeover.

Local Structure Plans

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local structure plans were approved since May 1986; and what was *(a)* the number of homes proposed by the local authority and *(b)* the number of homes finally approved.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), the then Minister for Housing and Planning on 14 July this year, *Official Report*, columns *297-98*. Since that date, no further structure plans or alterations have been approved by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local structure plans were approved between May 1979 and January 1983; and what was *(a)* the number of homes proposed by the local authority and *(b)* the number of homes finally approved.

Mr. Trippier: The structure plans, including alterations and replacement plans, that were approved between May 1979 and January 1983 are listed in the table. Details of the submitted and approved housing provisions for those plans could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Structure plans approved between May 1979 and January 1983

Structure plan	*Date of approval*
Bedfordshire	January 1980
Central Berkshire	April 1980
East Berkshire	April 1980
Buckinghamshire	December 1979
Cambridgeshire	August 1980
Cheshire	July 1979
Cleveland (Hartlepool)	March 1980
Cleveland (East, West and Teesside) alts. No. 1	December 1979
Cornwall	July 1981
Coventry alt. No. 1	August 1979
Derbyshire	July 1980
Derbyshire alt. No. 1	December 1981
Devon	April 1981
South East Dorset	February 1980
Durham	January 1981
Essex	March 1982
Gloucestershire	September 1981
North East Hampshire	October 1980
Mid Hampshire	September 1980
South West Hampshire	September 1982
Hertfordshire	September 1979
Kent	March 1980
North East Lancashire	November 1979
Leicestershire (Transport) alt. No. 1	February 1980
Lincolnshire	November 1981
Greater Manchester	March 1981
Merseyside	November 1980
West Midlands replacement	March 1982
Norfolk	December 1979
Norfolk alt. No.1	October 1981
Norfolk alt. No.2	December 1982
Norfolk alt. No. 3	December 1982
Norfolk alt. No. 4	December 1982
Northamptonshire	January 1980
Northumberland	September 1980
Nottinghamshire	July 1980
Oxfordshire (Minerals) alt. No. 1	October 1982
Peak District National Park	December 1979
Rutland	December 1979
Shropshire	February 1980
Somerset	February 1982
Staffordshire alt. No. 1	December 1979
Suffolk	August 1979
Surrey	April 1980
East Sussex alt. No. 1	September 1980
East Sussex alt. No. 2	September 1982
West Sussex	June 1980
Tyne and Wear	September 1981
Warwickshire alts. Nos. 1 and 2	August 1979
Warwickshire alt. No. 3	June 1982
North East Wiltshire	November 1981
West Wiltshire	May 1981
South Wiltshire	July 1980
Worcestershire alt. No. 1	March 1980
North Yorkshire	November 1980
West Yorkshire	July 1980
South Yorkshire	December 1979

Drugs Testing

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will meet the chairman of the Sports Council to discuss the compulsory drugs testing of all athletes before the next world games, Commonwealth games and Olympic games.

Mr. Moynihan: I meet the chairman of the Sports Council regularly to discuss all matters of mutual interest, including drug abuse in athletics and other sports; and my Department and the Sports Council keep in close contact on this issue.

The Government attach great importance to combating drug abuse in sport. The United Kingdom now has a comprehensive and independent drug testing regime, administered by the Sports Council, and we are encouraging other countries to adopt equally effective measures. Among other initiatives, the United Kingdom is taking the lead in promoting a European convention on drug abuse in sport.

London Docklands

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information is available to the London Docklands development corporation as to how many workers are currently employed on-site at Canary wharf; and how many of these are residents of the three docklands boroughs.

Mr. Trippier: As of 17 October, 831 workers were employed on-site at Canary wharf. Of these, around 160 were residents of the three docklands boroughs.

River Pollution

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of contracts to eliminate pollutants from the River Tyne, Wear and Tees.

Mr. Moynihan: The Northumbrian water authority is engaged in schemes for the Tyne and Tees aimed at securing improvements in water quality both through investment in new sewerage and sewage treatment facilities and by action to reduce the amounts of industrial and trade effluents discharged to rivers and sewers. As a result of recent improvements, the Tyne has now become one of our best salmon rivers. The authority is on course to meet its short term objectives for the river Tees by 1990—involving the elimination of visual nuisance and smell—although further major investment by the water authority and private industry will be needed to achieve longer-term aims related to the passage of migratory fish. The Wear estuary already meets its long term objectives although the authority plans further investment to replace unsatisfactory outfalls. However contractural arrangements on work for all three rivers are matters for the authority.

Building Industry Contracts

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the recommendations of the working party on building industry contracts.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to my Department's news release of 28 July, in which I announced the Government's detailed response to the report of the Beat the Cowboys working party. A copy of the news release is in the Library of the House.

Childhood Leukaemias

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has evaluated the research work done by Professor Derek Ellwood at the University of Durham and Dr. Jim Watson of Southampton university on the relationship between the discharge of the desulfovibrios micro-organism in toxic waste streams at the nuclear plants at Dounreay and Sellafield, the uptake of radiotoxic nucleides such as plutonium by the gut wall, and incidences of childhood leukaemias above the statistical norm in the vicinities of the two nuclear plants.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We understand that Professor Ellwood and Dr. Watson have not, in the course of their work, considered the uptake of plutonium or any other radionuclide.

Nuclear Waste Disposal

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his departmental research programme into nuclear waste disposal includes evaluation of the laser photo-acoustic spectroscopy technique under development at United States Department of Energy laboratories at Argonne.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The development and application of laser induced photoacoustic spectroscopy has formed part of the radioactive waste management research programme of the Department of the Environment since 1985.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the criticisms of the current nucelar waste disposal strategy in the latest annual report from the radioactive waste management advisory committee.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We take careful note of views expressed in the annual reports of the radioactive waste management advisory committee and discuss significant issues with the chairman of the committee as appropriate. The ninth annual report was published on 28 July and copies were placed in the Library of the House.

European Commission (Environmental Research)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current annual level of financial commitment by the European Commission to research on *(a)* ozone layer depletion, *(b)* the greenhouse effect and its relation to power plant development, *(c)* nuclear waste and nuclear plant decommissioning and *(d)* liquid pollution of the North sea by toxic wastes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The European Commission does not publish a breakdown of all European Community research expenditure at this level of detail. Research on ozone layer depletion, the greenhouse effect, and marine pollution are all covered in the environment programme.

Expenditure figures (payment appropriations) published in the European Community budget for 1988 for relevant research programmes are as follows (converted to £ sterling at the rate 1 European unit of account = £0·66p):

	£ million
Environment	22·98
Radioactive Waste Management	[1]23·48
Decommissioning of Nuclear Power Stations	1·78

[1] Includes expenditure at the Communities' own Joint Research Centre on Nuclear Fission research, only part of which is concerned with radioactive waste management.

Karin B

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department first learned of the intention of the owners of the German registered Karin B cargo ship to dock and unload its 2,000 tonnes of chemical waste at Neath; what was his Department's response; and how many meetings have been subsequently held with *(a)* the Institute of Wastes Management *(b)* the National Association of Waste Disposal Contractors and *(c)* officials of the environment directorate of the European Commission with regard to the destination of the toxic cargo on the Karin B.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My Department learnt of the proposal for Karin B to dock at Neath on 26 August. There have been subsequent meetings with IWM and NAWDC as part of the normal round of business in waste management and the Karin B incident was among the topics discussed. There have been no meetings with the EC Commission on this matter.

Hazardous Wastes

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what input has been made by United

Kingdom officials into the United Nations environment programme meetings in February, June and September to discuss the formulation of an international convention to control the movement of 44 types of hazardous wastes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: United Kingdom officials are participating fully in the development of an effective international convention by UNEP, which takes into account related work already done in the EC and OECD.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to obtain a copy of the transcript of the comments made by the European Economic Community Environment Commissioner on BBC Radio 4's "The World At One" on 30 August concerning the non-implementation of the European Community directive on transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste; and if he will make a statement on the criticisms of Her Majesty's Government by the commissioner.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have not yet seen the transcript of the Commissioner's comments concerning directive 84/631/EEC but the necessary regulations were laid in Parliament on 14 September. The majority of other member states have yet to implement the directive.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his Department's consultation paper on special hazardous wastes; and to whom he expects to circulate the paper.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We plan to issue a consultation paper reviewing the special waste regulations early in 1989 and to consult the widest possible range of organisations with interests in this matter.

Pollution Inspectors

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has any plans to increase the resources available to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in response to the increase in the amount of hazardous waste being imported into the United Kingdom for disposal;

(2) if he has any plans to increase the number of hazardous waste inspectors employed by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution;

(3) by what criteria the establishment level of inspectors employed by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to cover England and Wales is determined.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The manpower and other resources allocated to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution are kept under continual review in the light of current circumstances and priorities.

Organic and Chlorinated Solvents

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what international regulations and recommendations exist to cover the transfrontier transport and disposal of organic and chlorinated solvents.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Transfrontier transport of organic and chlorinated solvents which are dangerous goods is subject to regulation under international transport conventions covering carriage by road, rail, sea and air and the United Nations recommendations on the transport of dangerous goods. Disposal of these materials which are toxic and dangerous waste is covered by the provisions of EC directive 78/319/EEC. They are not subject to the prenotification and acknowledgement procedures contained in the EC directives on the transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste but, in the United Kingdom, movement is controlled under the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980.

Aquatic Environment (Pollution)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the organisations to which the "Red List" consultation paper on pollution control for the aquatic environment, published on 28 July has been sent and the full list of 26 substances and their comparative toxicity, persistence and capacity for bio-accumulation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The "Red List" consultation paper was sent to some 250 organisations in the water, environmental, agricultural and industrial sectors as well as other Government Departments and foreign Governments. Since then, approximately 250 other organisations and individuals have been sent copies on request.

The table sets out the comparative toxicity, persistence and capacity for bio-accumulation of the 26 provisional "Red List" substances:

Red list substances: an indication of their aquatic toxicity, persistence in water and bioaccumulation potential

	[1] *Acute toxicity Aquatic organisms*	[2] *Half life in water*	[3] *Bioconcentration factor or octanol water partition coefficient*
Mercury	0·002	n.a.	n.a.
Cadmium	0·001	n.a.	n.a.
Gamma Hexachlorocyclohexane (Lindane)	0·0034	450	700
DDT	0·0024	1,800	84,500
Pentachlorophenol	0·022	10	776
Hexachlorobenzene	12·0	1·8	18,620
Hexachlorobutadiene	0·09	1·5	17,000
Aldrin	0·001	3,600	141,000
Dieldrin	0·0005	720	19,000
Endrin	0·00008	5,040	13,000
Chloroprene	1·0	90	*0·57
3 Chlorotoluene	1·0	1,800	*3·28
PCBs	0·0077	3,000	47,000
Triorganotin Compounds	0·0024	—	6,000
Dichlorvos	0·00007	23	*1·4
Trifluralin	0·041	60	4,570

	[1] Acute toxicity Aquatic organisms	[2] Half life in water	[3] Bioconcentration factor or octanol water partition coefficient
Chloroform	13·0	1·2	6
Carbon Tetrachloride	27·0	1·2	30
1, 2-Dichloroethane	65·0	1·2	2
Trichlorobenzene	0·45	30	2,800
Azinphosmethyl	0·0001	30	*2·99
Fenitrothion	0·004	30	250
Malathion	0·00076	1·5	*2·89
Endosulfan	0·00009	7·5	1,300
Atrazine	0·6	30	*2·7
Simazine	1·0	25·7	1,800
Dieldrin	0·0005	720	19,000

[1] These figures are the lowest acute toxic values found for the substances, in milligrammes per litre. They give an indication of the order of the acute toxicity of the substances under laboratory conditions and may not reflect the substances' toxicity in the water environment.
[2] These figures, quoted in days, give an idea of the substances' persistence in water. They are often derived from a number of reports and so constitute the "best single figure estimate".
[3] The figures marked * are log octanal/water partition coefficient (Log P) values and have been quoted where there is not a bioconcentration factor available. A Log P of 3 corresponds very roughly to a bioconcentration factor of 1,000.

Ravens (North Cumbria)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has made any evaluation of the effects on the breeding cycle of ravens in North Cumbria from their consumption of carrion from flocks of sheep with high uptake of radioactivity from the Chernobyl fallout.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No specific evaluation of the effects on ravens of sheep carrion has been made. We are advised that the declining population of this species is thought to be primarily caused by loss of habitat and food supply resulting from changing agricultural practices and improved livestock management.

Darenth Park Inquiry

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate when he is likely to publish his decision on the Darenth Park hospital site planning inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend hopes to issue his decision shortly.

Swan Farm, Ash-cum-Ridley

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate when he is likely to publish his decision on the Swan Farm, Ash-cum-Ridley planning inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend hopes to issue his decision shortly.

Kent Structure Plan

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has now received the revised structure plan, as amended by Kent county council; and if he will indicate when he is likely to issue his decision upon the proposed revision.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend received the second review and alterations to the Kent structure plan on 15 January 1988. An examination in public was held in July and August by an independent panel under the chairmanship of Professor Gerald Smart. Their report is expected before the end of the year. My right hon. Friend's response to the proposed alterations will be issued as soon as possible after that.

Planning Appeals (Chelmsford)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount of money awarded to appellants arising from successful planning appeals to his Department, against Chelmsford borough council, in each of the last five financial years and during the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: In making awards of costs to parties in planning proceedings, my right hon. Friend and planning inspectors are concerned with whether another party's behaviour has caused the applicant for an award to incur costs unreasonably. Determinations are not given in cash amounts and it is for the parties to negotiate about the sum payable after any award has been made. Consequently, I regret that although the council should have the information requested, it is not available to the Department.

Bradford Council (Staff Conditions)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about arrangements outlined in the document entitled, "Bradford metropolitan district council—A Model for the 1990s" to vary national pay and conditions agreements of local government staff.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None.

Planning Permission

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward an amendment to planning law to provide that failure to obtain planning permission should be an offence.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend is aware of some support for such an amendment to the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. This is one of the matters to be considered by Mr. Robert Carnwath QC, in his current review of planning authorities' enforcement powers, and my right hon. Friend therefore prefers to await any recommendation Mr. Carnwath may make in his report early in the new year.

Planning Authorities (Enforcement Powers)

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce the result of his review of planning authorities' enforcement powers.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend hopes to receive Mr. Robert Carnwath's report on his review of enforcement powers early in the new year; and to announce his response to it shortly afterwards.

Acid Pollution

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish the report on strategies to reduce acid pollution, prepared for his Department by Technica; and whether that report will be placed in the Library.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The report to which the hon. Member refers was prepared by the Fellowship of Engineering as a commentary on its manual of acidic emission abatement technologies, a copy of which was placed in the Library last year. The commentary was supplied by the Fellowship of Engineering on a commercial, in confidence basis and there are no plans to publish it.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what arrangements will be made, in the light of the proposed water privatisation, to ensure the continuation of rights of access to reservoirs for those wishing to pursue passive leisure activities;

(2) what measures he intends to take, in the light of the proposed water privatisation, to protect the interests of those wishing to use the water-gathering grounds as a leisure area.

Mr. Moynihan: The private water companies will inherit the statutory duties of the water authorities in respect of public access to, and recreational use of their lands and waters. They will also be subject to a new code of practice on recreation and access, which will give guidance on discharging this duty.

Inner Area Programme

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities that supplied information to his Department too late to qualify for inner area programme funding.

Mr. Trippier: Following a review in 1986, a total of 57 local authorities with the highest levels of urban deprivation were each invited to submit annual inner area programmes. All 57 authorities submitted programmes for 1988-89, and all have now been approved.

Bathing Beaches

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received from regional water authorities with regard to the implications of upgrading bathing beaches.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 21 October 1988]:* The financial implications of upgrading bathing waters have been considered in this year's round of corporate plan discussions with water authorities. These discussions took place against the background of a request to the industry to examine the feasibility of accelerating investment programmes to achieve compliance with the EC bathing water directive.

Water Supply Costs

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the average increases in the cost to *(a)* domestic and *(b)* commercial consumers of water supplies in percentages in (i) Belgium, (ii) Denmark, (iii) France, (iv) the Federal Republic of Germany, (v) The Netherlands, (vi) Norway, (vii) Spain, (viii) Sweden and (ix) the United Kingdom for each year since 1974.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* The increases in domestic water charges in England and Wales are shown in the table.

Domestic water supplies (including sewerage)
Annual percentage increase 1975-76 to 1987-88
England and Wales

Year	*Average household bills £'s*	*Percentage increase*
1975-76	27·44	—
1976-77	34·64	26·24
1977-78	36·01	3·95
1978-79	38·00	5·53
1979-80	41·98	10·47
1980-81	51·98	23·82
1981-82	60·01	15·45
1982-83	67·09	11·80
1983-84	72·00	7·32
1984-85	76·85	6·74
1985-86	86·00	11·91
1986-87	92·84	7·95
1987-88	98·81	6·43
1988-89	107·18	8·47

Source: Waterfacts.

Information about increases in other countries is not readily available.

Mersey Basin

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he has taken to assist the cleaning-up of the environment of the Mersey basin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* In 1983 the Department set up the Mersey basin campaign to co-ordinate a multi-million pound regeneration of the Mersey basin involving the North West water authority, central and local government and business and voluntary organisations.

The long-term aims of the campaign are to improve the worst parts of the river system to fair condition (Class 2 in the national classification scheme) and to upgrade the existing class 2 waters to class 1 (good quality). The campaign also seeks to improve the landward environment of the Mersey.

The project is expected to take some 25 years to complete with estimated capital expenditure around £4 billion in total—£2·5 billion on water quality improvements and £1·5 billion for landward improvements. The

campaign has been underpinned with aid from the European regional development fund. A range of resources is being brought to bear on the landward side, and in particular the Department's urban programme and derelict land grant. The Department is also giving direct assistance, along with industry, to the very worthwhile efforts of the voluntary sector in carrying out a series of waterside projects.

In these ways, substantial progress is being made in what is the largest clean-up programme of its kind in the country.

Water Contamination (Report)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Halcrow report on water contamination will be published.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* We expect to publish the report shortly.

Drinking Water

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the sources of drinking water supply in Britain with nitrate content exceeding the European Community limit.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* A number of sources that feed public supplies regularly exceed the EC drinking water directive limit for nitrate. However, many of these are blended with water of lower nitrate content before being put into supply. Detailed information on them is not held by the Department.

The following public supplies regularly exceed the nitrate limit:

Water Authority area and area of supply

Anglian
- Barrow
- Dersingham and Snettisham
- Docking
- Heacham and Hunstanton
- Moulton and Kennet
- Wisbech
- Habrough—part of Lincolnshire
- Aswarby—Saltersford—part of Lincolnshire
- Binbrook—part of Lincolnshire
- Bully Hill—Barnoldby—part of Lincolnshire
- Bully Hill—Otby—part of Lincolnshire
- Clay Hill—Drove Lane, Sleaford
- Sleaford
- Potterhanworth—part of Lincolnshire
- Saltersford
- Waneham Bridge—Saltersford
- Ely and Littleport
- Habrough—Covenham, part of Cleethorpes
- Browthorpe, part of Norwich
- Heigham—Thorpe, part of Norwich
- Otby
- Otby—Waddingham
- Little London
- Winterton Holmes—Barrow
- Branston Booths
- Waddingham—Glentham—Ulceby
- Waddingham—Glentham—Ulceby—Barrow

Severn Trent
- Parts of Leamington, Kenilworth, Warwick and Stratford District Council
- Parts of South Derbyshire District Council
- Part of Stourbridge, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (Coalbournbrook source)
- Part of Wychavon District Council area
- Parts of Wychavon District Council
- Malvern Hills and Wyre Forest District Council
- Parts of Wrekin District Council (Lilleshall source)
- Parts of Worksop and Mansfield Woodhouse
- Part of South Shropshire District Council
- Part of Wrekin District Council (Puleston Bridge source)
- Parts of Newark District Council (Farnsfield source)
- Parts of Nottingham County Council area primarily Huchnall
- Bromley Lane area of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

South Staffordshire Waterworks Company
- Parts of Lichfield District Council Sutton Coldfield area
- North Warwickshire County Council and Walsall Metropolitan area
- Parts of Kingswinford, Pensnett and Brierley Hill Dudley Metropolitan area

South West
- St. Mary's Island

Thames
Lee Valley Water Company
- Part of Luton

NATIONAL FINANCE

Local Pay Additions

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will provide the latest available figures for the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency for the *(a)* numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions, by grade, *(b)* location of those offices awarding local pay additions and *(c)* annual cost;

(2) if he will provide the latest available figures for Her Majesty's Treasury for *(a)* numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions, by grade, *(b)* location of those offices awarding local pay additions and *(c)* annual cost.

Mr. Peter Brooke: The following is the information:

Local pay additions (LPA)

	Her Majesty's Treasury (inclusive of CCTA)	*CCTA only*
(a) Number of staff receiving LPA by grade:		
Executive Officer	321	29
Administrative Officer	439	26
Administrative Assistant	152	5
Senior Personal Secretary	16	1
Personal Secretary	103	8
Typing Manager	8	1
Typist	81	0
(b) Location of offices paying LPA	London Chessington Basingstoke	London
(c) Estimated annual cost of LPA	£524,600	£33,100

Hansard

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many copies of *(a)* Lords weekly *Hansard*, *(b)* Lords daily *Hansard* and *(c)* Lords weekly *Hansard* index were sold by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in 1987 and to date in 1988; and what were the figures for each year since 1970;

(2) how many bound volumes of *(a)* Commons and *(b)* Lords bound volumes of *Hansard* were sold by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in 1987 and to date in 1988 and what were the figures for each year since 1970;

(3) how many copies of *(a)* Commons weekly *Hansard*, *(b)* Commons daily *Hansard* and *(c)* Commons weekly *Hansard* index were sold by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in 1987 and to date in 1988, and what were the figures for each year since 1970.

Mr. Lilley: The estimated average number of copies sold per issue for each year since 1980 is given in the table. I regret that figures for earlier years are no longer available.

	House of Commons				*House of Lords*			
	Daily	*Weekly*	*Index*[1]	*Volume*	*Daily*	*Weekly*	*Weekly Index*	*Volume*
1980	6,169	1,790	1,213	1,113	3,855	731	434	790
1981	5,812	1,708	1,213	1,110	3,688	706	434	700
1982	5,391	1,488	1,213	1,028	3,295	645	434	702
1983	5,221	1,488	1,213	1,026	3,234	645	434	694
1984	5,005	1,469	1,197	1,026	3,290	637	434	663
1985	4,925	1,384	1,121	997	3,038	597	436	673
1986	4,713	1,384	1,121	938	3,030	597	436	616
1987	4,638	1,380	1,001	939	2,930	593	402	590
1988[2]	4,562	1,410	982	875	2,712	638	402	549

[1] Weekly until 1984; thereafter fortnightly.
[2] To date.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many hon. Members are currently provided with *(a)* Commons weekly *Hansard*, *(b)* Commons bound volumes, *(c)* Commons Weekly *Hansard* Index, *(d)* Commons daily *Hansard*, *(e)* Lords daily *Hansard*, *(f)* Lords weekly *Hansard* and *(g)* Lords bound volumes by Her Majesty's Stationery Office; and what were the figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lilley: Some hon. Members receive copies of *Hansard* direct from Her Majesty's Stationery Office and copies are also made available via the Vote Office. The current figures are as follows:

	Number of copies supplied		
	Direct	*To the Vote Office*	*Total*
(a) Commons Weekly	395	35	430
(b) Commons Volume	391	—	391
(c) Commons Weekly Index	377	35	412
(d) Commons Daily	205	[1]1,220	1,425
(e) Lords Daily	19	[1]270	289
(f) Lords Weekly	11	15	26
(g) Lords Volume	15	—	15

[1] Average.

I regret that comparable details for earlier years could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the current cost of each single bound volume of Commons *Hansard*; what is the amount of subsidy per volume; and what were the figures for each year since 1970;

(2) what is the current cost of each single bound volume of Lords *Hansard*; what is the amount of subsidy per volume; and what were the figures for each year since 1970;

(3) what is the current price per copy of Commons weekly *Hansard*; and what were the figures for each year since 1970;

(4) what is the current price per copy of Lords weekly *Hansard;* and what were the figures for each year since 1970.

Mr. Lilley: The prices agreed in each of the years concerned are given in the table. Figures for the amount of subsidy per issue could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, since the estabishment of the trading fund in 1980 the total Government subsidy has reduced in real terms by 66 per cent.

	House of Commons			*House of Lords*		
	Daily parts	*Weekly parts*	*Volume*	*Daily parts*	*Weekly parts*	*Volume*
1970	2s 3d	7s 0d	various	2s 3d	4s 6d	various

	House of Commons			*House of Lords*		
	Daily parts £	*Weekly parts* £	*Volume* £	*Daily parts* £	*Weekly parts* £	*Volume* £
1971	0·18	0·50	3·75	0·18	0·35	3·40
1972	0·18	0·50	3·75	0·18	0·35	3·40
1973	0·18	0·50	3·75	0·18	0·35	3·40
1974	0·20	0·55	4·15	0·20	0·39	3·75
1975	0·22	0·60	4·65	0·22	0·43	4·20
1976	0·33	0·90	7·00	0·33	0·65	6·30
1977	0·33	0·90	7·00	0·33	0·65	6·30
1978	0·40	1·10	8·50	0·40	0·80	7·65
1979	0·45	1·25	9·55	0·45	0·90	8·60
1980	0·80	2·20	16·75	0·80	1·60	15·10
1981	0·80	2·20	16·75	0·80	1·60	15·10
1982	1·00	2·75	21·00	1·00	2·00	18·85
1983	1·50	4·15	31·50	1·50	3·00	28·30
1984	1·95	5·40	40·95	1·95	3·90	36·80
1985	2·50	6·90	52·50	2·50	5·00	47·00
1986	2·95	8·15	62·00	2·95	5·90	55·00
1987	3·70	10·20	65·00	3·25	6·50	57·50
1988[1]	4·35	12·00	68·00	3·60	7·60	60·00

[1] Effective from the start of the 1988-89 session.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Schoolchildren

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many pupils there are at each primary school in the constituency of Newry and Armagh: and how many pupils there are at each secondary and grammar school in the constituency of Newry and Armagh, on the most recent date for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

Primary Schools	Enrolment (at January 1988)
Aghavilly, Armagh	89
Ahorey, Craigavon	38
Anamar, Newry	83
Annaghmore, Craigavon	83
Armagh Christian Brothers', Armagh	467
Armstrong, Armagh	419
Ballynaclosha, Newry	74
Bessbrook, Newry	116
Cabra, Craigavon	37
Carrickrovaddy, Newry	39
Clare, Craigavon	62
Clay, Keady, Armagh	71
Clonalig, Newry	170
Cloughoge, Newry	331
Collegeland, Dungannon	43
Collone, Armagh	116
The Cope, Armagh	90
Cortamlet, Newry	43
Darkley, Armagh	79
Derryhale, Craigavon	87
Drelincourt Infants, Armagh	44
Dromintee, Newry	130
Drumhillery, Armagh	93
Drumsallen, Armagh	40
Foley, Armagh	87
Glassdrummond, Armagh	64
Hamiltonsbawn, Armagh	99
Hardy Memorial, Richill, Armagh	461
Jonesborough, Newry	152
Keady, Armagh	59
Killeen, Newry	104
Killylea, Armagh	77
Kingsmills, Armagh	32
Kinnego, Dungannon	28
Lisdrumchor, Armagh	25
Lislea, Armagh	12
Lisnadill, Armagh	51
Lissummon, Newry	56
Loughgall, Armagh	52
Markethill, Armagh	240
Middletown Boys', Armagh	51
Mount St. Catherine's Covent, Armagh	475
Mountnorris, Armagh	94
Mullaglass, Newry	68
Mullavilly, Craigavon	54
Newry Model, Newry	63
Newtownhamilton, Newry	123
Our Lady's Keady, Armagh	45
Poyntzpass, Newry	80
St. Brigid's, Crossmaglen, Newry	52
St. Brigid's, Belleeks, Newry	87
St. Clare's Convent, Keady, Armagh	290
St. Clare's Convent, Newry	698
St. Colman's Abbey, Newry	788
St. Colmcille's, Armagh	30
St. James', Armagh	51
St. James', Craigavon	76
St. Jarlath's, Dungannon	179
St. Joseph's, Armagh	106
St. Joseph's, Bessbrook, Newry	366
St. Joseph's, Poyntzpass, Newry	91
St. Joseph's, Killeavy, Newry	179
St. Joseph's Convent, Newry	457
St. Laurence's, Newry	55
St. Louis' Convent, Armagh	40
St. Malachy's, Whitecross, Armagh	83
St. Malachy's Boys', Armagh	195
St. Malachy's, Camlough, Newry	301
St. Malachy's, Newry	390
St. Mary's, Tassagh, Armagh	59
St. Mary's, Keady, Armagh	269
St. Mary's, (Barr), Newry	66
St. Mary's, Newry	241
St. Michael's, Mowhan, Armagh	31
St. Michael's, Newry	91
St. Mochua's, Armagh	78
St. Oliver Plunkett, Kilmore, Armagh	90
St. Oliver Plunkett, Newry	74
St. Patrick's Armagh	475
St. Patrick's, Cullyhanna, Newry	287
St. Patrick's Crossmaglen, Newry	330
St. Patrick's, Newry	386
St. Peter's, Newry	289
Salter's Grange, Armagh	14
Tandragee, Craigavon	351
Tullyherron, Armagh	52
Tullymore, Armagh	70
Tullyroan, Dungannon	38
Tullysaran, Armagh	76
Tynan, Armagh	26
Windsor Hill, Newry	241
Secondary Intermediate Schools	
Armagh, Armagh	661
Markethill Junior High, Armagh	432
Newry High, Newry	575
Newtownhamillton, Newry	104
St. Brigid's Boys', Armagh	328
St. Catherine's College, Armagh	836
St. Joseph's, Crossmaglen, Newry	522
St. Joseph's, Newry	539
St. Mary's, Newry	579
St. Patrick's High, Keady, Armagh	824
St. Paul's, Bessbrook, Newry	1,211
Tandragee, Craigavon	286
Grammar Schools	
Armagh Royal, Armagh	596
Christian Brothers, Abbey, Newry	708
Christian Brothers, Armagh (closed 31 August 1988)	[1]348
Our Lady's, Newry	736
Sacred Heart, Newry	744
St. Colman's, Newry	767
St. Patrick's College, Armagh (closed 31 August 1988)	[1]377

[1] Amalgamated 1 September 1988 (now called St. Patrick's Grammar).

ENERGY

Pit Closures

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list in the *Official Report* the pits closed by British Coal since 1 January and the date of closure of each.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The information requested is as follows:

Colliery	Date of closure
Arkwright	22 January 1988
Seafield/Frances	22 January 1988
Ashington	29 January 1988
Lady Windsor/Abercynon	8 February 1988
Abernant	23 February 1988
Linby	11 March 1988
South Kirkby/Riddings	25 March 1988
Mansfield	25 March 1988
Cadley Hill	25 March 1988
Manvers	25 March 1988

Wave Energy

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 10 May, *Official*

Report, column 75, if he will place in the Library copies of the reviews of the costs of offshore wave energy which have been conducted by his Department since the beginning of 1982.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Copies of the reviews are already in the Library of the House.

Nuclear Safety

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what policy considerations underlie the decision to bring United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority reactors under safety and licensing regulations administered by the nuclear installations Inspectorate under the Nuclear Installations and Health and Safety Acts, respectively; and what implications this decision has for manning levels at the nuclear installations inspectorate.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The UKAEA has been and will continue to be fully subject to the powers which Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspectors, including the nuclear installations inspectorate (NII), have under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The decision to licence the authority under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 and 1969 reflects the fact that the authority has now operated for over two years as a trading fund; it is appropriate that its nuclear sites should become subject to licensing in the same way as other commercial sites.

Licensing will be administered by the NII; planning of the future resource needs of the NII is already taking into account the work load which licensing will impose.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has ordered any evaluation within his Department of the implications of papers on the Chernobyl accident presented at the British Association for the Advancement of Science annual conference in Oxford, held in September, for the safety of nuclear plants in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) was represented at senior level at that part of the British Association for the Advancement of Science annual conference to which the hon. Member refers. None of the papers on the Chernobyl accident contained (new) information of significance for nuclear safety in the United Kingdom, beyond that already known to the HSE's nuclear installations inspectorate and the United Kingdom nuclear industry. Any new information that becomes available about the Chernobyl accident continues to be assessed; should any points arise that have implications for the safety of United Kingdom nuclear plant, appropriate action will be taken.

Nuclear Materials Exports

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, *Official Report* column *289*, 27 July, on nuclear materials exports he will set out the security considerations to which he makes reference.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

CEGB Magnox Plant, Oldbury

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when his Department first learnt of the incident at the Central Electricity Generating Board magnox nuclear plant at Oldbury on 13 June 1987, involving the partial loss of electricity supplies to the control systems governing the supply of coolant to the reactor core; what departmental evaluation has been made of the implications for the continued operation of the plant; if he has requested the nuclear installations inspectorate to study the cause of the incident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate was informed at 11.30 on Saturday, 13 June 1987, that reactor 1 had tripped following the failure of one of three phases of the electrical supply to part of the instrumentation. It was subsequently reported in the Oldbury site newsletter of 19 June 1987.

An independent assessment was carried out by the inspectorate and it was concluded that although the fault resulted in a loss of forced coolant circulation for a short period following the reactor shut-down, the reactor's behaviour was entirely as predicted and presented no on or off site hazard. Nevertheless, the fault revealed that improvements in the instrument supply system protection would be prudent and suitable modifications were developed. I understand that those have now been implemented on both reactors at Oldbury which have continued to operate in a satisfactory manner.

A statement on the incident was published by the Health and Safety Executive in its "Statement on Incidents at Nuclear Installations—Second Quarter 1987" on 29 January 1988.

Three Mile Island Nuclear Reactor

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he possesses, and what assessment he has made of its relevance for the United Kingdom nuclear energy programme, concerning the discovery of micro-organisms in the degraded core of the Three Mile Island II nuclear reactor.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Micro-organism growth in stagnant water is a well-known phenomenon. The example of micro-organisms in the degraded core of Three Mile Island II reactor (TMI) is of interest in relation to long-term severe accident management and clean-up. The United Kingdom is kept up to date on this and other aspects of TMI through information exchange agreements with the United States of America.

South African Uranium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if any uranium ore of South African origin was delivered to the United Kingdom for civil use in the period from 1977 to 1984.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No uranium of South African origin has been delivered to the United Kingdom for use in the civil nuclear programme since 1973.

Nuclear Reactors

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on representations made by *(a)* the Government of the Republic of Ireland and *(b)* non-governmental organisations in the Republic of Ireland to the European Commission on the continued operation, or new siting, of respectively *(a)* the British

Nuclear Fuels Sellafield reprocessing site, *(b)* British Nuclear Fuel's Calder Hall military reactors, *(c)* Central Electricity Generating Board magnox reactors at Hinkley A Transfynydd and Wylfa, *(d)* Central Generating Board advanced gas cooled reactors at Heysham and Hinkley 'B' and *(e)* Central Generating Board planned pressurised water reactors at Hinkley C.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Any representation to the European Commission is a matter between those making the representation and the Commission. I have not been informed by the Commission of any such representations.

I am, of course, aware of the general concerns which have been expressed by the Government of the Republic of Ireland and other non-governmental Irish organisations on these questions.

Departmental Safety Inspectorate

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the establishment of his Department's safety inspectorate; and how many posts have been filled in each of the last eight years.

Mr. Parkinson: The information has already been provided in my reply to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) on 25 July 1988 at columns *83-84*.

Since then one vacant post has been filled while four newly recruited inspectors are due to join the Department in the next six weeks.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to report regularly on the status of part-time workers in the statistics printed in the *Employment Gazette*.

Mr. Lee: Part time workers are included in the employment statistics published in the *Employment Gazette*.

In June 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, 25 per cent. of the workforce in employment in Great Britain (9 per cent. of males and 45 per cent. of females) were working part time.

The workforce in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self employed, members of Her Majesty's Forces and participants in work-related Government training programmes. In classifying the workforce between full and part time all programme participants are counted as in part time employment.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the estimated net change in the United Kingdom labour force for each year between 1989 and 2003.

Mr. Lee: The following information was published in an article in the March 1988 edition of the *Employment Gazette* (pages 117-129), a copy of which is in the Library. The table includes projections of the net change in the Great Britain labour force for each year between 1987 and 1995. Projections beyond 1995, or for the United Kingdom, are not available.

Components of change in the civilian labour force in Great Britain

Thousands

			Projections					
	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
MEN								
Age 16 to 24								
Change in labour force	−29	−74	−102	−94	−105	−103	−100	−73
Population effect	−47	−77	−100	−96	−106	−104	−100	−69
Activity rate effect	18	3	−2	1	1	2	0	−4
Age 25 to 54								
Change in labour force	173	142	138	120	109	92	93	81
Population effect	152	148	145	127	116	99	100	89
Activity rate effect	21	−7	−7	−7	−7	−7	−7	−7
Age 55 and over								
Change in labour force	4	−31	−29	−24	−16	−6	−6	−9
Population effect	−14	−16	−15	−11	−3	6	5	2
Activity rate effect	18	−15	−14	−13	−13	−12	−12	−11
All ages								
Change in labour force	149	36	8	2	−12	−17	−14	−1
Population effect	92	55	30	21	7	0	6	22
Activity rate effect	57	−19	−23	−19	−18	−17	−19	−22
WOMEN								
Age 16 to 24								
Change in labour force	−20	−61	−80	−77	−72	−87	−77	−49
Population effect	−46	−73	−90	−92	−83	−97	−85	−56
Activity rate effect	25	12	10	15	11	10	8	6
Age 25 to 54								
Change in labour force	221	189	181	162	139	129	125	120
Population effect	107	109	102	95	80	75	73	69
Activity rate effect	114	79	79	67	59	54	52	51

				Projections				
	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
Age 55 and over								
Change in labour force	27	−12	−9	−6	0	6	8	3
Population effect	−14	−15	−11	−8	−2	4	6	2
Activity rate effect	41	3	3	2	2	2	1	1
All ages								
Change in labour force	228	116	93	79	68	48	56	73
Population effect	47	22	0	−5	−5	−18	−6	15
Activity rate effect	181	94	93	85	72	66	61	58
ALL								
Age 16 to 24								
Change in labour force	−49	−136	−182	−171	−177	−190	−178	−122
Population effect	−93	−150	−190	−187	−189	−202	−185	−124
Activity rate effect	43	14	8	16	13	12	8	2
Age 25 to 54								
Change in labour force	395	330	319	283	248	221	218	201
Population effect	260	258	247	222	196	174	174	158
Activity rate effect	135	73	73	60	52	47	44	43
Age 55 and over								
Change in labour force	31	−43	−37	−30	−16	0	2	−7
Population effect	−28	−31	−26	−19	−5	10	12	3
Activity rate effect	59	−11	−11	−11	−10	−10	−10	−10
All ages								
Change in labour force	377	152	100	81	56	31	42	73
Population effect	140	77	31	16	2	−18	0	37
Activity rate effect	238	75	70	66	54	49	42	36

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the parliamentary contituencies in which the number of people out of work and claiming benefit declined by more than 40 per cent. between August 1984 and August 1988, including in the table for each constituency the total for *(a)* August 1984, *(b)* August 1988 and *(c)* the percentage reduction.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the parliamentary constituencies in Great Britain where the number of unemployed claimants has fallen by 40 per cent. or more between August 1984 and August 1988, together with the number of unemployed in each constituency at the requested dates. The figures are affected by the change in compilation of the count in March 1986 to reduce over recording.

Parliamentary Constituencies with a fall in unemployment of more than 40 per cent. between August 1984 and August 1988

Parliamentary Constituencies	*Unemployed Claimants*		*Change*	*Percentage change*
	August 1984	*August 1988*		
Wantage	2,391	949	−1,442	−60·3
Horsham	2,180	881	−1,299	−59·6
Henley	2,020	819	−1,201	−59·5
Corby	5,914	2,444	−3,470	−58·7
Basingstoke	3,250	1,369	−1,881	−57·9
Tunbridge Wells	2,519	1,069	−1,450	−57·6
Witney	2,646	1,126	−1,520	−57·5
North West Hampshire	2,361	1,046	−1,315	−55·7
Reading West	3,334	1,496	−1,838	−55·1
North West Surrey	2,356	1,058	−1,298	−55·1
Aylesbury	2,741	1,248	−1,493	−54·5
Reigate	2,023	927	−1,096	−54·2
Chertsey and Walton	2,099	963	−1,136	−54·1
Mole Valley	1,726	796	−930	−53·9
West Hertfordshire	3,594	1,670	−1,924	−53·5
Stevenage	4,059	1,896	−2.163	−53·3
Saffron Walden	2,382	1,116	−1,266	−53·2
Gillingham	5,479	2,568	−2,911	−53·1
Mid Sussex	1,991	941	−1,050	−52·7
Newbury	2,650	1,257	−1,393	−52·6
Castle Point	3,430	1,630	−1,800	−52·5
Wealden	1,907	908	−999	−52·4
South West Bedfordshire	3,766	1,795	−1,971	−52·3
Medway	5,264	2,517	−2,747	−52·2
Guildford	2,097	1,008	−1,089	−51·9
Spelthorne	2,328	1,121	−1,207	−51·9
Brentwood and Ongar	2,438	1,175	−1,263	−51·8
Braintree	3,283	1,583	−1,700	−51·8

Parliamentary Constituencies	Unemployed Claimants August 1984	August 1988	Change	Percentage change
South West Surrey	1,661	804	−857	−51·6
Crawley	2,485	1,207	−1,278	−51·4
Chichester	2,278	1,107	−1,171	−51·4
Reading East	3,923	1,908	−2,015	−51·4
East Surry	1,625	791	−834	−51·3
Maidstone	3,525	1,731	−1,794	−50·9
Tonbridge and Malling	2,678	1,318	−1,360	−50·8
Mid Kent	4,837	2,391	−2,446	−50·6
Esher	1,563	774	−789	−50·5
Chesham and Amersham	1,742	868	−874	−50·2
Rochford	2,828	1,413	−1,415	−50·0
Billericay	3,882	1,941	−1,941	−50·0
Oxford West and Abingdon	3,152	1,580	−1,572	−49·9
North Hertfordshire	3,573	1,792	−1,781	49·9
Milton Keynes	6,750	3,423	−3,327	−49·3
Southend West	3,590	1,823	−1,767	−49·2
South West Hertfordshire	2,530	1,285	−1,245	−49·2
Woking	2,387	1,213	−1,174	−49·2
Windsor and Maidenhead	2,612	1,330	−1,282	−49·1
Welwyn Hatfield	3,123	1,595	−1,528	−48·9
Banbury	3,263	1,668	−1,595	−48·9
Sevenoaks	2,416	1,241	−1,175	−48·6
Basildon	6,712	3,453	−3,259	−48·6
Wokingham	1,970	1,025	−945	−48·0
Harlow	4,426	2,304	−2,122	−47·9
East Berkshire	3,196	1,666	−1,530	−47·9
South Colchester and Maldon	4,240	2,214	−2,026	−47·8
Hornchurch	3,047	1,592	−1,455	−47·8
Aldershot	2,971	1,571	−1,400	−47·1
Hertford and Stortford	2,093	1,111	−982	−46·9
Christchurch	2,254	1,197	−1,057	−46·9
Kettering	3,308	1,759	−1,549	−46·8
Arundel	2,786	1,488	−1,298	−46·6
Dagenham	4,311	2,305	−2,006	−46·5
Buckingham	2,561	1,375	−1,186	−46·3
Surbiton	1,554	840	−714	−46·0
Wycombe	2,932	1,586	−1,346	−45·9
Mid Norfolk	2,989	1,622	−1,367	−45·7
Ruislip-Northwood	1,779	966	−813	−45·7
Poole	3,702	2,011	−1,691	−45·7
Northampton North	4,789	2,609	−2,180	−45·5
South East Cambridgeshire	1,892	1,032	−860	−45·5
Harborough	2,566	1,404	−1,162	−45·3
West Gloucestershire	4,609	2,531	−2,078	−45·1
Slough	4,629	2,544	−2,085	−45·0
North Dorset	2,181	1,199	−982	−45·0
North Bedfordshire	4,573	2,515	−2,058	−45·0
Huntingdon	3,511	1,938	−1,573	−44·8
Southend East	4,675	2,586	−2,089	−44·7
Upminster	3,029	1,678	−1,351	−44·6
Hastings and Rye	4,259	2,361	−1,898	−44·6
St. Albans	2,462	1,368	−1,094	−44·4
Stratford-on-Avon	3,314	1,844	−1,470	−44·4
Mid Bedfordshire	2,756	1,536	−1,220	−44·3
Ludlow	3,722	2,076	−1,646	−44·2
Bosworth	3,557	1,987	−1,570	−44·1
South West Cambridgeshire	2,500	1,397	−1,103	−44·1
Beaconsfield	1,700	951	−749	−44·1
Cirencester and Tewkesbury	2,976	1,666	−1,310	−44·0
Wimbledon	2,894	1,622	−1,272	−44·0
Bournemouth East	4,951	2,784	−2,167	−43·8
Epsom and Ewell	1,901	1,071	−830	−43·7
South Suffolk	3,281	1,850	−1,431	−43·6
Bournemouth West	3,896	2,197	−1,699	−43·6
Stamford and Spalding	3,325	1,878	−1,447	−43·5
Oxford East	4,025	2,282	−1,743	−43·3
Blaby	2,915	1,653	−1,262	−43·3
North Colchester	4,129	2,345	−1,784	−43·2
Uxbridge	2,625	1,494	−1,131	−43·1
Leominster	3,192	1,817	−1,375	−43·1
Thurrock	5,822	3,343	−2,479	−42·6
Carshalton and Wallington	2,899	1,665	−1,234	−42·6
The City of London and West	5,423	3,120	−2,303	−42·5
Worcester	5,030	2,894	−2,136	−42·5
Wellingborough	4,111	2,369	−1,742	−42·4
Worthing	2,539	1,469	−1,070	−42·1

Parliamentary Constituencies	Unemployed Claimants August 1984	August 1988	Change	Percentage change
Hertsmere	2,595	1,502	−1,093	−42·1
Croydon Central	3,609	2,091	−1,518	−42·1
Devizes	3,310	1,921	−1,389	−42·0
Rutland and Melton	3,473	2,016	−1,457	−42·0
Central Suffolk	3,097	1,798	−1,299	−41·9
Salisbury	3,208	1,865	−1,343	−41·9
Cambridge	3,554	2,067	−1,487	−41·8
Winchester	2,057	1,197	−860	−41·8
Daventry	2,713	1,579	−1,134	−41·8
Sutton and Cheam	2,029	1 183	−846	−41·7
Aberavon	4,762	2,780	−1,982	−41·6
Cheadle	2,921	1,707	−1,214	−41·6
Romford	2,776	1,623	−1,153	−41·5
Shoreham	2,053	1,202	−851	−41·5
Suffolk Coastal	2,452	1,437	−1,015	−41·4
Staffordshire Moorlands	3,608	2,116	−1,492	−41·4
South West Norfolk	3,844	2,259	−1,585	−41·2
Ashford	3,396	1,996	−1,400	−41·2
Chelmsford	3,035	1,786	−1,249	−41·2
North Luton	4,332	2,558	−1,774	−41·0
Watford	3,235	1,911	−1,324	−40·9
Croydon South	2,023	1,197	−826	−40·8
Congleton	3,322	1,968	−1,354	−40·8
Stroud	3,743	2,223	−1,520	−40·6
Havant	4,918	2,928	−1,990	−40·5
Bexhill and Battle	1,774	1,057	−717	−40·4
The Wrekin	9,589	5,724	−3,865	−40·3
Gravesham	4,984	2,976	−2,008	−40·3
Wyre Forest	5,135	3,067	−2,068	−40·3
Alyn and Deeside	4,694	2,811	−1,883	−40·1
East Hampshire	2,419	1,449	−970	−40·1
Bishop Auckland	7,166	4,299	−2,867	−40·0

Relocation of Staff

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he intends to relocate any of his staff in Runcorn.

Mr. Lee: The Employment Department already has about 900 of its headquarter staff located in Runcorn. But in common with other Government Departments, the Department is currently reviewing the potential for moving more of its headquarter work from London and the south-east. A number of alternative locations are under consideration, of which Runcorn is one, but it will be some time yet before final decisions are taken.

Pendulum Arbitration

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the number of disputes in the United Kingdom settled by pendulum arbitration, giving the number settled in favour of the employers.

Mr. Nicholls: Such information is not collected by my Department.

Tourism

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether his review of the Government's role in supporting the tourism industry will include consultations with *(a)* the Association of District Councils and *(b)* regional tourist boards; and whether he has yet received any representations from those two bodies on the nature and scope of the review.

Mr. Lee: Members of the review team have seen representatives of both bodies. Written submissions have not yet been received.

"Prompt Payment Please"

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what responses he has received following the publication of the booklet "Prompt Payment Please"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The booklet has been welcomed by many large and small firms and their representative organisations as a well written source of practical advice which will help businesses to reduce payment delays. Since its publication in July, demand has resulted in over 125,000 copies being distributed.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspectors have joined or left the Health and Safety Executive in the last eight years; from where they were recruited; and what was their destination on leaving.

Mr. Nicholls: Between 1 January 1979 and 31 December 1987, 454 inspectors joined the Health and Safety Executive from a wide variety of backgrounds. During the same period 564 inspectors left, of whom 234 resigned, 302 retired and 28 left for other reasons.

Comprehensive information on the destination of those who resign from HSE is not available as staff are under no obligation to disclose their reasons for leaving.

Health and Safety Executive (Visits)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how is the frequency of visits to installations by Health and Safety Executive inspectors, other than the annual visit, determined.

Mr. Nicholls: Each of the Health and Safety Executive's inspectorates determines its own priorities for planned visits. The frequency of visits depends on a number of factors. The factory and agricultural inspectorates' programme of preventive visits to fixed premises are planned on the basis of an inspection rating system and this is reviewed at each visit to the premises. In addition, each inspection rating is reviewed at the start of every inspection year, when a rating is amended upwards to take into account the period since the last preventive inspection.

HSE's explosives inspectorate operates an inspection rating system similar in principle to that used by the factory and agricultural inspectorates.

Major nuclear sites are generally visited at least ten times a year on the basis that regular visits are needed to maintain a close monitoring of the site and to complete given regulatory requirements.

Visits made by HSE's mines and quarries inspectors are made in accordance with work plans drawn up by inspectors in charge of local districts weighted in line with local circumstances and knowledge.

In addition, all inspectorates make reactive visits required, for example, to investigate accidents and dangerous occurrences.

Health and Safety Representatives

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether inspectors are informed of the identity of the health and safety representatives on the installations they visit.

Mr. Nicholls: HSE inspectors are instructed to identify and contact as far as possible appointed health and safety representatives during inspections.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether Health and Safety Executive inspectors seek private contact with company-appointed health and safety representatives during their visits to installations.

Mr. Nicholls: Inspectors of the Health and Safety Executive offer appointed health and safety representatives the opportunity for private discussion during visits.

Welfare Rights Claimant Advisers

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what qualifications and experience in welfare rights claimant advisers in unemployment benefit offices and jobcentres in Bradford are required to possess; how many are bi-lingual in an Asian language; what access they have to staff Asian language interpreters; and to what independent advice agencies claimants are referred.

Mr. Lee: Claimant advisers are specialist staff, trained in interviewing skills, with an extensive knowledge of the labour market and the help available to unemployed people, which they continuously update.

In particular this includes comprehensive information about benefits that can be claimed by people both in and out of work.

Although none of the claimant advisers in Bradford are bilingual in an Asian language they each have access to a member of staff in their local office on whom they can call to act as an interpreter.

The claimant advisers in Bradford refer claimants to the following independent advice agencies:

The Al Falah Community Centre
The Citizens Advice Bureau
The Bradford Corporation Benefit Shop
The Centre for Unemployment

Integrated Offices

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many integrated unemployment benefit offices/jobcentres and pilot offices have been established; where they are located; and when their evaluation is expected to be completed.

Mr. Lee: A total of 83 jobcentres and 102 unemployment benefit offices are operating an integrated employment service in the following 79 locations:

Abergavenny
Arbroath
Ashton in Makerfield
Aston
Ayr
Bargoed
Barrhead
Barry
Bebington
Bedford
Bedlington
Beeston
Bermondsey
Blantyre
Boness
Brighouse
Brownhills
Camden
Chapeltown
Chester-le-Street
Chorley
Cinderford
Coventry
Crosby
Dagenham
Dereham
Easterhouse
Edinburgh
Erith
Felling
Finchley
Halesowen
Hammersmith
Hartlepool
Haverhill
Hillington
Hinkley
Hull
Ilkeston
Kidderminster
Kings Cross
Kings Heath
Kirkby
Leyland
Maidenhead
Marple
Middleton
Newburn
Newhaven
Newquay
Northampton
Northwich
Pembroke Dock
Porthmadog
Portsmouth
Ruislip
Salford
Scarborough
Seaham
Shipley
Shotton
Sittingbourne
Skegness
Spen Valley
Stanford le Hope
Stepney
Stevenage
Stornoway
Sutton
Tamworth
Thorne
Thornton Heath
Tonbridge
Ulveston
Wellington
West Moor
Weymouth
Wythenshaw
Yate

We are currently evaluating their performance and expect to have results by the end of this year.

Bradford Council

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether any contingency arrangements are being made to assist people who become voluntarily or compulsorily redundant from Bradford council.

Mr. Lee: No contingency arrangements have been made. Suitable arrangements will be made once there is a clearer idea of the numbers who may become voluntarily or compulsorily redundant from Bradford council.

Benefit Shops (Bradford)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received about the closure of Bradford council's benefits shops; and what assessment he has made of the impact of such closures on the unemployment benefit offices and job centres in Bradford.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer Tuesday 25 October]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received some representations about the closure of benefit shops in Bradford. Employment service staff are aware of the situation, which is being kept under close review.

Repetitive Strain Injury

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham North-East): To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, whether he has received copies of the studies into repetitive strain injury at the University of Birmingham and the Institute of Occupational Health in Edinburgh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on Friday 22 July 1988 at column 631.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisons (Night Sanitation)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many prisons built before 1901 night sanitation has been provided during the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available; how many cells have been taken out of service to provide such facilities; and what was the cost to public funds of the conversions during this period.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: During the past 12 months, essential refurbishment involving the closure of wings at Liverpool and Stafford prisons has been used as an opportunity to install integral sanitation for 141 prisoners at Liverpool and 100 at Stafford. The cells concerned will be out of service for about 21 months at Liverpool and about 18 months at Stafford until the total refurbishment is completed early in 1989. The installation of the integral sanitation has not been costed separately from the total refurbishment because there are so many elements common to both.

During the same period, different methods of installing integral sanitation have been tested in a number of old prisons without major refurbishment and without taking cells out of service for longer than a few weeks. The number of prisoners accommodated has not been reduced because working on only a few cells at a time makes it acceptable for the number in others to be temporarily increased. The schemes concerned are as follows:

Prison	*Number of cells converted*	*Cost per cell* £
Camp Hill (built 1910)	4	800
Northallerton	6	1,200
Nottingham	4	2,000
Pentonville	[1]8	1,400
Preston	8	800
Shepton Mallett	[2]6	1,000
Wandsworth	8	1,100

[1] Four already converted, four due to complete in two weeks.
[2] Due to complete in six weeks.

These and other similar schemes where installation has not yet been completed will be assessed during the next few months to determine which are the most suitable for extensive use.

Seat Belts

Mr. Amess To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many persons convicted of failure to wear a seat belt were *(a)* male and *(b)* female; and what is the percentage of the latter to the former, in each month since 1983;

(2) how many persons convicted of failure to wear a seat belt in the Basildon area were *(a)* male and *(b)* female; and what is the percentage of the latter to the former, in each month since 1983;

(3) how many persons were convicted of failure to wear a seat belt in each month since 1983;

(4) what is the average fine in England and Wales for failure to wear a seat belt;

(5) how many persons were convicted of failure to wear a seat belt in the Basildon area since 1983.

Mr. Douglas Hogg The information which could be provided without disproportionate cost is given in the table. Total findings of guilt for all seat belt offences are published annually in table 5 of "Offences relating to motor vehicles, England and Wales, supplementary tables", the latest issue of which relates to 1986; the issue for 1987 will be published soon. In 1986, the average fine imposed by magistrates' courts for seat belt offences was £15.

Findings of guilt at magistrates' courts for seat belt offences[1]

	1985				*1986*			
	Male	*Female*	*Total*	*Percentage male*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Percentage male*
England and Wales								
January	720	63	783	92	1,194	141	1,335	89
February	618	70	688	90	1,108	135	1,243	89
March	796	92	888	90	1,230	132	1,362	90
April	944	105	1,049	90	1,630	192	1,822	89
May	1,053	118	1,171	90	1,421	162	1,583	90
June	1,210	132	1,342	90	1,669	197	1,866	89
July	1,399	146	1,545	91	1,682	173	1,855	91
August	1,200	134	1,334	90	1,470	147	1,617	91

	1985				1986			
	Male	Female	Total	Percentage male	Male	Female	Total	Percentage male
September	1,278	138	1,416	90	1,682	177	1,859	90
October	1,351	150	1,501	90	1,705	227	1,932	88
November	1,221	127	1,348	91	1,445	120	1,565	92
December	945	105	1,050	90	1,074	98	1,172	92
Total	12,735	1,380	14,115	90	17,310	1,901	19,211	90
Billericay Magistrates' Court								
January	13	—	13	[2]	13	—	13	[2]
February	14	—	14	[2]	6	1	7	[2]
March	7	1	8	[2]	9	2	11	[2]
April	14	1	15	[2]	7	1	8	[2]
May	21	2	23	[2]	8	3	11	[2]
June	13	1	14	[2]	14	1	15	[2]
July	17	3	20	[2]	7	—	7	[2]
August	16	1	17	[2]	6	—	6	[2]
September	6	2	8	[2]	5	—	5	[2]
October	24	2	26	[2]	6	1	7	[2]
November	17	5	22	[2]	2	—	2	[2]
December	11	1	12	[2]	—	1	1	[2]
Total	173	19	192	90	83	10	93	89

[1] Driving or riding in a motor vehicle not wearing a seat belt or driving motor vehicle with child in the front not wearing a seat belt.
[2] Percentages not calculated because of the small numbers involved.

Shoplifting

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the percentage of those charged with shop-lifting who pleaded guilty or not guilty in *(a)* magistrates' courts, and *(b)* Crown courts in (i) England and Wales and (ii) the Basildon area for each of the last six years.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not available as reliable data on plea are not collected centrally.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many persons were *(a)* charged and *(b)* convicted of shoplifting in each of the last five years; and what percentage the latter is to the former;

(2) how many persons were *(a)* charged and *(b)* convicted of shoplifting in the Basildon area for each of the last five years; and what percentage the latter is to the former.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to the question from the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) on 4 December 1987 at columns *749-50*.

Details in respect of the Basildon area are not available, but the following table gives information for Billericay petty sessional division and Chelmsford Crown court for 1986 and 1987. Comparable data for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Persons proceeded against and found guilty of offences of theft from shops

England and Wales	*Number of persons*[1]	
	1986	*1987*
Billericay psd:		
Proceeded against[2]	314	353
Found guilty	265	280
Proportion found guilty per cent.	84	79
Chelmsford Crown Court:		
For trial	81	67
Found guilty	64	53
Proportion found guilty per cent.	79	79
England and Wales		
Magistrates' courts:		
Proceeded against[2]	73,345	69,028
Found guilty	60,708	55,032
Proportion found guilty per cent.	83	80
Crown Court:		
For trial	4,444	4,408
Found guilty	3,326	3,497
Proportion found guilty per cent.	75	79

[1] As shown by the records held centrally, which are approximate.
[2] Include those committed to the Crown Court for trial.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the percentage of shop-lifting cases coming before the courts, expressed as a percentage of all cases coming before *(a)* magistrates' and *(b)* Crown courts in (i) England and Wales and (ii) the Basildon area for each of the last six years;

(2) what percentage of cases were heard in *(a)* magistrates' courts and *(b)* Crown courts in (i) England and Wales and (ii) the Basildon area concerning people on charges of *(aa)* shoplifting, *(bb)* theft and *(cc)* breaking and entering; and what percentage in each category of crime, for each court, was found guilty or not guilty for each of the last six years.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested in respect of England and Wales is published annually in volumes 1 and 2 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables."

Details for the Basildon area are not available, but the following table gives information for Billericay petty sessional division and Chelmsford Crown court for 1986 and 1987. Comparable data for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

I also refer my hon. Friend to the reply given today to another question from him.

Reasons proceeded against or tried for selected offences

Percentages

	Theft from shops		*All thefts*		*Burglary*	
	1986	*1987*	*1986*	*1987*	*1986*	*1987*
	Magistrates' court					
Percentage of total number proceeded against for all indictable offences						
Billericay psd	4·2	6·0	7·8	11·6	1·6	2·3
England and Wales	3·4	3·8	8·8	10·2	3·1	3·8
Percentage of those proceeded against[1] found guilty						
Billericay psd	84	79	75	73	39	53
England and Wales	83	80	77	73	54	49
	Crown court					
Percentage of total number tried for all offences						
Chelmsford	5·2	4·4	23·3	22·2	15·5	18·9
England and Wales	4·6	4·3	22·5	21·2	21·0	21·4
Percentage of those tried found guilty						
Chelmsford	79	79	81	83	95	94
England and Wales	75	79	79	82	93	93

[1] Including those committed to the Crown court for trial

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of alleged shop-lifting offences were for goods to the value of *(a)* under £5, *(b)* between £5 and £10 and *(c)* over £10 for each of the last six years for which statistics are available; and what was the percentage of acquittals in magistrates' courts and Crown courts, in each of the three categories, for the years concerned in (i) England and Wales and (ii) the Basildon area.

Mr. John Patten: Information about the value of goods stolen from shops for offences recorded by the police is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (in table 2.13 of the issue for 1987, Cm. 498). It is not possible, however, from the records of court proceedings held centrally to distinguish the value of goods stolen for offences of theft from shops. Details of proceedings for such offences can be found in volumes 1 and 2 of the supplementary tables to the criminal statistics, under offence classification 46.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of shoplifting cases brought before the courts in each of the last 10 years; what were the numbers for each year of those acquitted and convicted respectively; and how many of those acquitted and convicted were facing their first criminal charge.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my hon. Friend to a question from the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) on 4 December 1987 at columns 749-50. The supplementary tables for 1987 will be placed in the Library in about one week's time. Information about the previous court appearances, if any, of defendants proceeded against for theft from shops is not available.

Public Order

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many persons were *(a)* charged and *(b)* convicted of (i) public order offences and (ii) offences against the person in each of the last five years;

(2) how many persons were *(a)* charged and *(b)* convicted of (i) offences against the person and (ii) public order offences in the Basildon area for each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested in respect of England and Wales is published annually in volumes 1 and 2 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales Supplementary Tables."

Details for the Basildon area are not available, but the following table gives information for Billericay petty sessional division and Chelmsford Crown court for 1986 and 1987. Comparable data for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Persons proceeded against and found guilty of offences against the person[1] and public order offences

England and Wales *Number of persons[2]*

	1986	*1987*
Billericay psd:		
Offences against the person		
Proceeded against[3]	181	240
Found guilty	68	84
Public order offences		
Proceeded against	35	56
Found guilty	23	33
Chelmsford Crown Court:		
Offences against the person		
For trial	371	478
Found guilty	290	370
Public order offences		
For trial	47	24
Found guilty	38	22
England and Wales		
Magistrates' Courts:		
Offences against the person		
Proceeded against[3]	74,975	86,001
Found guilty	34,647	37,995
Public order offences		
Proceeded against	27,759	41,818
Found guilty	18,196	27,843

	1986	1987
Crown Court:		
Offences against the person		
For trial	24,414	27,301
Found guilty	18,124	20,543
Public order offences		
For trial	1,395	1,815
Found guilty	991	1,352

[1] Violence against the person, sexual offences, and robbery.
[2] As shown by the records held centrally, which are approximate.
[3] Including those committed to the Crown Court for trial.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will obtain and list in the *Official Report* the dates and places of crimes using bombs or other explosive devices that have taken place in England and Wales resulting in death or personal injury; and if he will list the casualties and the number of convictions that have been secured for each year since 1974;

(2) if he will obtain and list in the *Official Report* the names of organisations and individuals who claimed responsibility for crimes using bombs or other explosive devices that have taken place in England and Wales resulting in death or personal injury for each year since 1974.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available in the form requested. Information on offences of homicide involving the use of bombs or other explosive devices is given in the following table. Information on the number of personal injuries sustained as a result of offences involving explosive devices is not readily available and could be

Homicide offences recorded by the police from 1974 to 1987 involving the use of bombs or other explosives in England and Wales

Year recorded and number of victims	Terrorist organisation	Incident	Date of incident	Number of suspects convicted of homicide
1974				
12	Provisional IRA	M62 bomb	4 February 1974	1
1	Provisional IRA	Bomb in Tower of London	17 July 1974	—
5	Provisional IRA	Guildford pub bomb	5 October 1974	[1]4
2	Provisional IRA	Woolwich pub bomb	7 November 1974	2
21	Provisional IRA	Birmingham pub bomb	21 November 1974	6
1	Provisional IRA	Bomb in telephone exchange, WC1	17 December 1974	—
1975				
1	Provisional IRA	Bomb in Coventry	14 November 1974	—
1	Provisional IRA	Bomb in Church Street, Kensington	29 August 1975	[2]4
2	Provisional IRA	Hilton Hotel bomb	5 September 1975	[2]4
1	Provisional IRA	Green Park underground	9 October 1975	[2]4
1	Provisional IRA	Car bomb, London	23 October 1975	[2]4
1	Provisional IRA	Scotts restaurant bomb, London	12 November 1975	[2]4
2	Provisional IRA	Waltons restraurant bomb, London	18 November 1975	[2]4
1976				
1	Provisional IRA	Olympia bomb	27 March 1976	—
1978				
2	Middle Eastern	Car bomb in London	31 December 1978	—
1979				
1	INLA	Car bomb, House of Commons	30 March 1979	—
1981				
2	Provisional IRA	Ebury Bridge Road barracks car bomb	10 October 1981	[3]2
1	Provisional IRA	Wimpy bar bomb, Oxford Street	26 October 1981	[3]2
1982				
7	Provisional IRA	Regents Park bomb	20 July 1982	—
4	Provisional IRA	Hyde Park bomb	20 July 1982	—
1983				
6	Provisional IRA	Harrods bomb	17 December 1983	—
1984				
1	n.a.	Letter bomb, Kent	21 May 1984	—
5	Provisional IRA	Brighton bomb	12 October 1984	1
1987				
1	Middle Eastern	Video shop bomb, Kensington	19 August 1986	—
1988[4]				
1	Provisional IRA	Inglis barracks, London	1 August 1988	—

[1] Two of the four suspects were also convicted of the Woolwich pub bomb incident.
[2] Four suspects convicted of six incidents.

[3] Two suspects convicted of two incidents.
[4] Provisional.
n.a. = Not available.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of convictions for murder, attempted murder and manslaughter respectively, for each year since 1958.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 29 July at columns *200-201*. In 1987, 166 persons were found guilty of murder, 50 of manslaughter due to diminished responsibility and 214 of other manslaughter. Information in respect of the number of persons convicted of attempted murder is given in the following table.

Persons found guilty of attempted murder
England and Wales

Year	Total found guilty
1958	37
1959	35
1960	40
1961	52
1962	30
1963	28
1964	35
1965	29
1966	50
1967	38
1968	46
1969	46
1970	46
1971	52
1972	29
1973	46
1974	52
1975	46
1976	42
1977	29
1978	30
1979	27
1980	34
1981	31
1982	40
1983	27
1984	30
1985	35
1986	35
1987	43

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were convicted of crimes of violence in 1987; by what percentage this figure exceeds or is less than the comparable figure for each year since 1962; and if he has any indication of the trend of crimes of violence in the current year.

Mr. John Patten: 58,500 persons were found guilty of offences of violence in 1987. The table gives comparisons for the period 1979 to 1986. Figures for earlier years are not shown as they are not directly comparable owing to changes in counting procedures for courts proceedings which occurred at the beginning of 1979.

Statistics of notifiable offences recorded by the police, including offences of violence, are published quarterly; the most recent figures—for the year ending June 1988—were published in Home Office statistical bulletin issue 26/88, which is available in the Library.

Persons found guilty at all courts of offences of violence[1]
England and Wales

1979	101
1980	109
1981	106
1982	107
1983	106
1984	99
1985	99
1986	90
1987	[2]100

[1] Comprises offences of violence against the person, sexual offences, and robbery.
[2] 1987 taken as the base year: 100 = 58,500.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females have been (i) charged with and (ii) convicted of arson in each year from 1982 to the latest convenient date in *(aa)* England and Wales and *(bb)* the Basildon area;

(2) how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females have been (i) charged with and (ii) convicted of cruelty or neglect of children in each year since 1982 to the latest convenient date in *(aa)* England and Wales and *(bb)* the Basildon area;

(3) how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females have been (i) charged with and (ii) convicted of neglect of animals in each year from 1982 to the latest convenient date in *(aa)* England and Wales and *(bb)* the Basildon area;

(4) how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females have been (i) charged with and (ii) convicted of cruelty to horses, ponies or donkeys in each year since 1982 in *(aa)* England and Wales and *(bb)* the Basildon area.

Mr. John Patten: The readily available information is published annually in Volumes 1 and 2 of the supplementary tables to the "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", under offence classifications 56 (arson), 11 and 109 (cruelty to or neglect of children), and 108 (cruelty to animals). Particulars of the animals involved in offences of cruelty are not collected centrally.

Details in respect of the Basildon area are not available, but the following table gives information for, Billericay petty sessional divison and Chelmsford Crown court for 1986 and 1987. Comparable data for earlier years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Persons proceeded against at magistrates' courts and found guilty at all courts of selected offences
England and Wales

Number of persons[1]

	1986				1987			
	Proceeded against		Found guilty		Proceeded against		Found guilty	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Basildon area[2]								
Arson[3]	6	—	12	1	7	4	16	6
Cruelty to or neglect of children	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Cruelty to animals, etc.	2	—	2	—	8	2	4	2

	1986				1987			
	Proceeded against		Found guilty		Proceeded against		Found guilty	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
England and Wales								
Arson[3]	2,064	257	1,699	237	2,121	269	1,746	222
Cruelty to or neglect of children	80	101	59	68	71	77	68	76
Cruelty to animals, etc.	955	364	828	314	984	360	836	318

[1] As shown by the records held centrally, which are approximate.
[2] Billericay Magistrates' Court and Chelmsford Crown Court. The "found guilty" figures for arson exceed the proceedings figures because Chelmsford Crown Court tries cases from several Magistrates " Courts other than Billericay.
[3] Offences of arson may be tried at the magistrates' courts or the Crown Court, and the figures for persons proceeded against at magistrates' courts are not precisely comparable with the figures for those found guilty at all courts. For the Basildon area the found guilty figures also include cases proceeded against at magistrates' courts other than Billericay from which Chelmsford Crown Court tries cases.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many motoring offences were heard in magistrates' courts in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* the Basildon area in each of the past six years; and what proportion of all cases heard these figures represented.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information that could be provided without disproportionate cost is given in the table. From 1986, it has been published in table 13 of Volume 5 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables". The fall in proceedings for motoring offences in 1987 reflects the extension of fixed penalties in October 1986.

Persons proceeded against at magistrates' courts for all offences and summary motoring offences
England and Wales 1986-87
Numbers and percentages of persons

	All offences	Summary motoring offences	
		Number	Percentage of all offences
1986			
Petty Sessional Division of Billericay	7,456	4,604	62
England and Wales total	2,128,414	1,166,729	55
1987			
Petty Sessional Division of Billericay	5,854	2,451	42
England and Wales total	1,814,230	829,135	46

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many mugging offences were reported in 1987; and what was the comparable figure for each year since 1980.

Mr. John Patten: The term "mugging" has no legal definition; the majority of offences of the type frequently referred to as "mugging" are recorded as offences of robbery. Information on offences of robbery recorded by the police is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (table 2.10 of the issue for 1987, Cm. 498).

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the murder rate per million of the population in England and Wales between 1982 and 1987; what it was for the period from 1958 to 1963 on an annual basis; and if he will give similar figures for manslaughter;

(2) what was the murder rate per thousand of the population in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* the Basildon area between 1982 and 1987; what it was in the period from 1958 to 1963 on an annual basis; and if he will give similar figures for manslaughter.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available in the form requested. The number of offences decided by the court to be murder or manslaughter are published annually in table 4·2 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales," copies of which are available in the Library; the figures for 1958 to 1963 and 1982 to 1987 are given in the following table. Information on homicides in the Basildon area are not available but for 1982 to 1987 figures for the Essex police force area are included; corresponding figures for the years 1958 to 1963 can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Offences currently[1] recorded by the police as murder, Section 2 manslaughter and other manslaughter by type of offence and year
England and Wales

Year	Number of offences				Number of offences per million population			
	Total	Murder	Section 2 manslaughter	Other manslaughter	Total	Murder	Section 2 manslaughter	Other manslaughter
England and Wales 1958-63								
1958	[2]55	26	29	n/a	[2]1·21	0·58	0·64	n/a
1959	[2]65	44	21	n/a	[2]1·43	0·97	0·46	n/a
1960	[2]72	41	31	n/a	[2]1·57	0·90	0·68	n/a
1961	[2]68	38	30	n/a	[2]1·47	0·82	0·65	n/a
1962	[2]80	38	42	n/a	[2]1·71	0·81	0·90	n/a
1963	[2]94	38	56	n/a	[2]2·00	0·81	1·19	n/a
Total	[2]434	225	209	—	[2]1·57	0·81	0·76	—

Year	Number of offences				Number of offences per million population			
	Total	Murder	Section 2 manslaughter	Other manslaughter	Total	Murder	Section 2 manslaughter	Other manslaughter
Essex Police Force Area 1982-87								
1982	9	5	2	2	6·37	3·54	1·41	1·41
1983	4	—	2	2	2·81	—	1·41	1·41
1984	12	4	4	4	8·41	2·80	2·80	2·80
1985	14	7	1	6	9·76	4·88	0·70	4·18
1986	12	6	3	3	8·32	4·16	2·08	2·08
1987	7	3	2	2	4·82	2·06	1·38	1·38
Total	58	25	14	19	6·75	2·91	1·63	2·21
England and Wales 1982-87								
1982	428	160	108	160	8·63	3·23	2·18	3·23
1983	384	152	83	149	7·73	3·06	1·67	3·00
1984	428	165	85	178	8·60	3·32	1·71	3·58
1985	417	168	75	174	8·35	3·37	1·50	3·49
1986	451	204	79	168	9·01	4·07	1·58	3·35
1987	284	111	55	118	5·65	2·21	1·09	2·35
Total	2,392	960	485	947	7·99	3·21	1·62	3·16

[1] As at 1 June 1988. "Section 2" Manslaughter is when the only/principal defence is diminished responsibility.
[2] Not including offences initially classified as manslaughter.
n/a Not available—before 1967 information was not collected for offences initially classified as manslaughter.

Vandalism

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what studies have been made concerning the motivation of persons convicted of vandalism; what assessment he has made as to how far such studies are representative of the problem; and what advice he has taken from outside Her Majesty's Government of such studies.

Mr. John Patten: Early studies focusing on the psychology of those convicted of vandalism were supplanted by research which investigated the acts of vandalism committed by "normal" children and young people, because convicted vandals were judged to be unrepresentative. Lately the Home Office, in seeking to foster crime prevention activities by agencies other than central Government and the police, has taken note of work by British Telecom plc. which involved interviewing young people about telephone box vandalism. The Home Office crime prevention unit has advised London Underground Ltd. in conducting a study of those convicted of putting graffiti on the outside of trains. In deriving advice for policy and practice from studies of the motivation of vandals, due regard is taken of the biases introduced by a focus on convicted offenders, where practical reasons make such a focus unavoidable.

Unpaid Appointments

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the bodies, both official and non official, to which he has the right to make unpaid appointments.

Mr. Hurd: I refer my hon. Friend to the Home Office entry in "Public Bodies", published annually by the Cabinet Office, which lists both paid and unpaid appointments. Copies are in the Library of the House. I make no other unpaid appointments.

Prison Sentences

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the average sentences served by persons serving life sentences released in each year since 1958;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the average sentences served by persons serving life sentences for murder, released in each year since 1958.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Reliable information for 1958 to 1975 is not readily available and the readily available information is given in the following table. The average figures do not take account of the longest periods being served by some of those given life sentences following the abolition of capital punishment in 1965 who have not yet been released. They also exclude persons who have died in custody or been discharged for other reasons.

My right hon. Friend has made it clear that those convicted of the most heinous murders can normally expect to serve at least 20 years in prison and in some cases even longer; and no life sentence prisoner is released no matter how long he or she has served unless my right hon. Friend is personally as satisfied as it is reasonably possible to be that there is no risk to the community.

Average time[1] spent under sentence in Prison Service establishment in England and Wales by prisoners first released in 1976-87 on licence from a life sentence

Year of release	Average years[2] under life sentence	
	for murder	for all offences
1976	9	8¾
1977	9¾	9¼
1978	9¼	9¼
1979	9¼	9
1980	10¼	10¼
1981	9¾	10¼
1982	10¼	10¼
1983	10¼	10¼
1984	10¼	10¼
1985	10¼	10¼
1986	11	11¼
1987	11¼	11

[1] Excluding any time spent on remand in custody.
[2] Estimates rounded to the nearest quarter.

Abortion

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many men and women, respectively, have been proceeded against for procuring abortions under section 58 or 59 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, in each year since 1958;

(2) what was the percentage of those charged with procuring abortion under section 58 or 59 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 who pleaded guilty or not guilty in *(a)* a magistrates' courts, *(b)* Crown courts and in (i) England and Wales and (ii) the Basildon area in each year since 1958;

(3) what percentage of cases were heard in *(a)* magistrates' courts and *(b)* Crown courts in (i) England and Wales and (ii) the Basildon area concerning people on charges of procuring abortion under section 58 or 59 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861; and what percentage, for each court, was found guilty or not guilty for each year since 1958.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) on 6 November 1987 at column *904*. Reliable information on plea is not available.

Details in respect of the Basildon area are not available, but the following table gives information available to the Home Department for Billericay petty sessional division and Chelmsford Crown court for 1986 and 1987. Comparable data for earlier years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Defendants proceeded against and found guilty of offences under sections 58 and 59 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 (as amended by the Abortion Act 1967)
England and Wales

	Number of defendants			
	1986		1987	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Billericay petty sessional division				
Proceeded against	—	—	—	—
Found guilty	—	—	—	—
Chelmsford Crown Court				
For trial	—	—	—	—
Found guilty	—	—	—	—
England and Wales				
Magistrates' Courts				
Proceeded against	1	—	2	—
Found guilty	—	—	—	—
Crown Court				
For trial	2	—	—	—
Found guilty	2	—	—	—

Dangerous Driving

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many convictions there were for dangerous driving in the United Kingdom in each of the past five years;

(2) how many convictions there were for dangerous driving in the Basildon area in each of the past five years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information which could be provided without disproportionate cost is given in the table. The offence of dangerous driving was repealed in 1978.

Convictions for reckless driving

Number of offences

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Petty sessional division of Billericay and Chelmsford Crown Court	—	—	—	19	28
United Kingdom total[1]	6,200	6,200	6,000	5,800	5,800

[1] These figures are rounded because the information for Northern Ireland relates only to findings of guilt where reckless driving was the principal offence. For England and Wales, and Scotland the figures include also non-principal offences.

Departmental Statistics

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, according to grade, the total number of people who are employed in his Department, and the equivalent figures for each year since 1982.

Mr. Hurd: Historical information on Home Office staff numbers by reference to grade is held only for a limited period. The available information is as follows

Total numbers of staff employed in the Home Office according to grade since 1986

	1988 (as at 30 September)	1987 (as at 31 December)	1986 (as at 31 December)
Grade 1 (Unified)	1	1	1
Grade 2 (Unified)	6	7	6
Grade 3 (Unified)	20	23	23
Grade 4 (Unified)	5	4	5
Grade 5 (Unified)	83	80	80
Grade 6 (Unified)	69	63	61
Grade 7 (Unified)	433	440	419
Senior Executive Officer	277	263	268
Higher Executive Officer	847	819	795
Executive Officer	1,583	1,547	1,570
Administrative Officer	3,343	3,266	3,236
Administrative Assistant	1,494	1,510	1,174
Administrative Trainee/HEO (D)	25	29	27
Inspector Immigration	43	41	41
Chief Immigration Officer	233	222	232
Immigration Officer	1,372	1,357	1,322

	1988 (as at 30 September)	1987 (as at 31 December)	1986 (as at 31 December)
Typists and Secretaries	1,123	1,108	1,062
Support Grades	781	616	787
Inspectorates	54	54	56
Medical etc.	501	482	493
Scientific and Technical Grades	1,572	1,588	1,614
Prison Service Grades	24,387	20,633	19,135
Others	112	68	75
Obsolete Grades	—	1,747	3,024
Total (Non-industrial)	38,364	35,968	35,506
Industrial	3,117	3,087	3,225
Grand Total	[1]41,481	[1]39,055	[1]38,731

Note: As recorded at 30 September 1988.
[1]Each part time member of staff is counted as one.

The overall totals for earlier years were held in a different form and recorded the total number of posts filled (with part time staff counting as half). The information for earlier years is as follows:

1982	1983	1984	1985
34,604	35,072	36,446	36,613

Departmental Papers

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* Green and *(b)* White papers his Department has produced since 1979; if he will list these in date order; in each case, whether the responses to the papers were deposited in the Library; and what was the percentage of such papers for each year which have not had their responses placed in the Library since 1980.

Mr. Hurd: The following is a list in date order of six Green and 48 White papers produced by the Home Office which have been laid before parliament since 1 January 1979. The list includes White Papers prepared in response to the reports of Select Committees but excludes Home Office annual statistical reports published as Command papers.

The Department does not hold centrally records of whether responses have been deposited in the Library.

Parliamentary Papers 1979 to 1988

Year and Paper	White/Green Paper	Publication date	Command number
1979			
Proposals for Revision of the Immigration Rules	White	14 November 1979	7750
1980			
The Interception of Communications in Great Britain	White	1 April 1980	7873
The Review of the Public Order Act 1936 and Related Legislation	Green	22 April 1980	7891
The Government's Reply to 15th Report from the Expenditure Committee: Reduction of Pressure on The Prison system	White	25 June 1980	7948
British Nationality Law	White	30 July 1980	7987
Young Offenders	White	2 October 1980	8045
1981			
The Government's Reply to the 1st Report from the Home Affairs Committee Session 1980-81: Home Office Reports	White	31 March 1981	8214
The Government's Reply to the 3rd Report from the Home Affairs Committee: Vagrancy Offences	White	21 July 1981	8311
The Government's Reply to the 4th Report from the Home Affairs Committee Session 1980-81: the Prison Service	White	8 December 1981	8446
1982			
The Government's Reply to the 5th Report from the Home Affairs Committee Session 1981-82: Racial Disadvantage	White	26 January 1982	8476

Year and Paper	White/Green Paper	Publication date	Command number
Data Protection: The Government's Proposals for Legislation	White	7 April 1982	8539
The Government's Reply to the 1st Report of Home Affairs Committee Session 1981-1982: the Commission for Racial Equality	White	27 April 1982	8547
The Government's Reply to the 4th Report of the Home Affairs Committee Session 1981-1982: Police Complaints Procedures	White	18 October 1982	8681
Proposals for Revision of the Immigration Rules	White	23 October 1982	8683
The Government's Reply to the 5th Report of the Home Affairs Committee Session 1981-1982: Immigration from the Indian Sub-Continent	White	25 November 1982	8725
1983			
The Government's Reply to the 6th Report of the Home Affairs Committee Session 1981-82: Miscarriage of Justice	White	13 April 1983	8856
The development of Cable Systems and Services	White	27 April 1983	8866
Scientific Procedures on Living Animals	White	12 May 1983	8883
Police Complaints and Discipline Procedures	White	27 October 1983	9072
An Independent Prosecution Service for England and Wales	White	27 October 1983	9074
1984			
The Government's Reply to the 1st Report from the Education, Science and Arts Committee, Session 1982-83: Prison Education	White	18 January 1984	9126
The Government's Reply to the 1st Report from the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1982-83: Representation of the People Acts	White	31 January 1984	9140
The Government's Reply to the 3rd Report from the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1982-83: British Nationality Fees	White	7 March 1984	9183
Intermittent Custody	Green	29 June 1984	9281
The Government's Reply to the 1st Report of the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1983-84: Remands in Custody	White	24 July 1984	9322
Shops Act—Report of the Committee of Inquiry into proposals to amend the Shops Acts: Late Night and Sunday Opening	White	21 November 1984	9376
1985			
Extradition	Green	20 February 1985	9421
The Interception of Communications in the United Kingdom	White	7 February 1985	9434
The Government's Reply to the 1st Report of the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1984-85: Compensation and Support for victims of crime	White	7 March 1985	9457
Scientific Procedures on Living Animals	White	15 May 1985	9521
Review of Public Order Law (included the Government's reply to the 5th Report of the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1979-80: The Law relating to Public Order)	White	16 May 1985	9510
The Government's Reply to the 2nd Report of the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1984-85: Chinese Community in Britain	White	24 July 1985	9586
The Government's Reply to the 3rd Report of the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1984-85: Refugees and Asylum with Special Reference to the Vietnamese	White	26 September 1985	9626
The Government's Reply to the 6th Report of the Home Affairs Committee, Sesion 1984-85: Immigration and Nationality Department of the Home Office	White	2 October 1985	9632
The Nationality Provisions of the Hong Kong Act 1985, with a draft Order-in-Council	White	17 October 1985	9637
1986			
Criminal Justice Bill plans for Legislation	White	6 March 1986	9658
The Prison Disciplinary System in England and Wales	White	23 October 1986	9920
The Government's Reply to the 3rd Report from the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1985-1986: Racial Attacks and Harassment	White	11 December 1986	45

Year and Paper	White/Green Paper	Publication date	Command number
1987			
Metropolitan Police Fund Accounts 1985-1986	White	17 February 1987	86
Radio: Choices and Opportunities—A Consultative Document	Green	25 February 1987	92
The Government's Reply to the 3rd Report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1985-86: The Prison Service	White	26 March 1987	115
The Government's Reply to the 2nd Report from the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1986-1987: Bangladeshis in Britain	White	23 July 1987	193
The Government's Reply to the 2nd Report from the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1985-1986: Immigration from the Indian Sub-Continent	White	25 August 1987	199
Firearms Act 1968—Proposals for Reform	White	2 December 1987	261
1988			
The Government's Reply to the 3rd Report from the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1985-1986: State and Use of Prisons	White	3 December 1987	263
The Government's Reply to the 2nd Report of the Education, Science and the Arts Committee, Session 1986-1987: Prison Education	White	26 January 1988	298
The Government's Reply to the 2nd Report from the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1986-1987: Redistribution of Seats	White	4 February 1988	308
The Government's Reply to the 5th Report from the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1986-1987: Passport Control	White	11 February 1988	313
Metropolitan Police Fund Accounts 1986-1987	White	24 February 1988	325
Metropolitan Police Fund Estimates 1988-1989	White	12 April 1988	356
Reform of Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911	White	29 June 1988	408
The Government's Reply to the 2nd Report from the Home Affairs Committee Session 1987-1988: Plans for Radio Broadcasting	White	30 June 1988	411
The Government's Reply to the 1st Report of the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1987-1988: Public Expenditure Plans 198-1989 to 1990-1991	White	14 July 1988	422
Punishment, Custody and The Community	Green	18 July 1988	424
Private Sector Involvement in the Remand System	Green	25 July 1988	434

Cosmos 1900

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken by the civil planning unit of his Department to issue guidance of radiological safety and protection measures against Cosmos 1900 or other malfunctioning nuclear powered satellites that could crash land on United Kingdom territory having lost control of their orbit.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Guidance on procedures to be followed by the emergency services in relation to a nuclear-powered satellite accident are set out in chapter 25, annex C, of the "Emergency Planning Guidance to Local Authorities", a copy of which is in the Library. This was supplemented, for Cosmos 1900, by detailed advice on operational points and communications for use if the United Kingdom were to be affected by radioactive debris. As the nuclear reactor was ejected from Cosmos 1900, there was no call for specific advice on radiological protection, although precautionary guidance was given through the media about avoiding contact with any debris and alerting the emergency services. Guidance for any future incident would depend on the composition and state of the reactor, the effectiveness of automatic safety systems, and the extent of any threat posed to the United Kingdom.

Nuclear Accidents

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any representations in the past few months from the President of the County Emergency Planning Officer's Society regarding the setting up by his Department of an interdisciplinary working party to provide a forum for exchange of ideas and information on nuclear accident emergencies.

Mr. Hurd: Yes, the proposal is being considered in consultation with other Departments.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to provide a review by his departmental scientists of the recent report by the Royal Institute of British Architects on nuclear disasters and the built environment, with regard to evaluating its utility for improving current emergency planning arrangements for nuclear accidents.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been asked to reply.

Emergency plans for civil nuclear installations are prescribed by the licensing procedures. The licensing authority, the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, takes account of relevant information available to it. I understand that the report referred to has not yet been published.

DEFENCE

Crown Proceedings Act

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many successful claims have been made against the Crown by service men under the Crown Proceedings Act since its amendment in 1986; how many such cases went to court; how many such cases were settled out of court; and what was the average legal costs to his Department for *(a)* cases taken to court, and *(b)* cases settled out of court.

Mr. Freeman: Since the passage into law on 15 May 1987 of the Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act 1987, a total of 12 claims have so far been concluded resulting in payments being made by the Ministry of Defence. All 12 cases were settled out of court, involving legal costs totalling £127. A further 10 claims have been settled on an ex-gratia basis arising from incidents during the period between 8 December 1986, when the Government announced their intention to repeal section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947, and 15 May 1987; and legal costs totalling £1,474 were incurred in respect of these 10 claims.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the latest available figures for his Department in the London pay area of the number of vacancies by grade and the proportion this is of the grade complement in London.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information requested is detailed in the following tables:

Administrative Grades as at 15 September 1988

Grade	*Vacancies*	*Vacancies*[1]
Senior Executive Officer	38	9·1
Higher Executive Officer	61	6·4
Executive Officer	62	4·5
Administrative Officer	413	14·3
Administrative Assistant	419	25·8
Chief Typing Manager	2	18·1
Typing Manager	1	2·2
Typists	72	10·4
Senior Personal Secretaries	4	5·8
Personal Secretaries	76	18·4
Research Officer/Senior Research Officer	5	10
Statisticians	3	15
Senior Assistant Statistician/Assistant Statistician	4	40

[1] As a per cent. of grade complement

Notes:

1. The table covers the main non-industrial Civil Service administrative grades employed in the London pay area.
2. Vacancies are unfilled complemented posts.
3. There are no vacancies at grade 7 level and above.

Miscellaneous grades as at 1 October 1988

Grade	*Vacancies*	*Vacancies*[1]
Telecommunications Officer (Army)	4	33·3
Teleprinter Operator	1	25
Specialist Teleprinter Operator	20	21·7
Superintendant of Teleprinter Operator	9	10·8
Photographer	1	2·3
Senior Photographer	8	14
Graphics Officer	1	15
Higher Graphics Officer	6	52
Mapping and Charting Technical Grade 1	9	12
Mapping and Charting Grade 1	40	18
Higher Mapping and Charting Officer	2	1·94
Senior Mapping and Charting Officer	8	13
Support Grade Band 1	15	11·5
Support Grade Band 2	72	
Support Grade Band 3	4	
Support Manager 1	1	

[1] As a percentage of grade complement.

Notes:

1. The table covers the main non-industrial miscellaneous Civil Service grades employed in the London pay area.
2. Vacancies are unfilled complemented posts.
3. There are no vacancies at grade 6 level and above.

Specialists

Defence Engineering Service as at 1 July 1988

Grade	*Vacancies*	*[1]Vacancies*
7	23	9
Professional and Technology Officer—Senior Professional and Technology Officer	451	16·11

[1] As a percentage of Grade complement

Defence Science Group

Grade	*Vacancies*	*[1]Vacancies*
7	16	7·2
Scientific Officer—Senior Scientific Officer	122	16·2

[1] As a percentage of Grade complement

Notes:

1. The table covers the main non-industrial engineering and science Civil Service grades employed in the London pay area.
2. Vacancies are unfilled complemented posts.
3. There are no vacancies at grade 6 level and above.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide the latest available figures for his Department for *(a)* numbers of staff in receipt of local pay additions, by grade, *(b)* location of those offices awarding local pay additions and *(c)* annual cost.

Mr. Sainsbury: Local pay additions in the Ministry of Defence are given to 1,278 executive officers, 26 typing managers, 65 senior personal secretaries, 427 personal secretaries, 2,784 administrative officers, 1,650 administrative assistants and 675 typists. Officers in all these grades in inner London receive the payment as do administrative officers, administrative assistants, personal secretaries and typists at Aldershot military town, Farnborough, High Wycombe, Northwood, Pyestock, Stanmore, Wandsworth and West Byfleet. The annual cost is estimated to be £3,420,000.

Departmental Contractors

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the contractors, foreign or otherwise, which were paid £5 million or more by his Department in 1986-87 and which are not included in the list on page 15 of "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988 (Volume 2)".

Mr. Sainsbury: The table on page 15 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988 (Volume 2)" lists United Kingdom-based contractors which were paid £5 million or more by the MoD in 1986-87. Foreign-based contractors which were paid £5 million or more are as listed:

Aerospatiale SNI (France)
McDonnell Douglas Corporation (USA)

Hollandse Signaalapparaten BV (Netherlands)
Aral Aktiengesellschaft (Germany)
Hagglund & Soner AB (Sweden)
The Singer Company (USA)

In accordance with the practice of successive Governments not all United Kingdom-based contractors would qualify for appearance in the published list for security reasons.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the precise amounts paid to each of the following contractors by his Department in 1986-87 *(a)* The General Electric Co. plc., *(b)* Rolls-Royce Ltd., *(c)* British Telecommunications plc., *(d)* Lucas Industries plc., *(e)* BTR plc., *(f)* Austin Rover Group Ltd., *(g)* United Scientific Holdings plc., *(h)* Courtaulds plc. and *(i)* Massey Ferguson Holdings Ltd.

Mr. Sainsbury: The payments made to each of these companies in the year ended 31 March 1987 in respect of headquarter contracts were as follows:

	£ million
The General Electric Co. plc.	850·0
Rolls-Royce Ltd.	425·0
British Telecommunications plc.	56·0
Lucas Industries plc.	61·0
BTR plc.	27·0
Austin Rover Group Ltd.	47·0
United Scientific Holdings plc.	38·0
Courtaulds plc.	7·5
Massey Ferguson Holdings Ltd.	7·5

Nuclear Materials

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, *Official Report*, column *351*, 27 July, on nuclear materials requirements, in each case, a-e, mentioned, it would not be in the national interest to publish the details of the various nuclear materials requirements.

Mr. Sainsbury: It would not be in the national interest to publish the details of the various nuclear materials requirements because the information would be of value to a potential enemy.

Franco-British Nuclear Missile

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if discussions with France over the joint Franco-British development of a new air-launched stand-off nuclear missile system are still continuing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We are continuing to study a number of options for the replacement of the United Kingdom's free-fall nuclear bomb. A collaborative approach to the development of a successor system remains highly attractive and we are keeping closely in touch with both the United States and French Governments. We expect our continuing discussions with the French Government to concentrate on the future potential of and developments in the technology associated with current systems.

European Strategy Group (Studies)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the study by the European strategy group, "The Gorbachev Challenge" and "European Security," published by Nomos in Baden-Baden.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence library already possesses a copy of this publication.

Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out a list of serious verification problems remaining to be resolved before a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty could be concluded, to which general reference is made in paragraph 210, on page 11 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1988, volume 1, Cm. 344-1.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government's approach to the seismic verification of treaties constraining nuclear testing was set out in their paper submitted to the conference on disarmament in 1985 (CD 610), a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made by scientists at the Blacknest research centre into the implications for verification of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty of the United States-Union of Soviet Socialist Republics joint verification experiment test, conducted at the Nevada test site on 17 August.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The joint verification experiment carried out at the Nevada test site in August was designed to assess verification techniques to enable the ratification of the threshold test ban treaty. The test was neither designed nor intended to make progress towards the verification of a comprehensive test ban.

Aircraft Accidents

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many aircraft have been destroyed as a result of accidents by *(a)* Royal Air Force and *(b)* Royal Navy since the figures of total numbers allocated were published in the Annual Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1988; if he will list the accidents by date and aircraft type; and what is the estimated replacement cost for these aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: Accidents which have resulted in the loss or destruction of Royal Navy and Royal Air Force aircraft from 1 January 1988 to 25 October are as follows:

Date	*Service*	*Aircraft*
22 January 1988	RAF	Hawk
3 February 1988	RN	Sea King
2 March 1988	RAF	Bulldog
10 March 1988	RN	Lynx
30 March 1988	RAF	Tornado
11 April 1988	RAF	Lightning
20 April 1988	RAF	Phantom
6 May 1988	RAF	Chinook
10 May 1988	RAF	Tornado
13 May 1988	RAF	Hawk
20 May 1988	RAF	Harrier
30 May 1988	RAF	Meteor
14 June 1988	RN	Hunter
2 August 1988	RAF	Phantom
9 August 1988	RAF	Tornado × 2
18 August 1988	RAF	Harrier
6 September 1988	RAF	Bulldog
7 September 1988	RAF	Jaguar

Date	Service	Aircraft
23 September 1988	RAF	Phantom
13 October 1988	RN	Sea King
18 October 1988	RAF	Phantom

It is not our practice to publish unit production costs of equipments. For information on the costs of major equipment projects I refer the hon. Member to table 32 of volume 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" (Cm. 344-II).

Nuclear Strategic Forces

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the allocation of funds for nuclear strategic forces, as listed in table 2.3 in the Analysis of the Defence Budget on page 10 of volume 2 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates has risen from the 1982-83 figure of £327 million to the 1988-89 figure of £1,072 million.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The increased expenditure on nuclear strategic forces reflects the build up of Trident expenditure.

Budget (Funds Allocation)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out in the *Official Report* the specific areas of the allocation of funds in the defence budget covered by the phrases "other vessels", "other areas", "other aircraft", "other electronics", "other research and development", "other repair and maintenance" and "other support services" in table 2.3 of the analysis of the defence budget by programme section of the finance and trade chapter in the Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1988, volume 2, Cm. 344-II.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Table 2.3 of volume 2 of the statement attributes expenditure between the main elements of the defence programme. Expenditure which cannot readily be attributed in this way is included under general headings such as "other vessels", which includes, for example, survey ships and HMY Britannia; "other areas" which includes Belize; "other aircraft" which includes Andovers and Devons; "other electronics" which includes navigation and avionic systems; "other R and D" which includes management of R and D, and work undertaken for other Government Departments; "other repair and maintenance" which includes REME work, and repairs to Her Majesty's ships other than at Devonport or Rosyth; and "other support services" which includes defence attaches, and NATO infrastructure costs.

Warsaw Pact Central Front Forces

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the source of the data on the Warsaw pact central front forces as listed in figure 15, on page 61 of volume 1 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1988, Cm. 344-I.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have long been pressing the Warsaw pact in the mutual and balanced force reductions talks to publish proper data on its conventional forces in central Europe. In view of its continuing failure to do this, the figures for the Warsaw pact forces in Poland, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic, listed in figure 15 of volume 1 on the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988" (Cm. 344-I) are based on internal estimates produced by the Ministry of Defence.

Defence Estimates

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the source of information on which the statements on pages 56-59 of the annual Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988 that the Soviet Union is probably ahead of the West in specific charged-particle devices, some areas of high energy physics, the use of titanium for submarine construction and the development of mobile ground-based long-range ballistic missiles;

(2) what is the latest information he possesses on the location and site of the production and storage facilities in the Soviet Union of *(a)* chemical and toxic agents, *(b)* nuclear warheads, *(c)* ballistic missile delivery vehicles, *(d)* terrain contour guided missile vehicles and *(e)* strategic defence technologies.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the policy of Her Majesty's Government to give details of such information.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what considerations underlie his policy on publication of line by line costings in the annual Statement on the Defence Estimates.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The costings in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" are intended, within the constraints of cost and security, to provide Parliament and the public with information relevant to the Government's defence policies.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the sources of information on which figures for Warsaw pact capability are produced in figures 16, 17, 18 and 19 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1988, Cm. 344-1.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Warsaw pact does not for the most part produce reliable figures for its military forces. The figures for Warsaw pact capabilities provided in figures 16, 17, 18 and 19 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988" (Cm. 344-I) are therefore based principally on internal estimates produced by the Ministry of Defence. The Soviet Union did, however, provide data in connection with the INF treaty and this has been incorporated into figures 18 and 19.

Mr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what basis the 50 per cent. real term growth in Soviet expenditure since 1970 has been calculated, to which reference is made in paragraph 623, page 68 of volume 1 of the Statement on Defence Estimates 1988, Cm.344-1.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The statement on Soviet defence expenditure in paragraph 623 on page 68 of volume 1 "Statement on Defence Estimates 1988" (Cm. 344-1) is based on estimates produced by the Ministry of Defence of total Soviet defence outlays in roubles. In addition, the NATO definition of defence expenditure is used, since the published Soviet defence budget excludes expenditure on items such as the research, development and procurement of equipment.

NATO (Defence Budgets)

Mr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to which Governments of the

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation member states currently have a policy of publishing line by line costing of their annual defence budgets.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: NATO member states provide each other with classified information in a standard format on the details of their annual defence budgets. Published information, on the other hand, varies considerably beween countries, and my Department does not have a comprehensive knowledge of the policy of each country towards publication.

Chemical Weapons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the basis of the information for the statement on page 69 of volume 1 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1988, Cm. 344-1, that the Soviet Union commands the world's largest, most comprehensive and advanced capability for chemical and toxic agent warfare;

(2) if he will set out the basis on which Her Majesty's Government have judged the Soviet Union to have a substantial chemical weapons advance over the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no chemical weapons declared to NATO although the United States has a limited national retaliatory capability. By contrast, we assess that the Soviet Union has a massive offensive CW capability. It is not the policy of Her Majesty's Government to give details of such information.

Radiation (Leukaemia)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evidence was presented by his Department to the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) study on the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Aldermaston and Royal Ordnance Burghfield; what evaluation has been made of extant evidence linking leukaemias to the operation at these two plants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information supplied by my Department to COMARE to assist its examination of the evidence available into the incidence of cancer in the west Berkshire and north Hampshire area in which AWRE and ROF (Burghfield) are situated, (now known respectively as AWE Aldermaston and AWE Burghfield) has included data on liquid and airborne radioactive discharges as well as other detailed information on aspects of the operations involving radioactive and toxic materials conducted at the two sites, covering the whole period of their use as nuclear facilities. COMARE has been asked to evaluate the available epidemiological evidence on the incidence of childhood cancer, including leukaemia, in the area and comment on possible causes.

Once COMARE has completed its report, it will be published. I do not know what it will contain and in any event would not wish to pre-empt its findings.

South Africa (Uranium)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications of full membership by the Republic of South Africa of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) for the procurement of non-safeguarded uranium from South Africa for defence purposes.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Nuclear Tests (Verification)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if departmental scientists or scientific consultants to his Department have made any assessment of the report published in May by the United States Congress Office of Technology assessment on the comparative merits of using seismological verification techniques at distances many hundreds of miles from a nuclear test, against near-explosion use of the corrtex hydrodynamic measuring instrument.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department has studied the report with interest. However, the continuous reflectometry for radius versus time experiments (CORRTEX) verification technique is designed to obtain accurate yield assessments of known and notified nuclear tests through the co-operation of both parties to any treaty in which the use of CORRTEX is permitted. The technique is of no value in monitoring unnotified tests, particularly if conducted away from known testing sites.

Nuclear Submarines

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts have been placed by the Royal Navy for the procurement of long-term storage tanks for the Devonport royal naval dockyard stockpile of radioactive ion exchange resins from the refitting of nuclear submarines.

Mr. Sainsbury: No such contracts have been placed by the Royal Navy. Responsibility for providing suitable containers in which to store the spent resin falls to the dockyard contractor.

Nuclear-free Campaigners

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the confrontations between campaigners for nuclear-free seas in inflatable dinghies and Royal Navy ships at Scottish ports in July.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On 12 July, at Rosyth, six people in inflatable craft were apprehended by Ministry of Defence police and charged with offences under local byelaws. On 21 July, at Holy Loch, three people were apprehended by Ministry of Defence police on board a Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service vessel, and charged with similar offences. There were no confrontations with Royal Navy ships.

Unsafeguarded Uranium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the United Kingdom last received a consignment of unsafeguarded uranium for defence purposes; and from which country the uranium was imported.

Mr. Sainsbury: Uranium ore concentrate for defence purposes was last delivered to the United Kingdom in 1973. Further details cannot be given.

East-West Military Balance

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, in the light of the uncertainties, counting problems and difficulties in reaching reliable figures for Warsaw pact

forces and military capabilities, as set out on page 56 of the 1988 Statement on the Defence Estimates, he will make it his policy to instruct Ministers and spokespeople for his Department to ensure such qualifying statements are included in all speeches made or information materials produced on behalf of his Department when addressing the question of the East-West military balance.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As the essay on the conventional balance on pages 56 to 59 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988" (Cm. 344-I) makes clear, although there is scope for assessments to differ in detail, the estimates produced by the Ministry of Defence and by the most reputable independent bodies all show broadly the same picture of massive Warsaw pact numerical superiority in conventional ground and air forces. This central point has been made by successive Governments, and needs no qualification.

Atomic Weapons Establishment, Cardiff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total income from non-defence related work at the Atomic Weapons Establishment, Cardiff, plant in each of the past five years.

Mr. Sainsbury: The figures are as follows:

	£
1983-84	85,761
1984-85	163,789
1985-86	141,212
1986-87	93,046
1987-88	93,661

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies have been undertaken into the potential for undertaking non-defence related work at the Atomic Weapons Establishment, Cardiff, in the past five years.

Mr. Sainsbury: Some non-defence work is carried out. No such studies have been undertaken however.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

OECD

1. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster with which Organisation for Economic Co-operation and development countries the United Kingdom is running a trade surplus.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the 12 months to August, of the 23 other countries in the OECD, the United Kingdom had surpluses on visible trade with, in descending order of magnitude, the United States, Australia, the Irish Republic, Canada, Spain and Greece.

Private Industry (Assistance)

5. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list for each year since 1983 the total level of government financial assistance given to private industry under aid and job creation schemes and his estimates of the total number of jobs created by this assistance.

Mr. Newton: Expenditure on regional assistance in Great Britain in the five financial years beginning April 1983 was £730 million, £710 million, £690 million, £860 million and £660 million respectively. The programmes making up these totals are being listed in the *Official Report*. It is too soon to estimate the net effect of this expenditure on employment in the assisted areas. In gross terms some 185,000 jobs were created or safeguarded by projects for which offers of regional selective assistance were made from 1983-84 onwards, and 97,000 were created in projects for which payments were made under the revised regional development grant scheme.

In addition, the Government have directly assisted job creation and safeguarding through its network of inner city task forces in England; through the urban programme; and through the employment measures of the Department of Employment.

The annual figures quoted in the reply comprise expenditure under the following:

Original and revised Regional Development Grant schemes
Regional Selective Assistance project and training grants
Business Improvement Services Scheme (Better Business Services and Better Technical Services in Scotland)
Exchange Risk Guarantee Scheme
English Industrial Estates Corporation and the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies
Highland and Islands Development Board and the Mid-Wales Development Board

Balance of Trade

15. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the latest cumulative figures for 1988 on the balance of trade.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the eight months ended August there was a cumulative deficit on visible trade of £12·8 billion.

EC (Trade)

22. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster with which EEC countries the United Kingdom is currently running a trade surplus.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the twelve months to August the United Kingdom had surpluses on visible trade with Greece, the Irish Republic and Spain.

43. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster with which EEC countries the United Kingdom is currently running a trade deficit.

27. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster with which EEC countries the United Kingdom is currently running a trade deficit.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the twelve months to August the United Kingdom had deficits on visible trade with Belgium/Luxembourg, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal.

Knitwear

23. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether, in the light of the closure of the knitwear section of the Corah factory, he will take steps to promote the knitwear industry in the city of Leicester.

Mr. Newton: Eligible firms are able to apply for assistance under the enterprise initiative. They may, for example, obtain help for exporting and consultancy support for further development of their business.

The knitwear industry both in Leicester and elsewhere, also benefits from the provisions of the multi-fibre arrangement and other trade agreements limiting low cost imports.

Industrial Prospects

24. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the prospects for industry in the north-west.

Mr. Newton: I would expect the north-west to share in the continuing growth in United Kingdom output and investment.

Self-regulatory Organisations

25. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the chairmen of the self-regulatory organisations created under the Financial Services Act; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Maude: I meet the chairman of the various self-regulatory organisations recognised under the Financial Services Act from time to time when there is either a specific need or a suitable opportunity. The subjects discussed range widely over the whole area of regulation of financial services.

Barlow Clowes

26. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a further statement on the Barlow Clowes case, with particular reference to Sir Godfray Le Quesne's inquiry.

Mr. Maude: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 20 October at columns 1005-1009.

Inner City Task Forces

28. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress of the inner city task forces.

Mr. Newton: The inner city task forces are central to the Government's action for cities. Their objectives are to secure more jobs for local people, to improve their employability, to encourage and facilitate local enterprise, and to support environmental and crime prevention initiatives which can contribute to these objectives.

Since the task forces began their work in 1986, they have supported more than 900 projects. These have generated or safeguarded about 4,000 jobs, facilitated around 20,000 training places and involved around 400 companies.

37. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has plans to establish any more inner city task forces.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans at present to establish any more task forces. However task forces are not meant to be a permanent feature in their areas and the number and locations of them may change.

Post Office Users Council

29. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met representatives of the Post Office Users Council; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Forth: The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs met with the chairman and secretary of the Post Office Users Council for Scotland on 4 May. A number of issues were discussed, ranging from the organisation and staffing of the council itself to more general matters of Post Office operations in Scotland.

Mergers

30. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any proposals to change his criteria for referring merger plans to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Maude: No. On 3 March 1988 the Government published the results of a review of law and policy on merger control. We concluded that the effect of a merger on competition should continue to be the main criterion in deciding whether to make a reference to the MMC. We see no justification for a further review of this policy.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will seek to expand the role of the Office of Fair Trading to enable it to consider not only the potential adverse consequences of a proposed merger, but the potential enhancement to competition of a proposed merger; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: In advising my right hon. and noble Friend whether to refer a merger to the MMC, the Office of Fair Trading already takes into account the effect of the merger on competition, whether beneficial or adverse. This is consistent with my right hon. and noble Friend's policy of making competition the main criterion in deciding whether or not to refer. However, each case must be judged on its merits. It is no part of the function of merger control policy to seek to judge the relative merits of different mergers.

European Single Market

31. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what monitoring he has undertaken of the level of awareness among business men of the single market achieved by his Department's "Europe—Open for Business" campaign.

Mr. Maude: Nine out of ten firms in this country are now aware of the significance of the single market. Since the campaign was announced DTI has had a substantial evaluation exercise to monitor the effectiveness of the campaign.

46. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on progress with regard to arrangements made by his Department to assist British firms to take full advantage of the completion of the internal market in 1992.

Mr. Maude: Nine out of ten firms in this country are now aware of the significance of the single market challenge. Firms throughout the country need to take action to prepare for it. DTI's "Europe—Open for Business" campaign provides the most comprehensive information service available to business anywhere in the Community.

59. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a further statement on progress

being made by the United Kingdom and the other member states on measures to create the single internal market by 1992.

Mr. Maude: The Government remain strongly committed to the completion of the single European market by the end of 1992. It will bring major benefits to business and consumers.

Over 60 separate single market measures have been agreed this year alone, including major proposals such as the liberalisation of capital movements, the mutual recognition of professional qualifications and the liberalisation of international road haulage. This brings the total number of measures agreed since 1985 to some 200.

At the European Council at Hanover in June, EC Heads of Government set four priorities for future work —public procurement, standards, financial services and intellectual property. All these are United Kingdom priorities. We also wish to see early progress on telecommunications, transport and food law.

I represented the United Kingdom at the first International Market Council of the Greek Presidency on 14 October. The council agreed six single market measures including a directive to ensure greater transparency in public works procurement; a directive to facilitate free trade in electrical apparatus by ensuring that it does not produce or receive interference; and measures to cut barriers to trade in fruit juices, jams, motorcycle parts and certain fertilisers. The council also discussed two further food law harmonisation directives, relating to labelling and foods for particular nutritional uses, and there was a preliminary discussion of a Commission memorandum about proposals for a European company statute.

We are maintaining rapid progress towards the completion of the single market. We will continue to make sure that markets are opened up in ways which encourage enterprise and increased competitiveness.

Teachers (Industrial Experience)

32. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps have been taken by the education unit within his Department to ensure that school teachers receive some experience of British industry.

Mr. Forth: One of the aims of the enterprise and education initiative, which was launched on 28 September, is that 10 per cent. of teachers should have the opportunity to gain experience of the world of business. DTI is developing a teacher placement programme with advice from education and industry, and it is proposed to have it in place early in 1989.

The programme will be completely voluntary and will supplement and increase any local teacher placement activity which may already be taking place.

Steel Industry

33. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a further statement on the prospects for the steel industry.

Mr. Newton: The steel sector is, of course, affected by the general level of economic activity, but demand for steel continues to be strong in key areas such as the construction, automotive and packaging industries.

Manufacturing (Productivity)

34. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest figures he has for the productivity of manufacturing industry; and what were the comparable figures one year ago.

Mr. Maude: On the basis of 1985 = 100 the output per person employed in manufacturing industry rose from 113·1 in August 1987 to 121·5 in August 1988.

Japan

35. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what initiatives his Department has undertaken to advise and support British businesses wanting to enter Japanese markets.

Mr. Alan Clark: The opportunity Japan campaign, launched earlier this year by my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, aims to heighten United Kingdom companies' awareness of the increasing opportunities offered by the Japanese market and to stress the arguments for tackling it now with appropriate long term commitment.

Over 2,000 business leaders have been briefed by the campaign to date. An action line has been established within the DTI's exports to Japan unit to facilitate rapid access to the very considerable range of information and advice available. Its number is (01) 215 4269.

Insurance Brokers Registration Council

36. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the chairman and secretary of the Insurance Brokers Registration Council; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Maude: I last met the chairman and registrar of the Insurance Brokers Registration Council on 5 May 1988 when we discussed the regulation of general insurance intermediaries.

Trade and Industry (Wales)

38. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his Department's responsibilities for trade and industry in Wales.

Mr. Forth: The responsibilities of the Department of Trade and Industry extend to Wales. In matters of regional industrial policy, operational responsibility in Wales lies with the Secretary of State for Wales and the Welsh Office.

Competitiveness

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has recently received on Britain's competitiveness and its effect on trade in manufactures.

Mr. Alan Clark: Most contacts which my Department has with industry and commerce involve matters having a bearing on United Kingdom competitiveness.

Financial Services

40. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what estimate he has of the contribution made to Britain's economy by the financial services industry.

Mr. Maude: The financial services industry makes a large and growing contribution to the economy of the United Kingdom. In 1987 it employed approximately 1·2 million people, some 5 per cent. of all United Kingdom employment; it accounted for about 10 per cent. of the total domestic output of the United Kingdom economy; it contributed a surplus of over £9 billion to the current account of the balance of payments.

Overseas Companies (Investment)

41. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many overseas companies have set up operations in Britain; and what is his estimate of how many jobs such overseas investment has created and is sustaining.

Mr. Alan Clark: Since my Department's Invest in Britain bureau started formally recording individual investment projects in 1979, there have been 2,434. These include the establishment of a new business, the expansion or acquisition of an existing business, and involvement in joint venture. Altogether, from the information provided by the companies themselves, these have been responsible for the creation of nearly 160,000 jobs and, since 1983, are known to have safeguarded some 95,000 others.

Manufacturing Output

42. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what estimates he has made of growth in manufacturing output in the coming year.

Mr. Maude: The Chancellor of the Exchequer will be publishing a new set of forecasts in the Autumn Statement.

Venture Capital Industry

44. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the current situation of Britain's venture capital industry.

Mr. Newton: The British venture capital industry has grown rapidly in recent years and is making a significant contribution to financing the development of new and growing businesses.

Engineering Products

45. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the balance of trade for engineering products for the most recent period for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure three years earlier.

Mr. Alan Clark: The balance of trade in engineering products (engineering products are defined as SITC 71-77) for the year to date and for the comparable period of 1985 is as follows:

Overseas Trade Statistics basis seasonally adjusted

	£ million
1988 January to August	−1,992
1985 January to August	−249

North-East (Overseas Investment)

47. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his estimate of the extent of overseas investment in the economy of the north-east, and of how many jobs it is supporting there.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest figures available for capital expenditure by overseas companies for manufacturing activities in north England—which includes Tyne and Wear, Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland and Cumbria—is:

	£ million
1983	71·7
1984	106·3
1985	124·6
1986	104·0

In 1986 this supported a total of 35,300 jobs.

Source: Business Monitor, Report on the Census of Production, Summary Tables, PA 1002.

Manufacturing Investment

48. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the latest figure for manufacturing investment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Revised estimates of investment in the second quarter of 1988—the most recent available—together with other investment figures were published on 15 September 1988 in the form of a press release. The estimate for manufacturing industry, including leased assets, is £2·9 billion at 1985 prices and seasonally adjusted —the highest quarterly figure recorded.

Manufactures

49. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further estimate he has made of the likely trade balance in manufactures for the current year.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will publish his forecast of trade balances with his Autumn Statement in the usual way.

Estate Agents

50. **Mr. French:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to implement all the provisions of the Estate Agents Act 1979.

Mr. Forth: I have no immediate plans to implement sections 16, 17, 19 and 22 of the Estate Agents Act 1979.

However I am currently exploring with the leading estate agency bodies the scope for self-regulatory action by the trade to supplement the existing consumer protection provisions of the Act.

Manufacturing (Leicester)

51. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he has to assist manufacturing industry in Leicester in the light of recent closures of local manufacturing firms.

Mr. Newton: Industry in Leicester, as in all parts of the country, can benefit from assistance offered under the enterprise initiative. In addition, firms located in the Leicester urban programme area can benefit from higher levels of support for consultancy projects.

Competition and Mergers

52. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received concerning his policies on competition and mergers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My Department has received, and continues to receive, many representations from hon. Members and others expressing a wide range of views.

Mergers

53. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a further statement on mergers policy.

Mr. Maude: As recently as 3 March 1988 the Government published the results of a review of law and policy on merger control. We concluded that the effect of a merger on competition should continue to be the main criterion in deciding whether to make a reference to the MMC.

Japanese Cars (Imports)

54. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he has received from the EEC about curbs on the imports of Japanese cars; what is the purpose of such proposals; and if cars manufactured in the United Kingdom by Japanese firms will be affected.

Mr. Alan Clark: The European Commission has not put forward proposals for future policy towards imports of Japanese cars in the Community.

Company Bids

55. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce legislation to provide that a mandatory offer shall be made for a company when a person or persons acting in concert own or control 10 per cent. or more of a company's voting shares.

Mr. Maude: No. The City code on takeovers and mergers requires an offer to be made at a 30 per cent. holding, at which point control is deemed to be obtained. I do not favour reducing the threshold to 10 per cent., nor embodying the requirement in legislation.

British Steel

56. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he now expects to be able to transfer British Steel to the private sector.

Mr. Newton: Her Majesty's Government intend to transfer British Steel to the private sector in the second half of this November. A pathfinder prospectus will be issued on 28 October.

Commercial Leases

57. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to review consumer protection policy and legislation as it relates to tenants and leaseholders in the light of complaints about commercial leases containing onerous provisions in respect of future rent increases; what representations he has received on this matter about the activities of Blue Dolphin Fish Restaurants Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Questions relating to matters involving commercial leases, tenancy and rent are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Competitiveness

58. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how the competitiveness of *(a)* British and *(b)* West German industry has changed in the last year.

Mr. Newton: There is no single satisfactory measure of competitiveness since price and non-price factors are both important. The only reliable indicator of all-round competitiveness is a country's share of world trade. Between 1986 and 1987 the United Kingdom increased its share of the value of exports of manufactures of the main manufacturing countries from 7·6 per cent. to 8·1 per cent. and West Germany from 20·7 per cent. to 21·5 per cent.

Aerospace Products

60. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will review the categories by which sales of aerospace products are classified for statistical purposes.

Mr. Newton: The Department undertakes regular reviews of the product classifications for all manufacturing industries. The review of the aerospace industry has recently been completed. The first results on the new basis have just been published in the *Business Monitor* PQ 3640. There are no plans for any immediate further review of this industry.

International Textiles Policies (Study)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement outlining the reasons for the need to commission an independent study of the effect of international textiles and clothing trading policies in the United Kingdom economy; what was its precise terms of reference; who is undertaking the study; and what it is expected to cost.

Mr. Alan Clark: The study was commissioned to help the Government play a full part in future international discussions covering trade in textiles and clothing. These include current GATT negotiations and future negotiations on the multi-fibre arrangement, the current phase of which extends to 1991. The study will assess the economic impact of the mult-fibre arrangment and the associated voluntary agreements on the United Kingdom textiles and clothing industries and on the economy more widely, including United Kingdom consumers of such products.

Professor Silberston has been asked to look at the costs and benefits of protection for a number of sectors within the textile and clothing industries. Apparel will be distinguished from non-apparel and the group 1 products (the most sensitive categories under the MFA) will be assessed separately.

Particular emphasis is to be placed on developments since 1984, which was the terminal date for the previous study ("The Multi-Fibre Arrangement and the United Kingdom Economy") carried out by Professor Silberston for the Department. The study will consider the effects of both protection of the United Kingdom market and the implications for United Kingdom exports of protection in major overseas markets. The economic effects of proposals now being put forward for the future development of international trade in textiles and clothing will also be considered.

Professor Aubrey Silberston, Emeritus Professor in the University of London, will undertake the study. The total cost of the work, which will take some 10 months, is expected to be about £70,000.

Motor Vehicles (Purchaser Protection)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any plans to seek to amend the Supply of Goods Act to give greater protection to the buyers of new or second-hand cars against the manufacturers or sellers of such vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: In their report on the Sale and Supply of Goods (Cm. 137, May 1987), the Law Commission and the Scottish Law Commission proposed changes to the Sale of Goods Act 1979 which applies to all goods including new and second-hand cars. The Government have consulted widely on the Commissions' proposals and hopes to announce their intentions in the very near future.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has about the law protecting purchasers of cars in the United States with particular reference to the right to money back in cases of defects; if he has any plans to introduce similiar legislation in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I understand that laws in the United States known as "Lemon Laws" typically provide that if defects appear in a new vehicle within a certain time (often one year) or certain mileage after delivery, and the vehicle is still defective after it has been submitted to four attempts at repair, the manufacturer must replace the vehicle with a comparable one or refund the purchase price to the consumer, less a reasonable allowance for use. I have no present plans to introduce similar legislation in the United Kingdom.

Incorporation

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on proposals to enable a firm to incorporate itself as a European company and on his assessment of the implications of this for British companies; and whether United Kingdom tax and legal provisions would continue to apply to such a company.

Mr. Maude: The European Commission has invited comments from the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and both sides of industry on an outline proposal for a European company statute. This would be a new set of laws to be applicable, if the companies concerned so wished, to companies formed by the joining together of two or more existing companies from different member states. The resultant "European company" would be governed partly by a new set of laws to be drafted and included in the statute and partly by the national laws of the relevant member states.

The Commission's memorandum suggests that a central feature of the statute should be a legal requirement that, subject to the agreement of the workers, a European company must have one of three alternative forms of employee participation described in the memorandum.

In order to assist the Government in forming a view on these proposals, the Department of Employment and the Department of Trade and Industry have jointly issued a consultation document.

Although all the responses to that consultation have not yet been received and analysed, the preliminary indications are that British companies do not in general see a need for such a statute; they do not appear to have problems in operating across borders which would be helped materially by the proposals and few would be likely to take up the option to use this new form of joining with other companies.

It is clear that the overwhelming majority of British companies also share the Government's view that it is wrong in principle to set out specific requirements in legislation for employee participation. The Government are committed to the concept of employers informing and consulting their employees but it must be for those employers and employees to determine the form of employee involvement which best suits their particular circumstances.

If the Commission's proposals were to go ahead, extensive discussions between all member states and the Commission would be necessary before the application of tax and legal provisions could be established. As I have already indicated, the outline proposal is that some aspects would be covered by provisions—yet to be drafted—in the statute and some by national law.

Foreign Investors

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will make it his policy to set a ceiling on the level of shareholding which foreign-owned or based companies will be permitted to hold in British Steel after privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: For a limited period following privatisation, individual shareholdings in British Steel (or shareholdings held by persons acting in concert) will be restricted by the company's articles to 15 per cent. of the ordinary shares in British Steel. These provisions are protected by a special share held by the Government, and cannot be changed without the Government's prior consent. The arrangements will remain in force until 31 December 1993.

The provisions apply irrespective of nationality. The Government have made it clear that in the case of British Steel they see no grounds for discriminating between shareholders on the basis of nationality.

Company Law Reform

Mr. Stern: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to bring forward proposals for the reform of company law.

Mr. Maude: My Department intends to introduce legislation at the earliest opportunity.

Consumer Credit Licensing

Mr. Curry: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the system of consumer credit licensing under the Consumer Credit Act 1974.

Mr. Maude: My Department has been reviewing the operation of consumer credit licensing and I have concluded that there should be greater powers for the authorities to take swift action against business practices which are a threat to the consumer.

My Department is therefore issuing today a consultation document containing proposals to make changes to the current licensing system and to give the Director General of Fair Trading more flexible and appropriate powers of enforcement. These will include the power to prohibit a business from trading with immediate effect where necessary, to seek information from businesses, and to attach conditions to a licence. I am also considering the removal of the current exemption from licensing of businesses not lending more than £30, which has been argued to be a barrier to effective enforcement of the Act against illegal moneylenders.

In the light of these changes I propose also that in future only lenders and hirers will automatically need to be licensed by OFT, and that in the exercise of his powers the DGFT will be able to take into account the activities of ancillary credit businesses, such as debt collectors, employed by lenders and hirers. Ancillary credit businesses will have to apply for a licence if the DGFT has reason to believe that they represent a threat to consumers; for instance, if their controllers have previously been refused a licence or have certain convictions or if their trading practices give rise to concern. At present, licences need to be renewed only after 15 years. I propose that in future licences should run for no more than three years.

I believe that these changes will focus regulatory resources where they are most needed, on those who pose a threat to consumers, while relieving a significant administrative burden on a wide range of law-abiding businesses.

My Department is seeking comments on these proposals before 2 December.

Regional Aid

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what initiatives are planned by his Department to increase the efficacy of the Government's regional aid programme.

Mr. Newton: An effective range of measures designed to encourage enterprise and economic growth in all parts of the country is available from DTI under the Enterprise Initiative. Extra help is already offered to firms in assisted areas and urban programme areas under the regional initiative.

North East Shipbuilders Ltd

Mr. Maples: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the latest position on the plans for the disposal of North East Shipbuilders Ltd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: British Shipbuilders received a number of bids for NESL by the deadline of 30 September. These are still being evaluated. Further additional information has also been submitted by some of the bidders, including a recent amendment to one of the bids. The Government are concerned to ensure that every avenue has been explored before a decision is taken. I have therefore asked John Lister to invite each of the bidders to submit any final amendments that they may wish to have considered by noon on Friday 28 October. I shall make a full statement to the House as soon as the evaluation is complete.

TRANSPORT

M1 Traffic Flow

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the road usage measured by vehicles per hour along the stretch of the M1 between Barlborough and Heath in Derbyshire.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department records road usage in terms of average annual daily traffic. This is the total number of vehicles in one year divided by 365. Hourly figures are not available. In 1987 the traffic flow expressed as AADT on the M1 between Barlborough and Heath was 57,000 vehicles. This figure includes traffic in both directions.

A1 Traffic Flow

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the road usage measured by vehicles per hour along the stretch of the A1 between Markham Moor roundabout and Five Lane ends roundabout in Nottinghamshire.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department records road usage in terms of average annual daily traffic. This is the total number of vehicles in one year divided by 365. Hourly figures are not available. In 1987 the traffic flow expressed as AADT on the A1 between Markham Moor roundabout and Five Lanes End roundabout was 26,000 vehicles. This figure includes traffic in both directions.

A12 (Accident Statistics)

Mr. Carttiss: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the accident figures for 1988 to the latest date and for 1987 and 1986, for the stretch of the A12 between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft; and whether he will make a statement about a new junction at Hopton-on-Sea to provide for safer access to and from the A12 to Hopton village.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Accident figures for this section of the A12 trunk road are as follows:

	Fatal	*Serious*	*Slight*
1986	0	4	15
1987	1	1	8
[1]1988	2	7	2

[1] January to June.

There are no plans for a new junction on the A12 at Hopton-on-Sea.

The erection of warning signs to improve safety at this junction has been agreed with Norfolk county council which, as the Department's agents, is considering whether any further measures are necessary and justified on safety grounds.

Dangerous Goods (Air Transport)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to how many licences were issued by the Civil Aviation Authority for the carrying of dangerous goods by air; and what proportion covered the transport of toxic wastes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Matters of aviation safety are the responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority. Permissions

are not issued for individual consignments of dangerous goods. They permit air operators to carry all such goods providing they comply with the International Civil Aviation Organisation's technical instructions for the safe transport of dangerous goods by air. The number of permissions currently on issue is 145: 44 to United Kingdom operators (for carriage anywhere in the world) and 101 to non-United Kingdom operators (for carriage in the United Kingdom). Toxic waste is regarded as an item of dangerous goods. The amount carried compared to other dangerous goods is not separately identifiable.

Radioactive Materials

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, *Official Report*, column *247*, 27 July, on radioactive materials transit, what policy considerations underlay the decision to require the central record keeping of nuclear materials lost in transit since 1987.

Mr. Portillo: Central recording of radioactive materials lost in transit was introduced as part of a general improvement of the controls exercised by the Government in this area.

Rheidol Narrow Gauge Railway

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail regarding the sale of the Rheidol narrow gauge railway line between Aberystwyth and Devils bridge, Cardiganshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that the British Railways Board has entered into a conditional contract with the Brecon Mountain Railway Co. The Secretary of State's consent will be needed in due course to the sale, to the closure of the existing BR service, and to the making of the light railway transfer order.

Motorway Service Areas

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek to amend that part of the Highways Act 1980 which prohibits guests staying for more than two consecutive nights in any motel or motor lodge at a motorway service area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The Highways Act 1980 does not directly prohibit guests from staying more than two consecutive nights at motorway service areas' motels or lodges. Under section 239(4)(c) we are empowered to acquire land solely for the provision of service stations to be used in connection with the construction, maintenance or use of the motorway. This means that service areas cannot be allowed to become destinations in themselves. Where, accordingly, the Department consents to the erection of MSA motels and lodges by operators on the areas leased to them, it is on the understanding that guests should not stay more than two consecutive nights. It is not proposed to amend section 239(4)(c). The principle that motorway service areas should be there to serve travellers on motorways rather than be an attraction in their own right seems a wholly reasonable one if we are to get the best out of our motorways in terms of promoting safe and free flow of traffic.

King's Cross

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration was given by his Department to the plans of London Underground Limited to refurbish part of King's Cross underground station prior to the fire in November 1987.

Mr. Portillo: The Department was aware that King's Cross was included in the modernisation programme for a number of stations approved by the GLC in 1981. It was also informed that work was due to begin in the summer of 1987 on the Metropolitan and Circle line areas of the station, the only areas at King's Cross remaining to be completed under the 1981 programme.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he or any of his ministerial colleagues or departmental officials have been consulted by Mr. Fennel about all or any part of the contents of his report into the King's Cross fire.

Mr. Portillo: No.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received the Fennel report into the King's Cross fire.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 24 October 1988.

M66

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* the dates of discussion between his Department or consultants, and the North West water authority about the route of the M66 over Audinshaw reservoirs; and how far those discussions have produced agreement about alternative water supplies, who will pay for such works and how far carrying out that work will delay opening of the M66 for Denton northwards.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Officials and the Department's consultants have met the North-West water authority many times over the past seven years to discuss the provision of water storage capacity equivalent to that which will be lost as a result of land taken from the reservoir for construction of the Manchester outer ring road. Present proposals envisage the construction of a pipeline from Fernilee reservoir to Audenshaw reservoir. The details of a formal agreement and costs are under discussion. The reasonable costs of the replacement facility would be paid by the Department as compensation to the water authority under rule 5 of section 5 of the Land Compensation Act 1961. The construction of the pipeline will not delay the M66 works.

Major Transport Projects

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many major transport infrastructure projects have been privately financed since 1979.

Mr. Portillo [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 October 1988, c. *97-8*]: Information concerning railways, light rail, river services and roads were omitted in error. The complete answer follows:

Since 1979 the transport infrastructure projects, costing over £10 million, financed fully or partly by the private sector and known to my Department are:

Channel Tunnel

The construction of the tunnel—Europe's largest ever private sector civil engineering project—has been entirely financed through the international capital markets. There is no Government funding or financial guarantee; this is ruled out by the treaty and the Channel Tunnel Act. The total financing requirement is £6 billion. This has been raised through £1 billion of equity and £5 billion in credit facilities with an international group of lending banks.

Ports

The privatised Associated British Ports was formed in 1983. Total capital expenditure of the 23 major port authorities from 1980 to 1987 was £534·5 million, including the following major port developments:

Dover

Reclamation of camber and creation of new berths in Eastern Docks (over 5 years) £20 million

Immingham

Deepwater LPG terminals—new dock facilities £35 million

Ramsgate

New linkspans, land reclamation and outer wall £17 million

Southampton

Container handling cranes and machinery £17 million

Airports

British Airports Authority, privatised in 1987, invested £182 million in capital projects in the year to March 1988 including the north terminal at Gatwick and the new terminal under construction at Stansted. In addition, London City airport was built by John Mowlem and Company plc at a cost of some £32 million and is owned by them. The airport opened in October 1987.

Railways

Paddington to Heathrow rail-link is to be financed largely from the private sector.

Light Rail

The cost of constructing an extension to Bank of the Docklands Light Railway and upgrading the initial railway includes a contribution of £68 million from private developers Olympia and York. A further extension to Beckton, if approved by Parliament, will be paid for by the LDDC from increased land values accruing as a result of the railway's construction. Private sector involvement is also expected in the Greater Manchester Metrolink light rail scheme and in the Avon and Leeds projects that are being developed.

River services

The Thamesline high-speed riverboat service is a totally private sector public transport operation linking Chelsea, Westminster, Canary Wharf and Greenwich.

Roads

The Dartford-Thurrock crossing was begun in August this year at an estimated cost of £86 million. The potential for private sector involvement in the second Severn crossing is being fully explored.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 27 October 1988

PRIME MINISTER

Okeford Fitzpaine

Q81. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Okeford Fitzpaine.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Sawbridge

Q85. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Sawbridge near Rugby.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

North Devon

Q138. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to pay an official visit to north Devon in the next 12 months.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Regulatory Units

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* in tabular form details of all the regulatory units or structures operating within Government Departments during each of the past five years including the number of civil servants working in them, together with their grades and salaries and the proportion of administrative and professional staff, the average period in which they are in post and if any fees paid for licences granted cover the cost of the regulatory procedures involved.

The Prime Minister: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Benefit Savings

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister why the Department of Social Security uses a multiplier different from that used by the Department of Employment to calculate weekly benefit savings; what multipliers are used; what consideration has been given to alternative multipliers; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The multiplier used by the Department of Social Security in calculating benefit savings is 32 and is based on a study by the Department's operational research services, a copy of whose report was placed in the Library on 12 June 1985.

The Department of Employment uses a multiplier of 22. The difference reflects the type of fraud involved and varying methods of investigation. The Department of Employment's multiplier is being further considered by a study involving that Department's research and evaluation branch.

Environment

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she has made any formal response to the European Community Environment Commissioner following his speech in Blackpool in early October criticising her address to the Royal Society in September and Her Majesty's Government's record on the environment.

The Prime Minister: No. I have received no communication from the European Community Environment Commissioner.

Silver Tableware

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if she will seek to use in 10 Downing street the silver tableware produced in the silver schools of the London county council and belonging to the former Greater London council and now held in storage by the London residuary body.

The Prime Minister: No.

Business-Education Relationships

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards involvement by the education system in business and vice versa; what is her assessment of the mutual advantages of such a relationship; what are the implications for this policy of the decision by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to charge value added tax on gifts by business to universities; what steps she proposes to take to reverse that decision; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government have introduced a wide range of initiatives which enable the education system at all levels to develop effective continuing partnerships with business, to provide a mutual awareness of opportunities and transfer of knowledge and expertise.

There is no VAT on unconditional gifts of money to universities. Nor does the mere acknowledgement of such support attract VAT, for example the naming of a university chair after the donor. But where payment is conditional upon the university supplying clearly identifiable benefits in return, VAT is chargeable. This has always been the position and each case is considered on its particular facts.

Sight Tests

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total number of sight tests carried out under the National Health Service in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Northern Ireland during 1987.

The Prime Minister: The information is as follows: *(a)* 651,175; *(b)* 1,021,712; *(c)* 242,709.

Engagements

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 October.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 October.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 October.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 October.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 October.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Minister's Statement

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for a copy of the statement made by the Minister for Overseas Development to the conference on the environment and the Pacific region, held in London in early October, to be placed in the Library; and if he will make a statement on the outcome of the conference.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have arranged for a copy of my speech to be placed in the Library.

A report of the conference, including recommendations made at it, is being prepared by the Commonwealth Institute, which hosted the event with strong support from the New Zealand Government. It should be available next month.

The conference discussed a wide range of environmental issues of concern to Commonwealth countries in the Pacific. It was attended by Government representatives and other individuals from those countries, from Australia and New Zealand and from the United Kingdom.

Central America

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state the latest available figures by land and type of technical assistance and bilateral aid given to Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Belize, and Mexico; and when was the last time a project for such aid or assistance was approved for Nicaragua.

Mr. Chris Patten: The figures for bilateral aid in 1987 are as follows:

£'000

	Financial aid	*Technical cooperation*
Costa Rica	[1]2,228	356
Panama	—	72
Nicaragua	—	—
Guatemala	—	1
El Salvador	367	44
Belize	1,385	693
Mexico	30	600

[1] Provided through the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

The last direct bilateral aid to Nicaragua was for scholarships which finished in 1986. We have also provided aid for projects jointly funded with British voluntary agencies.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Dyslexia

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what resources are devoted in *(a)* Basildon and *(b)* England and Wales to the training of teachers in detecting and teaching dyslexic children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The allocation of resources, both for in-service training of teachers (apart from the LEA training grants scheme) and for the education of particular groups of children is a matter for determination by each local education authority.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is his Department's latest estimate of dyslexic children and adults respectively; and how this compares with each of the last five years;

(2) what is his Department's latest estimate of dyslexic *(a)* children and *(b)* adults residing in the Basildon area; and how this compares for each of the last five years, respectively;

(3) what information his Department has on the number of children under 16 who suffer from dyslexia; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what proportion of under achievement of school children is due to dyslexia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Since the implementation of the 1981 Education Act in 1983, this Department has not collected national or local statistics of children by category of handicap. This information is not therefore available.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what research his Department is carrying out into dyslexia; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how much was spent by his Department on carrying out research into dyslexia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My Department is not funding any research in this field at the present time. A total of five projects on specific learning difficulties were funded by this Department in recent years. Details of these projects, their completion dates, the researchers and the level of funding are (i) The prevalence and characteristics of children with specific learning difficulties, April 1983, Dr. D. A. Dobbins, £157,546 (ii) Development of a classroom-based integrated diagnostic/remediation procedure for failing readers, April 1983, Mr. G. E. F. Trickey, £98,385 (iii) The teaching of seven-year-old dyslexic pupils, June 1982, Professor P. R. Miles, £4,600 (iv) Action research project for dyslexic pupils 1981-82, June 1982, Mr. V. Tyre and Mr. P. Young, £40,750 (v) Follow-up study of 90 dyslexic pupils, June 1982, Professor T. R. Miles, £630.

In addition, my Department sponsored a seminar held on 22 May 1984, to disseminate the findings of the first four of the above research projects. Given this considerable funding effort, I think it is now appropriate that the Department's research funding into children with special educational needs should concentrate on other aspects of concern in the special education field.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the British Dyslexia Association; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has received no representations from the British Dyslexia Association in recent months.

School Staff

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* teachers, *(b)* lecturers, and *(c)* non-teaching staff were employed in the public sector education system in the Basildon area for each of the last five years.

Mr. Butcher: Figures for Basildon are not available because the Department does not collect this information below the level of the local education authority. The numbers employed in the public sector education system in Essex are as follows:

	Teachers[1]	*Lecturers*[2]	*Non teaching staff*[3]	
			Full-time	*Part-time*[4]
January				
1984	12,643	2,195	3,340	13,861
1985	12,788	2,184	3,353	14,240
1986	12,401	2,223	3,376	15,077
1987	12,285	2,198	3,347	15,688
1988	12,398	2,187	3,379	16,174

[1] Teachers in maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools and those providing education otherwise than at school. As recorded by the local education authority on Form 618G.

[2] Full-time equivalent lecturers in further education establishments adult education centres and youth clubs and centres, as recorded by the local education authority on Form 618G.

[3] From Essex's Quarterly Manpower Information Reports for preceding December.

[4] Number of staff (ie head count.). Full-time equivalents based on national factors are not thought to be reliable for individual authorities.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the achievements of his Department in reducing drug abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Education support grants have been provided by the Department for the last three years to facilitate the employment by local education authorities of drugs education co-ordinators. the third year of funding in 1988-89 will support 70 per cent. of LEA expenditure of up to £2·3 million. Support in 1989-90 will amount to 50 per cent. of LEA expenditure up to a total of £2·4 million. In 1989-90 the Department is also for a third year supporting drugs education in-service traning for teachers under the LEA training grants scheme. The Department will fund 70 per cent. of the cost of such training up to a total expenditure of £1·7 million by LEAs. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these measures in reducing drug abuse.

Business and Schools

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress is being made on fostering links between business and schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Links between business and schools provide a valuable means of introducing children to the realities of industry, both its responsibilities and its opportunities. At present, two out of three children, before they leave school, receive direct experience of industry through a work experience placement. My Department is working with the DTI and Training Commision to ensure that all children benefit from this experience.

Seven-Year-Olds (Testing)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he anticipates that the first testing of seven-year-olds will be introduced into schools in England and Wales.

Mrs. Rumbold: The first national assessment of seven year olds is planned for 1991. The first fully reported run will be in 1992.

Mathematics (Report)

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will consider extending the closing date for responses to the consultative report, "Mathematics for Ages 5-16";

(2) how many individuals and organisations have applied for the consultation document, "Mathematics for Ages 5-16", and have not yet been sent one.

Mrs. Rumbold: The National Curriculum Council is responsible for consultations on the document "Mathematics for Ages 5-16". The NCC has distributed over 85,000 copies of the document, including some 40,000 copies to statutory consultees and schools and some 45,000 on request to other individuals and organisations. All requests received up to 24 October have been dealt with.

The NCC's 26 October deadline for comments on the proposed attainment targets and programmes of study has given statutory consultees up to 10 weeks to react. There is no case for extending this deadline.

SCOTLAND

Rating Reform

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what new arrangements he proposes to apportion the costs of provision of joint police forces and fire services between Lothian region and Borders region on the introduction of the community charge legislation in April 1989.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The new basis of apportionment of costs will require to be incorporated in schemes made by Lothian and Borders regional councils. These schemes have not yet been formally submitted to the Secretary of State for his approval, but I understand that the two councils are proceeding on the basis that both police and fire costs should be apportioned on the basis of population as estimated under paragraph 2(3) of schedule 4 to the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987.

Rail Bridge, Cockburnspath

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he now expects the work on the replacement rail bridge on the A1 trunk route at Cockburnspath to commence.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Work is expected to start during the last week in November or the first week in December.

Hospital Consultants

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the percentage of hospital consultants in Scotland who are female.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At 30 September 1987 female hospital consultants represented 12·1 per cent. of all hospital consultants employed by the National Health Service in Scotland.

Unrestricted Medical Services

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to increase the number of female consultants and general practitioners giving unrestricted medical services.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am currently considering measures to improve career patterns for young doctors in the hospital service in Scotland, as part of a drive to improve our hospital medical staffing structure. These measures include improved training programmes, better career advice and counselling, and more part-time registrar posts. All of these should help hospital doctors —including women doctors—to achieve their full career potential.

In the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" we announced our intention to discuss with the profession what arrangements might be made to ensure that more women are encouraged to enter and remain in general practice. This subject forms part of the confidential discussions at present taking place with the profession on the various proposals in the White Paper.

Lennox Castle Hospital

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 28 July, *Official Report*, column *472*, what information he now has as to the current bed occupancy of wards 7 and 8 at Lennox castle hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have had inquiries made of the greater Glasgow health board.

Wards 7 and 8 are for mentally handicapped people with behavioural disturbance. Eight of the 12 places in ward 7, the admission unit, are occupied. Further increases to the target occupancy level of 90 per cent. are dependent upon the rate of referrals from general practitioners and other consultants. Six of the 12 places in ward 8, the intensive care unit, are occupied. A further four residents will be admitted next week, taking the ward to its target occupancy level.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has concerning the current nurse staffing at Lennox castle hospital and the expected increase for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have had inquiries made of the greater Glasgow health board.

The average whole-time equivalent nursing staff at Lennox castle hospital has increased from 617 in 1987-88 to 634 in the period April to September 1988. Since 1986-87 the ratio of residents to nurses has improved from 1:0.52 to 1:0.69, an increase of 33 per cent. in the total number of nurses per resident. The health board has allocated £466,000 in the current financial year for increases in nursing staff at the hospital. This is equivalent to £599,000 in a full year and will be used to improve the proportion of trained nurses, and increase their total number.

Scottish Medical and Dental Defence Union Scheme

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration has been given to the inclusion of non-British graduates employed by Health Care International in the Scottish Medical and Dental Defence Union scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Consideration of what indemnification to provide against claims for damages made against its medical and other staff is a matter for Health Care International.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging Scanners

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of magnetic resonance imaging scanners in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are three nuclear magnetic resonance imaging scanners in National Health Service hospitals in Scotland.

Rent Arrears

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing levels of rent arrears for public sector housing in Scotland and in each district and islands area, for each month since 1 April 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on local authority, new town and SSHA rents and rent arrears is collected centrally from authorites on an annual basis at 30 September each year. Figures for 1987 are set out in the table.

Rent arrears for Scottish public sector housing as at 30 September 1987

	£
Scotland	26,658,649
Local Authority	24,441,926
Berwickshire	40,908
Ettrick and Lauderdale	29,501
Roxburgh	158,920
Tweeddale	9,950
Clackmannan	501,064
Falkirk	477,299
Stirling	466,600
Annandale and Eskdale	99,888
Nithsdale	126,891
Stewartry	27,523
Wigtown	99,446
Dunfermline	460,340
Kirkcaldy	462,442
North East Fife	67,633
Aberdeen	802,565
Banff and Buchan	253,788
Gordon	64,638
Kincardine & Deeside	39,669
Moray	48,770
Badenoch and Strathspey	12,838

	£
Caithness	37,837
Inverness	143,103
Lochaber	43,327
Nairn	7,385
Ross and Cromarty	170,923
Skye and Lochalsh	38,418
Sutherland	17,429
East Lothian	231,065
Edinburgh	1,147,598
Midlothian	247,049
West Lothian	163,544
Argyll and Bute	73,676
Bearsden and Milngavie	42,126
Clydebank	455,683
Clydesdale	117,243
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	537,420
Cumnock and Doon Valley	311,903
Cunninghame	256,818
Dumbarton	421,723
East Kilbride	32,312
Eastwood	35,173
Glasgow	9,550,000
Hamilton	428,508
Inverclyde	264,764
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	190,345
Kyle and Carrick	220,143
Monklands	671,501
Motherwell	935,361
Renfrew	766,543
Strathkelvin	723,992
Angus	99,175
Dundee	1,113,017
Perth and Kinross	111,454
Orkney Islands	50,878
Shetland Islands	92,685
Western Isles	441,133
New Towns	922,372
Cumbernauld	143,184
East Kilbride	167,179
Glenrothes	313,304
Irvine	101,116
Livingston	197,589
SSHA	1,294,351

Inshore Fisheries (Helicopter Surveillance)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of the 24 separate patrols undertaken in the current financial year up till 19 October by helicopters hired for surveillance of Scottish inshore fisheries have been specifically or mainly for the surveillance of salmon fisheries.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The 24 flights by helicopters in the current financial year up to 19 October were specifically for the surveillance of Scottish inshore fisheries and, as such, each flight was dedicated to protect the various sectors and detect infringements in those waters. Such flights are not aimed at any one individual component of the inshore fisheries.

Nuclear Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any requests from the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to conduct test drilling at its Dounreay site in preparation for Nirex's search for a suitable site for a repository for low and intermediate-level nuclear waste.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No such requests have been received.

Set-aside Scheme

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current level of applications for the set-aside scheme for Scottish farmers; and what is the acreage per Scottish region and per parliamentary constituency which will be removed from agricultural use as a result of *(a)* applications already processed and *(b)* applications pending decision.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not available in the form requested. Provisional returns indicate that over 400 applications were submitted by the closing date of 21 October and that almost 15,000 hectares of eligible land have been proposed for withdrawal from production this year.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been, to the latest available date, the expenditure incurred by his Department in *(a)* advertising the set-aside scheme, *(b)* offering advice to National Farmers Union offices and individual farmers and *(c)* approved annual payments for the transfer of land to non-agricultural purposes.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: *(a)* No expenditure has been incurred by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland on paid advertisements. The cost of an explanatory leaflet on registration for set-aside sent to all arable farmers in Scotland was about £2,000;

(b) Advice to farmers and others on the details of the scheme has been provided by staff as part of their normal duties;

(c) The precise cost of annual payments to farmers who have applied to enter the scheme this year cannot be calculated until all the applications have been processed but we estimate that expenditure in 1989-90—when the first payments will be made—will be of the order of £3 million.

Teachers

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total number of teachers employed in Scottish day schools by age band and by sex.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The full-time equivalent numbers of teachers in education authority and grant-aided schools at September 1987 are given in the table.

Age	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
<24	223·9	1,464·7	1,688·6
25 to 29	1,136·2	3,519·1	4,655·3
30 to 34	2,599·3	5,044·6	7,643·9
35 to 39	3,881·9	5,866·5	9,748·4
40 to 44	2,946·7	5,531·2	8,477·9
45 to 49	1,963·9	4,478·7	6,442·6
50 to 54	1,756·5	3,474·7	5,231·2
55 to 59	1,297·8	2,637·0	3,934·8
60+	607·9	555·1	1,163·0
TOTAL	16,414·1	32,571·6	48,985·7

Education Authorities

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female members of the directorate in each of the Scottish education authorities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Head Teachers

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list any day schools in each region and division which have a person other than a registered teacher employed as head teacher.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not held centrally on the registration status of teachers in particular posts. However, in terms of the Schools (Scotland) Code 1956, as amended, education authorities can only employ registered teachers.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to assist and co-ordinate action by Scottish local authorities for the safe disposal of unwanted domestic refrigerators and other equipment containing chlorofluorocarbons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The vaporisation of chlorofluorocarbons does not present any significant risk to human health and no advice to local authorities is considered necessary.

There is at present no environmentally safe disposal method that local authorities could use, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment through his Department actively pursues means to reduce emissions with user industries.

Housing (Mortgage Defaults)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many houses have been repossessed as a result of mortgage default in the Glasgow, Govan constituency in each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not available.

ENERGY

Gas and Electricity Bills

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many (i) gas bill and (ii) electricity bill debts he estimates there are in Wales, expressed as a percentage of domestic credit customers for each of the years 1986, 1987 and for each of the months of 1988.

Mr. Peter Morrison: This is a matter for the chairmen of the utilities concerned. I have asked them to write to the hon. Member with the information.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he proposes to initiate discussions between the gas and electricity boards and the local authority associations consequent upon the implementation of the new housing benefit regulations, with a view to minimising indebtedness.

Mr. Parkinson: No. Both industries operate a code of practice on the payment of bills which contains a number of safeguards for those in genuine difficulty and sets out a variety of "pay as you go" schemes to help consumers. The code stresses the importance of consumers who are having difficulty paying their bills informing their gas or electricity supplier at an early stage.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his reply on plutonium on 20 July, *Official Report*, column 666, he will publish in the *Official Report* the figures for 1987-88 on plutonium produced at nuclear power stations, civil plutonium stocks and reprocessing activities at Sellafield.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The information requested was published on 13 October 1988 and placed in the Library of the House. A copy was also sent to the hon. Member.

Hazards Programme

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to include nuclear installations in the regulations covered by the control of industrial major accident hazards programme.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Consideration is being given to the possibility of applying to nuclear installations arrangements of a kind comparable with those provided for under the CIMAH regulations.

Nuclear Plants

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department's research programme or that sponsored by his Department through the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, into decommissioning of nuclear plants, has taken into account the implications of bacteriological contamination of nuclear reactor cores and radioactively contaminated pipework.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's programme of research into reactor decommissioning relates primarily to gas cooled reactors where problems of bacteriological contamination are not expected to occur. Such contamination would be taken fully into account were it to become a relevant issue.

Gas and Oil Platforms

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many prosecutions his Department has taken against companies for breaches in health and safety law on offshore gas and oil platforms; how many of these prosecutions have been successful; and what were the mean and modal fines imposed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Details are available only from 1977. Since then 57 prosecutions of companies have been brought for breaches of health and safety requirements on offshore installations. 43 of these resulted in convictions. The mean and modal fines imposed were £1,100 and £500 respectively.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will list the requirements, showing the Acts under which they appear, for safety training for contract workers on oil and gas rigs.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 places a general obligation on all employers

—whether they are operators or contractors—to provide training to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of their employees. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (Application Outside Great Britain) Order 1977 extended this obligation offshore.

In addition, there are specific requirements under both the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971 for the training of employees working with lead, asbestos and ionising radiations, and for medical staff and radio operators. There are also requirements for the appointment of competent persons to be responsible for the control and safety of operations.

Piper Alpha

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what resources of his Department were involved in work subsequent upon the Piper Alpha incident.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Twenty of my Department's staff were engaged at various stages of the work leading to the interim report of the Piper Alpha technical investigation into the causes of the disaster, which was released by Lord Cullen, the chairman of the forthcoming public inquiry, on 29 September 1988. My Department has so far authorised payments of about £200,000 for goods and services supplied in connection with work following the disaster under the authority of the advance from the Contingencies Fund which my right hon. Friend announced on 21 July 1988, at columns 835-36, in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell).

Health and Safety

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will indicate the differences on the practices and procedures covering health and safety as between onshore and offshore installations; and whether he has any plans to harmonise them.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The general provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 applies both onshore and offshore. Safety onshore is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

It is not possible to list all the differences in practices and procedures, since they are not all governed by regulations. The offshore safety regime has been designed to take into account the special requirements of the offshore environment. Where appropriate, onshore regulations are already applied offshore.

Hinkley Point

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department has made any approach to the science policy research unit in Sussex university to obtain copies of the "trad", "mod" and "tech" computer simulations of the electricity supply system in the United Kingdom as part of his departmental input to the Hinkley Point inquiry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has made no such approach.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will instruct the chairman of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to inform the EC Energy Commissioner, M. Nic Mosar, that the European Commission has permission to release details of the 180 kg of United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority origin plutonium exported to Belgium under an agreement between the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and Euratom of 3 May 1968, in regard to the Commission response to written question 2932/87 by Llewellyn Smith MEP, given on 21 September.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. This information is commercially confidential.

"Magnox, the Reckoning"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the book "Magnox, the Reckoning", published by Friends of the Earth on 10 October.

Mr. Parkinson: A copy is on order for my Department's library.

Hinkley Point

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his policy towards his departmental witness at the Hinkley Point C public inquiry answering questions on the merits of departmental policy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: As recognised in rule 12(3) of the rules governing the Hinkley inquiry procedure, it is not customary for an official representative of a Government Department to answer questions on the merits of Government policy. As was made clear by my representative at the first Hinkley pre-inquiry meeting, I see no reason for my Department's witness to do so in this case; the merits of the relevant Government policy have been and will be the subject of parliamentary debate.

Uranium

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement upon the import of uranium from Namibia since 1977.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Imports of uranium ore from Namibia for the United Kingdom's civil nuclear programme were made from 1977 to 1984 by the Central Electricity Generating Board, on behalf of the British Civil Uranium Procurement Directorate. There are no plans to import further supplies from Namibia.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he envisages any changes in responsibility for the nuclear safety research programmes at present funded by his Department.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Following discussions with interested parties, it has been decided that the Health and Safety Commission will take over the Department of Energy's responsibility for contracting research programmes related to the safety of established thermal nuclear power systems. The transfer covers the existing programmes funded by my Department and carried out by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority on pressurised water reactor safety and advanced gas-cooled reactor safety, together with relevant parts of the general

nuclear safety programme. The transfer to the Health and Safety Commission will take place on 1 April 1990 and the Health and Safety Commission's responsibilities will be managed on its behalf by the Health and Safety Executive. The Health and Safety Executive has considerable technical expertise and experience in managing research programmes.

Following a review to be carried out by the Health and Safety Commission and Health and Safety Executive of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's nuclear safety research programmes to decide on the areas of work appropriate for them to sponsor, the Health and Safety Executive will, on the Health and Safety Commission's behalf, recover, from nuclear site licensees and licence applicants, the costs of research for which it becomes responsible under the new arrangements. Legislation to enable this will be introduced as soon as parliamentary time permits.

My Department will continue to fund directly a programme of generic nuclear safety research to enable the authority to carry out wider ranging work which is not related to nuclear systems currently licensed or contemplated for licensing in the United Kingdom and is therefore not appropriate for the Health and Safety Commission to sponsor under these arrangements.

Thermonuclear Fusion

Mr. Heseltine: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the current level of support for the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's programme of research in controlled thermonuclear fusion.

Mr. Parkinson: The Government earlier this year supported the European Council of Minister's decision to extend the life of the Joint European Torus (JET) project at Culham by two years to the end of 1992, to enable it to complete its agreed scientific objectives. This will mean further expenditure on JET of £75 million a year, which is partly funded by the United Kingdom. As a consequence, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority will continue to carry out research and development in support of JET and its programme of work on the tokamak route to fusion. Support for other lines of fusion research will be reduced gradually. Additional resources will be made available to enable the UKAEA's laboratory at Culham to expand its commercial work, building on the laboratory's existing success in marketing its expertise and the high quality and reputation of its staff.

Cash Limits

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any changes to announce to his Department's cash limits for 1988-89.

Mr. Parkinson: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class VI, vote 3 is increased by £0·90 million from £25·888 million to £26·788 million. This is to cover expenditure in relation to the Piper Alpha technical investigation and public inquiry. This increase is offset by a reduction of £0·90 million in the cash limit for class VI, vote 2 from £278·822 to £277·922 million. These changes will not therefore lead to an increase in the planned total of public expenditure.

Fawley B Power Station

21. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has fixed the date for the public inquiry into the proposals by the Central Electricity Generating Board to construct the Fawley B power station and coal jetty.

Mr. Parkinson *[pursuant to the reply, 13 June 1988, c.31]*: On 3 February 1988 the Central Electricity Generating Board applied for my consent under the Electricity Act 1909 to construct a coal-fired generating station at Fawley in Hampshire. The board was required to advertise this application, following which I received some 4,000 objections to it, including ones from the relevant local planning authorities. A public inquiry into the application is therefore necessary. Since the application to construct the generating station was made the Government have announced their plans for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry and have been preparing for its precise implementation in consultation with the industry.

The CEGB has told me that, in its assessment of future electricity demand and the needs of the industry, it believes that Fawley B is needed. However, after privatisation, the decision whether the power from the station is needed will rest with the distribution companies who will succeed the area boards. In the CEGB's view Big "G", who will own and operate Fawley B if it is built, will not wish to proceed with the station unless he has assurances from the area boards that they wish to take the power from it. Discussions between the generation and distribution sides of the industry are in progress, but the area boards are not yet in a position to give the assurances sought.

Against that background the CEGB feels that it should not proceed with the application until the area boards are in a position to give definite assurances and has therefore asked that the public inquiry arrangements should not be made for the time being.

After careful consideration I have decided that I will not proceed for the present with the public inquiry arrangements, but I have asked the CEGB to let me know by 1 May 1989 whether it wishes to proceed with the application or to withdraw it. Should the CEGB tell me that it wishes to proceed, in order to ensure fairness to all concerned, I will require it to readvertise the application so that any person, who is not already registered as an objector, will have the opportunity so to register.

In the circumstances, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has decided that the board's present application to him for an order to be made under the Harbours Act 1964 in respect of a jetty associated with the generating station should not proceed further, although if next year the CEGB indicates that it wishes to proceed with the power station application, he recognises that this would be likely to be accompanied by a fresh application under the Harbours Act 1964.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police (Complaints)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether it is proposed to consider changes in the law relating to the investigations of complaints against the police, in the light of representations from the chairman of the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Hurd: I intend shortly to circulate a consultation document seeking comments on the recommendations in the authority's triennial review report for 1985-88. When I have received these I shall consider how best to take forward the recommendations.

INFORM

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the size of the grant to INFORM: and for how many years it has been made;

(2) on what terms INFORM receives a Government grant.

Mr. John Patten: A grant of £25,000 was first made to INFORM (Information Network Focus on Religious Movements) for the period 1 October 1987 to 31 March 1988 and a further sum of £45,000 is being paid in 1988-89. It is proposed to give £35,000 and £15,000 in 1989-90 and 1990-91 respectively, subject to review of INFORM's performance. No money will be paid thereafter.

The grant is made to assist INFORM in its work of providing impartial information about cults, by providing a contribution towards its administrative expenses. Conditions relating to accounting and reporting arrangements are attached to the grant.

Civil Defence

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied with the progress being made in the preparation of fire brigade war plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Fire brigade war emergency planning in England and Wales is under review in conjunction with Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services. It is expected that initial findings will be available in early 1989.

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what auxiliary fire equipment held in store for civil defence purposes is available in emergency to organisations other than local authority fire services; what restrictions are placed on its use; and what arrangements are made for the crewing of the appliances.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Auxiliary fire equipment held for civil defence purposes, including "Green Goddess" appliances, pipes, hoses and other ancillary equipment can be made available on loan to any competent organisation or authority which may be responsible for dealing with emergencies. They would not normally be available in other than exceptional circumstances. Restrictions apply so as to preclude modification of the equipment or loan to a third party without Home Office consent; and a charge would normally be made. Arrangements for the crewing of appliances would normally be a matter for the borrowing organisation.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further response he has had to his proposals on crime prevention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: There has been an encouraging response to our crime prevention policy, which stresses the role of the whole community in tackling crime. For example: there are now nearly 60,000 neighbourhood watch schemes across the country covering some three and a quarter million households; there have been nearly 200,000 separate requests for copies of our crime prevention handbook, over 1·5 million of which have been distributed; and all of the nine areas invited to take part in the first year of our safer cities programme have expressed an interest in participating, and in three of these work has now begun.

Cruelty to Animals

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many persons have been *(a)* charged with and *(b)* convicted of cruelty to animals in 1988; what were the figures for each of the last five years; and what percentage the former is of the latter;

(2) how many persons have been *(a)* charged with and *(b)* convicted of cruelty to animals in the Basildon area; what percentage the latter is to the former; what were the figures for each of the last five years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to his question yesterday. Information for 1988 is not yet available.

Capital Punishment

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further representations he has received on capital punishment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 22 July, at column 876.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been *(a)* charged with and *(b)* convicted of, (i) murder, (ii) child destruction, (iii) illegal abortion, (iv) rape, (v) unlawful sexual intercourse with a person under 13 years, (vi) unlawful sexual intercourse with a defective and (vii) manslaughter in *(aa)* the Basildon area and *(bb)* England and Wales in each year since 1958.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested in respect of England and Wales for all the offences specified except unlawful sexual intercourse with a defective is published annually in volumes 1 and 2 of "Criminal statistics, England and Wales Supplementary tables".

Details for the Basildon area are not available, but the following table gives information for Billericay petty sessional division and Chelmsford Crown court for 1986 and 1987. Comparable data for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

For offences of procuring an illegal abortion, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to his question yesterday.

Persons proceeded against and found guilty of selected offences
England and Wales

	Number of persons[1]	
	1986	*1987*
Billericay psd:		
Proceeded against[4]		
Murder	3	—
Manslaughter[2]	—	1
Child destruction	—	—

	1986	1987
Rape[3]	2	5
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13	—	—
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective[3]	—	—
Found guilty		
Murder	—	—
Manslaughter[2]	—	—
Child destruction	—	—
Rape[3]	—	—
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13	—	—
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective[3]	—	—
Chelmsford Crown Court:		
For trial		
Murder	6	3
Manslaughter[2]	8	6
Child destruction	—	—
Rape[3]	8	13
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13	4	—
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective[3]	—	—
Found guilty		
Murder	3	3
Manslaughter[2]	6	3
Child destruction	—	—
Rape[3]	6	10
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13	4	—
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective[3]	—	—
England and Wales		
Magistrates' Courts:		
Proceeded against[4]		
Murder	515	496
Manslaughter[2]	83	80
Child destruction	—	—
Rape[3]	918	1,039
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13	129	155
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective[3]	9	9
Found guilty		
Murder	—	—
Manslaughter[2]	—	—
Child destruction	—	—
Rape[3]	2	2
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13	5	5
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective[3]	—	—
Crown Court:		
For trial		
Murder	217	223
Manslaughter[2]	273	289
Child destruction	—	1
Rape[3]	586	643
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13	100	107
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective[3]	7	6
Found guilty		
Murder	179	166
Manslaughter[2]	243	264
Child destruction	—	1
Rape[3]	395	417
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13	95	97
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective[3]	6	6

[1] As shown by the records held centrally, which are approximate.
[2] Includes manslaughter due to diminished responsibility and 'other manslaughter'.
[3] The figures for rape include unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective.
[4] Including those committed to the Crown Court for trial.

TV Licence Fees

Mr. David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is yet able to announce the level of the television licence fees to take effect from 1 April 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: On 27 October last year, at column 204, I announced that the licence fees for the three years starting from 1 April 1988 would be calculated in accordance with changes in the retail prices index, which determine the rate of increase of pensions and other state benefits.

The RPI figure for September, published on 14 October, showed a year-on-year increase of 5·9 per cent. I have accordingly decided that from 1 April 1989 the colour licence fee should be £66 and the monochrome fee £22. The necessary regulations will be laid before the House in due course.

Passport Applications

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the processing time for passport applications at all United Kingdom passport offices; what further progress has been made towards computerisation of passport offices and dispersal of work on postal applications from London to Glasgow; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Processing times for 14 October are shown in the table, together with those of six months and a year ago for the purpose of comparison. Urgent applications are given priority and are not normally subject to any delay.

Passport Office
Average time between receipt of application and issue of passport (working days)

	24 October 1988	24 April 1988	23 October 1988
London	13	56	[1]44
Glasgow	12	33	9
Peterborough	8	30	13
Newport	11	19	10
Liverpool	8	14	4
Belfast	2	3	2

[1] Resulting from the effects of industrial action.

The issue of machine readable passports in the European Community common format, which commenced in Glasgow on 15 August, is progressing satisfactorily, and plans for the next phase of the computerisation programme are well advanced. The phased transfer of postal applications from London to the computerised and enlarged Glasgow passport office commenced on 4 October. We aim to complete the dispersal of jobs and transfer of work from London to Glasgow by May 1989 when the London passport office will deal only with applications lodged by callers and all applications posted from the Greater London area will be handled in Glasgow. In association with these changes, the London public counter will, from 31 October 1988, close at 4 pm as opposed to 4·30 pm at present, though arrangements to deal with urgent inquiries up to 6 pm will remain.

Employment Protection Certificates

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many ministerial certificates, by grade or group, have been issued under section 138(4) of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 in each of the last three years for which figures are available; and how many of those issued have been renewed;

(2) for what period ministerial certificates issued under section 138(4) of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 are valid; after what period they are renewable; and to which classes of Crown employees they are generally issued.

Mr. Hurd *[holding answer 28 July 1988]:* There has been no change since my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister replied to the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) on 31 January 1984, at column 120.

HEALTH

Better Health (Self-help)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on how many health authorities have organised campaigns to promote better health by means of self-help since January 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Although detailed information is not available, I understand that nearly all health authorities mount health education campaigns which include a strong element of self-help. Health promotion is normally considered as part of ministerial reviews and we expect all health authorities to make active progress on the prevention of ill health through health promotion.

During the first year of the "Look After your Heart" campaign, grants were made to 95 health authorities to support heart disease prevention projects at local level, and 57 health authorities took stands and four showed their "health buses" at the first anniversary event of "Look After your Heart" at the National Exhibition centre, Birmingham in May.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to review the administration of payments made to haemophiliacs suffering with HIV infection.

Mr. Mellor: A new charitable trust, known as the Macfarlane trust, was established on 10 March 1988 specifically to give financial help to haemophiliacs infected with HIV and to their dependents. The Government made an ex-gratia payment to the trust of £10 million and by regulations have ensured that payments from the trust are disregarded for the purposes of housing benefit, income support and family credit. A majority of the trustees were appointed by the Haemophilia society. I believe that we have thereby fulfilled the promise made to the House by my predecessor on 17 November 1987.

It is now a matter for the trustees to allocate their funds in the way which will best meet the needs of those eligible for assistance. I understand that so far the trust has received about 350 applications and made some 297 payments.

Adoption

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give, for 1984 and each subsequent year for which figures are available, the number and age breakdown of children placed for adoption; how many of these children were placed for adoption while in local authority care; and how many of the latter were placed without parental consent.

Mrs. Currie: The available information on placements for adoption is set out in the table, which shows children and young persons placed for adoption by the local authority during the year ending 31 March 1984, by age group, for both children in local authority care and other children. Comparable information is not available for later years. However, some information on placements for adoption is available for the year ending 31 March 1987 and provisional estimates show that about 900 children in local authority care were placed for adoption at that date.

No figures are collected centrally on the number of children placed for adoption from care without parental consent.

Children and young people placed for adoption by the local authority by whether child was in care and by age group during the year ended 31 March 1984, England and Wales

	Children who were in the care of the local authority	*Other children*	*Total*
Under one	831	517	1,348
1 to 4	434	103	537
5 to 9	270	71	341
10 to 15	112	16	128
16 and over	10	3	13
Age not known	106	49	155
TOTAL	1,763	759	2,522

Magnetic Resonance Imaging Scanners

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the number of magnetic resonance imaging scanners in National Health Service hospitals paid for by charitable donations.

Mrs. Currie: To date the capital cost of nine magnetic resonance scanners in National Health Service hospitals has been paid for by charitable donation. One of the nine received some contribution from the Department of Trade and Industry and another from a regional health authority.

The revenue costs of all National Health Service scanners are paid from a variety of sources and include charitable donations, research bodies such as the Medical Research Council and Cancer Research Campaign, with approximately 50 per cent. receiving funding either wholly or in part from district health authorities.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the number of magnetic resonance imaging scanners in National Health Service hospitals and the number in the private sector.

Mrs. Currie: There are 19 magnetic resonance imaging scanners in National Health Service hospitals, including Scotland, and five in the private sector.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has for increasing the number of magnetic resonance imaging scanners in National Health hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: Within the total resources available to them, health authorities determine their own level of spending on capital equipment in the light of local knowledge, health needs and requirements. The Government believe that decisions about the relative priority of particular equipment, such as magnetic resonance imaging scanners, amongst the competing demands for resources, are best taken locally.

Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will consider amending the current birth, marriage and death certificates for England and Wales to include the additional information already required in Scotland.

Mrs. Currie: Yes. We will consider my hon. Friend's suggestion. I refer him to my announcement on 29 July 1988 at column *803*, that a consultative document is to be issued on reforming the registration service.

General Practitioners (Telephones)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what sum of money he has (i) earmarked and (ii) paid to the British Telecom authorities for priority fault repair services for general practitioners.

Mr. Mellor: Negotiations with British Telecom over these costs are still in progress. Formal agreement on a price framework may be reached in November. Meanwhile a without prejudice payment of £1,363,900 in respect of services for family practitioners was made in March 1988 to cover a 10 month period to 31 March 1988.

Radiation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence exists for a causal relationship between exposure to radiation doses and cancer.

Mrs. Currie: Evidence over many years from laboratory research in animals and from epidemiological studies suggest that exposure to various forms of radiation can cause certain cancers. The available evidence has been reviewed by international groups including the International Commission for radiation protection, the committee on the biological effects of ionising radiation and the United Nations scientific committee on the effects of radiation whose reports are publicly available.

Illegitimate Births

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the rate of overall illegitimate births as a percentage of all births in each of the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is as follows:

Percentage of births occurring outside marriage, United Kingdom 1978 to 87

Year	*Percentage*
1978	10·0
1979	10·6
1980	11·5
1981	12·5
1982	14·1
1983	15·4
1984	17·0
1985	18·9
1986	21·0
1987	22·9

An article describing recent trends in births outside marriage will appear in a forthcoming issue of Population Trends.

Deaf People

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he intends to take for the assessment and rehabilitation of those patients previously diagnosed as suffering from mental disorders, whose difficulties are subsequently discovered to arise from profound deafness; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: All staff working with mentally disordered people need to be alert to the possibility of hearing loss and this was drawn to the attention of staff working with mentally handicapped people in the 1984 report "Helping Mentally Handicapped People with Special Problems". Where hearing impairment is suspected, the patient is referred for skilled audiological advice. Future action must depend on the particular circumstances of the case.

St. Catherine's House, London

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to improve the facilities for members of the public visiting St. Catherine's house, Kingsway, London, to consult the births, marriages and deaths registers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I am aware that at peak times the public search room at St. Catherine's house can become uncomfortably crowded. However, it now includes all the ground floor space available in that building and there are no immediate opportunities for further expansion: improvements to other facilities such as public telephones and the general decor are being made. The need for people to visit the search room personally is also being diminished by the sale of microfilm copies of the registration indexes to local record offices, libraries and other interested bodies, and OPCS is looking at ways in which the indexes might be made available for sale in the microfiche form which will be easier to store and handle.

Chronically Ill Patients

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision is made for reimbursing chronically ill patients who use their own transport when travelling for treatment at hospital in a separate health district; how many reimbursements were made in the last year for which figures are available; and what was the average reimbursement made.

Mrs. Currie: Transport by the ambulance service is provided free of charge for those patients considered medically unfit to travel by other means. Help is available under the hospital travel costs scheme for those patients on low incomes who are not eligible for ambulance service

transport, including those who use their own transport. Information on the number of reimbursements made under this scheme, and the average amount paid, is not collected centrally.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates he has as to the annual cost of inter-authority transport arrangements for chronically ill patients requiring treatment in a hospital run by a different health authority; what was the average cost per patient in the last year for which figures are available; and what was the total number of journeys undertaken.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not collected centrally.

National Health Service (Staff Contracts)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the present contracts concerning medical staff including doctors working in the National Health Service are due for renegotiation.

Mr. Mellor: The contractual arrangements for doctors in the hospital and community health services are agreed as a result of national negotiations between the health departments and the professions. There are no plans at present for negotiations on this subject.

Following the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" (Cm. 249) published in November 1987, changes are to be made to general practitioners' terms of service and remuneration system. Discussions on implementing these changes are under way with representatives of GPs.

Spectacle Vouchers

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost to public funds for the whole of the United Kingdom for each of the past three years for which figures are available of the spectacle voucher schemes for the exempt groups for general optical service dispensing.

Mr. Mellor: The spectacle voucher scheme in the general ophthalmic service was introduced from 1 July 1986 and the only cost figures available, therefore, are £33·135 million for 1986-87 and £60·207 million (provisional) for 1987-88 for the United Kingdom.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital beds there were in *(a)* the Greater London area and *(b)* the rest of the country in May 1979, or the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

Average daily available beds, National Health Service hospitals

	1979	*1986*	*Percentage change*
Greater London	64,376	52,708	−18
The rest of England	297,294	263,006	−12

Reductions in bed numbers do not necessarily mean loss in services. Better use of beds, changing clinical practices and the ability to treat more cases as day cases without patients having to stay in hospital overnight mean that many more cases are being treated in the facilities available.

Heart Disease

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the rate of heart disease in *(a)* the north-west and *(b)* the south-east regions.

Mrs. Currie: The table gives the direct age-standardised mortality rates for ischaemic heart disease for the north-west and south-east standard regions for 1982 to 1987. These rates have been adjusted to take account of the differences in the age distributions between areas, and permit direct comparisons to be made.

Direct age-standardised mortality rates per 100,000 population for underlying cause as ischaemic heart disease (ICD(9)[1] 410-414) for usual residents of north-west and south-east standard regions by sex
All ages standard population England and Wales
1982 to 1987

	Sex			
	Male		*Female*	
	Area of usual residence			
Year	*North-west*	*South-east*	*North-west*	*South-east*
1982	418	330	298	228
1983	423	332	302	229
1984	421	324	311	231
1985	439	334	325	243
1986[2]	425	321	315	236
1987[2]	401	315	311	228

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.
[2] Excludes deaths at age under 28 days.

North-west and south-east standard regions are not precisely conterminous with health authority areas, being based on local authority boundaries; they correspond with health authority areas as follows:

North-west standard region
This consists of the following health authorities:
Mersey regional health authority
and North-western regional health authority, with the exception of part of Tameside and Glossop district health authority, which is in East Midlands standard region.

South-east standard region
This consists of:
North West Thames regional health authority
North East Thames regional health authority
South West Thames regional health authority
South East Thames regional health authority
and the following districts within Oxford regional health authority:
Basingstoke and North Hampshire
Isle of Wight
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire
Southampton and South West Hampshire
Winchester
plus part of Salisbury district health authority
together with the following districts within Wessex regional health authority:
Aylesbury Vale
East Berkshire
West Berkshire
Milton Keynes
Oxfordshire
Wycombe

Ancillary Workers

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department intends to fund fully the cost to the health authorities of the increase in the hourly rate of pay of ancillary workers resulting from the reduction in the working week from 40 to 39 hours; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The reduction of one hour in the hours of the standard working week from 12 December was part of the settlement agreed for improvements in the pay and conditions of service of National Health Service ancillary staff for 1988-89. Health authorities are expected to plan flexibly to meet pay increases and other costs from within the pool of resources available to them. This pool includes their increased cash allocations for the year, cost improvement savings and funds raised through income generation schemes.

Professions Allied to Medicine

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will publish the Health Department's written evidence to the review body for the 1989 review of the pay of the professions allied to medicine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The evidence on the professions allied to medicine was published today and copies are available in the Library.

This year's review body recommendations on the pay of the professions allied to medicine were accepted in full by the Government with effect from 1 April. Those recommendations will have added, in total, some 8·8 per cent. to the pay bill. Rates of pay have now risen on average by nearly 40 per cent. since 1979.

The health departments believe that, against that background, the existing remuneration levels should be maintained. Further large across-the-board increases are not a cost-effective means of maintaining an adequate workforce in the professions. A more accurately targeted response is needed to direct resources towards particular skills and geographical shortages. The review body's decision to introduce pay supplements for staff working in London represents a significant step in that direction. We are keen to see greater scope for geographical variation in pay, and we will be putting further evidence to the review body about this.

Intensive discussions have taken place over the past year on a new grading structure for the professions allied to medicine. Unfortunately agreement has not been reached in time for the 1989 review. We hope that discussions can continue with a view to reaching an agreement for the next round.

I have also arranged for copies of the health departments' evidence to the review body on nurses' pay, which was published on 4 October to be placed in the Library.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Overseas Pensioners

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimates he had made of the costs of paying fully indexed state retirement pensions to all United Kingdom pensioners in each of *(a)* Australia, *(b)* Canada, *(c)* New Zealand, *(d)* the United States of America and *(e)* the 12 member countries of the European Economic Community; and in which of these countries such indexed pensions are in fact paid.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The current costs in the 1987-88 tax year for paying United Kingdom retirement pension and widows benefits to pensioners in Australia, Canada and New Zealand are about £105 million, £62 million and £23 million a year, respectively. These pensions are not indexed linked and the cost of paying full United Kingdom rates of pensions and widows' benefits in those countries is estimated at 1988 rates to be an additional £88 million, £49 million and £36 million a year, respectively.

United Kingdom pensioners in the United States of America and in the EC receive uprated pensions and the costs for each country for 1987-88 are shown in the table.

	£ million
United States of America	40
Belgium	2·4
Denmark	0·4
France	4·3
West Germany	9·1
Greece	0·8
Republic of Ireland	54·9
Italy	11
Luxembourg	0·04
Netherlands	1·9
Portugal	1·3
Spain	15·7
United Kingdom	19,129

Pensions

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many employed persons have contracted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme and are members of company or occupational pensions schemes, categorised by sex, and industry or occupation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest available information is shown in the table. Contracted-out status for national insurance purposes is available only to employees who are members of an occupational pension scheme to which their employer contributes. Records are not kept of individuals' occupations.

	1985-86	*1986-87*[1]
Men	6,639,500	6,341,600
Women	2,833,500	2,892,000
TOTAL	9,473,000	9,233,600

[1] Provisional.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if his Department will publish a table of past housing benefit expenditure for each financial year since 1980 and projected housing benefit expenditure, indicating clearly the projected impact on rents of the current Housing Bill.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is shown in the table. Revised figures for 1988-89 will be published early in the new year along with projected figures for later years.

Housing benefit expenditure 1980-81 to 1988-89

	£ million
1980-81	632
1981-82	921
1982-83	1,563
1983-84	3,736
1984-85	4,193
1985-86	4,639

	£ million
1986-87	5,018
1987-88	5,380
1988-89	5,260

Source: Public Expenditure White Paper.
Notes:
Before 1982-83 assistance with housing costs was through the supplementary benefit scheme administered by the Department and the rent and rate rebate and allowance schemes run by the Department of the Environment. Housing benefit from the Department was introduced for some supplementary benefit claimants from November 1982 with full implementation for all claimants following from April 1983. The data for the years prior to 1982-83 are based upon the Department of the Environment scheme only. The data for 1982-83 combine information from both the old and new schemes.

Single-parent Families

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set up an inquiry to examine the extent of passive dependency on welfare by single-parent families; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest figures available (May 1987) show 629,000 women and 30,000 men claiming supplementary benefit as heads of one-parent families, excluding cases of temporary separation. Of these claimants, about 67,000 women and 1,000 men had earnings from part-time work. The general reduction of disincentives to independence was one of the key aims of the reforms in social security benefits which we introduced in April and we shall be monitoring the effects of these changes.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of single unmarried women, divorced women, widows, separated women/and men and the relative percentages of each group out of the total number of lone-parent families in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest available estimate of the number of lone-parent families in Great Btitain, published by the office of Population Censuses and Surveys using data from a variety of statistical sources, is 940,000 in 1984. Using information from general household surveys, OPCS estimates that that total is made up as follows:

Type of lone-parent family	*Estimated Number*	*Percentage of total lone-parent families*
Lone Mothers:		
single	220,000	23
divorced	380,000	41
widowed	80,000	8
separated	170,000	18
Lone Fathers:	90,000	10
All lone parents	940,000	100

Benefits

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if pursuant to his answer of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *346*, he will break down the £4 billion increase in the social security budget due to the real increase in the amount of benefits paid by each of the main benefits for which he is responsible; and what the real increase since 1978 has been on each benefit.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 28 April 1988 at columns *251-52*.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the average time taken for processing a successful claim for each of the major benefits for which his Department is responsible.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The national average clearance times for processing all claims for each of the major benefits are listed as follows. Separate figures for successful and unsuccessful claims are not available.

	Days
Sickness Benefit/Invalidity Benefit	11
Maternity Benefit	16
Retirement Pension	24
Income Support	5
Family Credit	[1]29·7

[1] The family credit figure of 29·7 days is for September, a period when claims clarance was affected by the postal dispute. The average clearance time in August was just over the target time of 18 working days.
Source: Management information statistics from the DSS Regional Organisation.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the value of *(a)* child benefit and *(b)* invalidity benefit for a married couple as a proportion of average net earnings for all males and all manually employed males for each year between November 1978 and the latest date available.

Mr. Scott *[pursuant to his reply, 29 July 1988, c. 822]:* The information on child benefit is given in the following table from April 1979 when child tax allowances ceased. I regret that information is not available from which to calculate the average value of total invalidity benefit (including additional pension and invalidity allowance) received by married men. The following table therefore relates only to basic invalidity pension with an increase for an adult dependant. It takes no account of additional pension or invalidity allowance.

Value of Child Benefit (one child)

Uprating dates	*Child Benefit (one child) as percentage of net average earnings*[1]	
	All adult males	*All male manuals*
April 1979	5·5	6·0
November 1980	4·9	5·4
November 1981	5·0	5·6
November 1982	5·2	5·9
November 1983	5·4	6·1
November 1984	5·2	5·9
November 1985	4·9	5·7
July 1986	4·7	5·5
April 1987	4·4	5·2
April 1988[2]	[3]4·0	[3]4·8

Value of Basic Invalidity Pension

Uprating dates	*Invalidity Pension (with adult dependant) no children as percentage of net average earnings*[1]	
	All adult males	*All male manuals*
November 1978	45·3	48·9
April 1979	—	—
November 1979	44·6	48·4

Uprating dates	Invalidity Pension (with adult dependant) no children as percentage of net average earnings[1]	
	All adult males	All male manuals
November 1980	42·5	47·6
November 1981	43·0	48·8
November 1982	44·7	50·9
November 1983	43·0	49·1
November 1984	41·4	47·4
November 1985	43·3	49·9
July 1986	41·1	47·8
April 1987	38·8	45·7
April 1988	[3]36·6	[3]43·2

[1] Net average earnings are the estimated gross weekly earnings less tax and national insurance contributions at the non contracted-out rate.
[2] Child benefit rate unchanged.
[3] Provisional.

Unemployment Benefit

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps have been taken to ensure that the full extent normal rule, as at present interpreted, fulfils its original purpose and does not result in claimants being unreasonably refused unemployment benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have recently conducted a review of how the full extent normal rule operates in practice and will bring forward proposals shortly.

Maternity Payments

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what social fund payments are available for maternity needs in excess of the fixed grant of £85 and, where such payments are not available, from what alternative sources applicants are advised to seek help.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No other social fund payments are available for maternity expenses. Help is provided in the form of regular weekly benefits which, for those not in work, include income support with its added family premium and, for low-income working families, by family credit.

People on income support may make an application to the social fund for a payment not related to their maternity needs.

Mr. N. Facey (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to reply to the letter of 25 July from the hon. Member for Woolwich about Mr. N. Facey of 4 Lytton Strachey Path, SE28.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that we have no trace of this correspondence. If the hon. Member would forward a copy of his letter, I shall ensure that he is sent a reply.

Income Support

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the unit cost and estimated total annual cost of producing income support claim form B1.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The unit cost of income support claim form B1 is 10.29p and the estimated total annual cost is £578,182.

However, form B1 is always issued together with the housing benefit claim form NHB1 and the income support allowances and premiums sheet IS100. This increases the unit cost of the package to 12.49p. and the estimated annual cost to £767,700.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the percentage rate of identified errors in income support assessments; and what steps he is taking to improve the accuracy of assessments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The income support error rate for the month ending 30 September 1988 was 9·4 per cent., a significant improvement on the error rate for the old supplementary benefit scheme.

(Source: Local Office monthly management information statistical returns based on the number of payments test-checked and the number of errors found in excess of 50p.)

The following steps are taken to improve further the accuracy of income support assessments:

Test checking and monitoring a random sample of all payments for accuracy. These results are used for local training of staff.

Adjudication and procedural instructions are constantly reviewed and expanded to provide staff with clearer and more precise guidance in areas of difficulty.

The office of the chief adjudication officer reports annually on the standards of adjudication achieved and makes recommendations for improvements.

Seasonal Workers

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people claiming income support are classed as seasonal workers in England, Wales and Scotland.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information is not available.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many complaints his Department has received in the last year regarding the payment of benefits to seasonal workers; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement regarding the position of seasonal workers and payment of unemployment benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A number of representations on unemployment benefits for seasonal workers are made every year. Following the publication in May of the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee on this subject (Cm. 374), officials have reviewed the operation of the additional condition for seasonal workers. We shall be making an announcement shortly.

Unemployed Persons

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what incentives his Department give to encourage the unemployed to take up short-term employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government do not draw a distinction between short-term work and other work. We are concerned to encourage individual independence and enterprise by improving incentives to work generally.

The Government have already taken the following measures to help improve work incentives. The basic rate of income tax has been reduced from 33 per cent. to 25 per cent. and since 1979 personal tax allowances have been

increased by 25 per cent. in real terms. Since October 1985 national insurance contributions have been reduced for those with low earnings and for their employers. In addition, the Department of Employment's claimant advisers explain to job seekers that rapid access to family credit and housing benefit can be provided for those re-entering employment.

The introduction of the reformed social security system in April helped to alleviate the unemployment trap by bringing more generous help through family credit. Alignment of the assessment rules for income-related benefit means that people with similar incomes are being treated equally whether in or out of work. The worst features of the poverty trap have been removed under the reformed structure. Family credit and housing benefit are being assessed using net, rather than gross, income. This means that the withdrawal of in-work income-related benefits no longer creates a fall in net income when gross earnings rise.

Hostel Dwellers

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has reached decisions on his Department's proposals to change the rules about paying benefit to hostel dwellers.

Mr. Scott: The consultation paper "Help With Hostel Charges", published in July, proposed ending special income support payments for people in hostels from April 1989. Comments were invited on two proposals: that normal income support and housing benefit should be paid to all hostel dwellers or, alternatively, only to those not receiving physical care.

I am grateful for the many responses to the proposals, which we are still considering. We have, however, decided at this stage to defer any changes until after April 1989, to allow us time to examine more fully the effects on hostels' finances. An announcement will be made once final decisions have been made.

DEFENCE

Estimates

61. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the single largest percentage increase in the categories listed in table 23 volume 2, page 10, of the annual statement on the Defence Estimates over the period 1980-81 to 1988-89.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The largest percentage increase between 1980-81 and 1988-89 is that for nuclear strategic forces.

Trident

63. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what effect the recent strike at VSEL, Barrow has had on the progress of the Trident submarine building programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: Construction work at VSEL on the two Vanguard class submarines so far ordered was suspended throughout the strike; however some sub-contract work continued. I am currently awaiting detailed proposals from VSEL for recovery of the Vanguard class programme and remain confident that the planned in-service date for Trident will remain unaltered.

WE 177 Replacement

64. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of his discussions with the French and United States Governments on the development of a replacement for the WE 177 free fall nuclear bomb.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 26 October 1988.

London Offices

65. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps have been taken to reduce the costs of his Department's London office space.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Department will very shortly complete its commitment to disperse 1,400 posts to Glasgow and in the meantime, is conducting the review announced by my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General on 31 March 1988, *Official Report*, columns *610-11*.

Cancer (AWRE)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications for health of the atomic weapons research establishment Aldermaston work force of the results of the survey conducted at Aldermaston by the London school of hygiene and tropical medicine, published in the *British Medical Journal* in September, showing statistically significant excesses of levels of prostatic cancer.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the incidence of different forms of cancer among people working at the atomic weapons research establishment; how these figures relate to the relevant averages for the United Kingdom as a whole; what medical examinations for carcinomas take place among the employees and how frequently; and whether he is generally satisfied with health levels at the establishment.

Mr. Sainsbury: The main conclusions of the study published in the BMJ No. 6651, Volume 297, on 24 September 1988 were that the mortality rates of AWE employees both from all causes and from all cancers were lower than those of the United Kingdom national averages for the general population when age distribution and sex were taken into account. No significant difference overall in mortality rates between exposed and non-exposed AWE workers was observed. In separate comparisons for 29 specific cancer categories the mortality rates for radiation-monitored workers was lower compared with that for other workers and with the national average in several categories, including leukaemia, multiple myeloma and lung cancer, and higher in some others. A suggestion of higher mortality rate from prostrate cancer in a very small group of workers who had accumulated comparatively high external exposures and had also been monitored for internal uptake of radioactive materials must be treated with caution; the numbers involved were very small. Although mortality from lung cancer in radiation workers was below the average for the general population, among workers monitored for internal exposure mortality from this cause rose as external exposure increased by the statistical link was weak.

The Government regard the findings as confirmation that the radiological protection policy operated by AWE during the period covered by this study was sound and effective, but accept the need for continuing vigilance to keep all radiation doses both internal and external "as low as reasonably practicable", in accordance with United Kingdom legislative measure and with the practices recommended by international and national radiological protection authorities. That is not to say that the suggestion that there might be a specific occupational hazard of prostrate cancer for a small group, similar to that observed in the study of workers in UKAEA, does not merit further study to establish whether it can be definitely associated with a particular aspect of employment. To this end, arrangements are being made for this study to be analysed with other similar ones for UKAEA and BNF plc, thus increasing the numbers of workers included with the anticipation that the outcome will be a more precise statistical estimate.

Information on cancer incidence has not been collated. All occupationally exposed workers are given a medical examination every two years unless there are grounds, including the individual's preference, for more frequent examinations. These examinations would be expected to uncover suspicion of any serious ailments including carcinomas which, if found, would then be referred immediately to the individual's own general practitioner. I am satisfied with health levels at the establishment.

Nuclear Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has made any evaluation of extra-terrestial methods of the disposal of nuclear wastes, either by internal scientific study, or in conjunction with the United States of America.

Mr. Salisbury: No.

Ilminster Crash

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the crash between a military Mamoth Major transporter en route to the Bullpoint Royal Navy base at Plymouth and a car on the Ilminster by-pass on 17 September.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The road traffic accident in question is still subject to investigations under the direction of the local coroner, in the normal manner. It would be inappropriate for us to comment on the precise circumstances of the accident in advance of the coroner's inquest.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list each Royal Air Force and Royal Navy search and rescue detachment in the United Kingdom, together with the number of ground and aircrew employed on search and rescue duties at each base, the number of search and rescue helicopters and other aircraft at each base and the cost of each detachment in 1987-88.

Mr. Freeman: A list of search and rescue (SAR) stations and aircraft assigned to the SAR role was included in the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) on 8 June 1988 at column 566. It is not our practice to give numbers of other operational aircraft, or of personnel assigned to specific operational roles.

On the subject of costs, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) on 1 July 1988, at columns 225-26.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each Royal Air Force and Royal Navy search and rescue detachment the total number of call outs in each year since 1984, the number of civilians and number of service personnel rescued.

Mr. Freeman: The figures requested by my hon. Friend are as follows:

Station	*Number of Callouts*					*Rescues: Civilians*					*Service personnel*				
	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
RAF Helicopters[1]															
Boulmer	90	100	104	120	96	137	66	65	69	63	1	1	11	3	2
Brawdy	83	100	98	134	132	97	66	79	65	88	—	1	8	2	4
Chivenor	123	94	110	128	166	75	43	55	51	81	1	6	4	6	9
Coltishall	54	56	75	107	82	35	61	44	46	51	5	—	2	4	4
Leconfield	85	75	92	93	87	56	43	38	39	33	1	10	5	6	3
Leuchars	114	110	120	113	132	85	63	39	63	84	1	15	3	2	3
Lossiemouth	160	132	167	153	112	130	120	75	98	120	12	4	6	6	7
Manston	80	103	100	121	127	35	36	36	54	57	1	—	1	1	—
Valley	142	156	128	152	140	83	78	81	106	137	5	14	—	13	1
RN Helicopters															
Culdrose	99	101	78	154	138	50	87	43	53	69	11	—	3	8	3
Lee on Solent	121	126	119	136	[2]70	84	75	71	75	31	4	—	1	—	1
Portland	7	1	5	1	91	—	—	1	—	42	—	—	—	—	2
Prestwick	33	37	58	55	64	7	14	8	8	39	2	1	—	2	4
Fixed Wing Aircraft[3]															
St. Mawgan	10	16	24	7	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kinloss	38	36	27	42	47	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mountain Rescue Teams															
Leuchars	14	6	21	13	14	—	1	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Kinloss	12	3	12	15	16	—	—	1	3	26	—	—	—	—	—
Valley	11	9	6	14	11	17	13	1	3	1	—	—	—	—	1
St. Athan	5	3	13	11	12	1	—	6	2	1	—	—	—	—	4

Station	Number of Callouts					Rescues: Civilians					Service personnel				
	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Stafford	3	6	8	11	10	2	—	3	8	3	—	—	—	—	—
Linton on Ouse	11	6	13	13	4	11	—	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—

[1] The figures exclude a small number of sorties and rescues carried out by units which are not assigned to the SAR role.
[2] The statistics for Lee-on-Solent cover the period up to 15 May 1988, when the military search and rescue (SAR) service at the station was withdrawn. A temporary RAF flight operated from Lee between 31 March, when the RN flight was withdrawn, and 15 May.
[3] Nimrod MR aircraft operating from St. Mawgan and Kinloss provide assistance to SAR operations and may drop life-saving stores, but do not carry out rescues.

Royal Ordnance

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will name the chartered surveyors who were commissioned by him to value the land and buildings of the Royal Ordnance prior to its sale.

Mr. Sainsbury: Messrs Weatherall, Green and Smith.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what instructions he gave, concerning the assumptions to be made about planning permission, to the firm of chartered surveyors that he commissioned to value the land and buildings of Royal Ordnance.

Mr. Sainsbury: The instructions to Messrs Weatherall, Green and Smith required it to submit valuations of the freehold and leasehold properties of Royal Ordnance for balance sheet purposes as at 31 December 1985. It was also asked to advise on open market alternative use values of the properties. It was left to the chartered surveyors to use their professional judgment in assessing the effect on such values of any possible future changes in planning constraints. Both of these were updates of an earlier valuation in 1984.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the chartered surveyors who estimated the open market value of the Royal Ordnance sites at Waltham Abbey and Enfield in 1984 gave any estimates of their value that did not assume that their location within the metropolitan green belt area would inhibit their redevelopment.

Mr. Sainsbury: In 1984 alternative use valuation took account of existing planning constraints, and of the assumptions that a prospective purchaser might make about the prospects of obtaining consent for development. The 1986 updating was conducted on a similar basis.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to why the chartered surveyors commissioned by him to value the assets of Royal Ordnance were unable to determine an open market value for all of its assets.

Mr. Sainsbury: The chartered surveyors did provide such a valuation for the Royal Ordnance sites, using their professional judgment in assessing the likelihood of planning permission being granted for redevelopment and the possible timing of any such permission.

Wind Tunnels

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is proposed to dispose of the wind tunnels at Bedford and Farnborough or lease out the use of the facilities to private sector interests.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are no plans at present to dispose of the wind tunnels at Bedford or Farnborough. A study has been carried out into the feasibility of commercial management of the wind tunnels and the report is now being considered within the Ministry of Defence.

Royal Aerospace Establishment, Bedford

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much of the total acreage of the royal aerospace establishment, Bedford will be *(a)* retained and *(b)* available for disposal; and if he will make a statement about the future of the airfield at Thurleigh.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are no plans at present to dispose of the airfield at Thurleigh or any other part of the royal aerospace establishment, Bedford sites.

Research Establishments

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how it is proposed to safeguard long-term planning projects while restructuring of research establishments is being undertaken.

Mr. Sainsbury: The requirement of long-term projects will be taken into account in any proposals for restructuring the research establishments.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are employed by *(a)* the Admiralty research establishment, *(b)* the royal aerospace establishment, *(c)* the royal armaments research and development establishment, *(d)* the royal signals and radar establishment, *(e)* the chemical defence establishment and *(f)* the aeroplane and armament experimental establishment; and what staff cuts are envisaged at each.

Mr. Sainsbury: As at 1 April 1988, the number of staff employed at each establishment was as follows:

	Numbers
Admiralty Research Establishment	3,006
Royal Aerospace Establishment	5,378
Royal Armaments Research and Development Establishment	2,340
Royal Signals and Radar Establishment	1,605
Chemical Defence Establishment	555
Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment	1,133

Staffing levels are kept under continual review, and reflect current and predicted workloads.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends the formation of a defence research agency to be the precursor of full privatisation of the establishments involved.

Mr. Sainsbury: Proposals for the creation of a defence research agency are currently under consideration. No

decisions have yet been taken. However, full privatisation of the non-nuclear research establishments is not likely to be appropriate; the agency concept relates to the improvement of management efficiency in the public sector.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends that the existing research establishments should form one unit or will be assembled under several entities.

Mr. Sainsbury: Decisions on the status and scope of the proposed defence research agency have yet to be taken.

Research Agency

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where it is proposed to locate the administrative headquarters of the defence research agency.

Mr. Sainsbury: Decisions on the proposed defence research agency, including where its headquarters might be, have yet to be taken.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Apples and Pears

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from apple and pear growers seeking urgent approval by his Department of low volume spray procedures; and if he can give any indications of the progress in discussions with the industry on this matter.

Mr. Ryder: I have not received any representations from apple and pear growers as such, but horticultural interests are represented on our application technology panel by a nominee of the National Farmers Union. The panel is currently formulating guidance on the question which will be considered by the advisory committee on pesticides.

Users of reduced-volume application equipment do not require specific approval for the use of such equipment, nor are they obliged to follow recommended dilution rates for individual pesticides, although the total permitted dose is regulated. Moreover, growers are obliged by the legislation to "take all reasonable precautions to protect the health of human beings, creatures and plants, to safeguard the environment, and in particular to avoid pollution of water".

Guidance as to what would constitute appropriate precautions for low-volume use generally is given in part 6 of our revised draft code of practice for the agricultural and commercial horticultural use of pesticides. However the code does not yet cover air-assisted applications. Until such guidance can be made available users of air-assisted equipment should judge, in the light of the nature of the compound, their experience and their local circumstances, what would constitute reasonable precautions.

Hinkley Point C (Inquiry)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards his departmental witnesses at the Hinckley Point C public inquiry answering questions on the merits of departmental policy.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Witnesses from my Department appearing at the Hinkley Point C public inquiry will present factual evidence on matters for which MAFF either has statutory responsibility or appropriate expertise. They will assist the inquiry by explaining departmental policy but will not expect to answer any question which, in the opinion of the inspector, is directed to the merits of that policy. This is in accordance with rules 12(3) of the inquiries procedures rules 1987.

Milk Quota

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he anticipates that there will be a need for further cuts in the milk quota beyond those already agreed.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I am not aware of any plans to make further reductions in milk quotas.

Beef and Sheep Premiums

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the retention of the beef and sheep variable premiums; and if he will make a statement on the proposals put forward by the European Community Commission to end them.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I continue to receive a number of such representations. The Commission's proposals for the reform of the beef and sheepmeat regimes have just been received, and I am studying them closely.

Set-Aside Scheme

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farm workers have lost their jobs as a result of their employers entering the set-aside scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: As the scheme has only just come into operation, this information is not available. I will, however, be monitoring carefully the impact of the scheme.

Whales

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what representations have been made to the Danish Government in respect of the slaughter of pilot whales and white-sided dolphins by Faroe islanders; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it his policy to prohibit the importation of produce from Denmark until the slaughter of pilot whales and white-sided dolphins is prohibited in the Faroe Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We have expressed our concern to the Danish Government about the manner in which the Faroese hunting of pilot whales is conducted. In response to our raising this in the International Whaling Commission the Faroese authorities now exercise tighter control of the hunting and have take measures to improve its humaneness. I would caution against the hope of securing a complete stop to the hunting as there is no evidence that the pilot whale stock has been endangered by the Faroese catches.

I understand from the Danish authorities that the killing of dolphins last year was in contravention of Faroese law and the incident was investigated by the local police.

We are not taking trade sanctions. It is widely recognised that the Government have taken a positive lead on the conservation of whales. We consider that the appropriate way forward is to continue to work for this through the International Whaling Commission which we regard as the primary forum for all whaling matters.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Telecom

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has on the allowance made by the Director General of the Office of Telecommunications in his negotiations with British Telecom for return on capital employed.

Mr. Forth: The Director General of Telecommunications wrote to my right hon. and noble Friend shortly before making his public statement of 7 July, which set out the considerations that had influenced the director general's discussions with British Telecom. The allowances he made for various elements is a matter for him.

Staff Sickness

Mr. Ames: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many working days are lost to his Department by staff sickness; and what are the figures for each month since 1983.

Mr. Forth: Monthly figures are not available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Annual totals of days of sick absence from 1984 onwards are:

Year	*Days*
1984	132,270
1985	164,520
1986	154,979
1987	164,840

Mr. Ames: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many working days are lost to his Department through staff suffering from *(a)* migraine and *(b)* backache; and what are the figures for each month since 1984.

Mr. Forth: Data on staff sick absence are not held in the form requested, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ames: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many staff of his Department are absent from work because of *(a)* migraine and *(b)* backache; and what are the figures for each month since 1984.

Mr. Forth: Data on staff sick absence are not held in the form requested, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Space Programmes

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he or his departmental officials have had any recent discussions with the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority over plans being developed within the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to create an international inspectorate for monitoring the safety and reliability of space programmes.

Mr. Newton: No. As part of its business development plans the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority is actively seeking R and D contracts in the space market and is well qualified to give advice on the safety and reliability of space programmes. However neither my Department nor the authority has plans to create an international space inspectorate.

Airbus

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total amount in cash in 1988 prices given by successive Governments to British Aerospace for Airbus Industrie for Airbus projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: In 1988 prices £376·56 million has been given by successive Governments to British Aerospace for Airbus Industrie Airbus projects.

Urban Development

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what contribution is being made by Her Majesty's Government to British Urban Development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Government warmly welcomed the announcement of the British Urban Development initiative, but they make no financial contribution towards the initiative.

Petrol (Retailing)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the terms of reference of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry into petroleum retailing in the United Kindom.

Mr. Maude: The Director General of Fair Trading, who has announced his intention to refer the wholesaling of petrol in the United Kingdom to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, will publish the terms when the reference is formally made.

British Aerospace

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will visit the British Aerospace works, Broughton, Clwyd; what is his estimate of the number of jobs involved in the projects in the United Kingdom concerning Airbus Industrie; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* I have no immediate plans to visit the British Aerospace works at Broughton. On the basis of information presently available to my Department, it is estimated that approximately 10,850 jobs are involved in Airbus production in the United Kingdom.

Foreign Investors

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether, in the light of his decision to accept the

Monopolies and Mergers Commission's ruling on the level of the stake in BP held by the Kuwait Investment Office, he will make a statement on his policy towards the size of shareholding by foreign investors in the United Kingdom companies which will be permitted in future.

Mr. Maude: *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* We shall continue to consider qualifying mergers under the Fair Trading Act 1973 on a case by case basis, without discriminating between acquisitions made by UK and overseas enterprises. The Director General of Fair Trading will continue to examine any acquisition of shares in order to establish whether it constitutes a qualifying merger under the Act.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his assessment of the repercussions on foreign investors operating in the City of London of the decision to order the Kuwait Investment Office to reduce its holding in BP; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* Each merger situation is considered individually, on its merits, under the provisions of the Fair Trading Act 1973. The recommendations of the MMC on the Kuwait Investment Office holding in BP applied to one holding in one company, and were reached in the light of special and unusual circumstances. The Government's general attitude towards investment by foreigners in the UK is to welcome it.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made, in the light of the decision to order the Kuwait Investment Office to reduce its stake in BP, of the likelihood of other countries taking reciprocal action against British companies holding substantial stakes in overseas companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* I am not aware of any reason to suppose that UK companies with overseas investments are being asked to reduce those investments.

WALES

Speech Therapy Services

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the amount of cash spent on speech therapy services in 1982 and in 1986-87; what is the percentage increase in real terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: NHS expenditure on speech therapy services in Wales in 1982-83 was £909,500 and 1986-87 was £1,446,100. This represents an increase in real terms of 32·8 per cent. over the period.

Physiotherapy Services

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the expenditure on physiotherapy services in the National Health Service in Wales in 1982 and 1986-87; what was the percentage increase; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: NHS expenditure on physiotherapy and remedial gymnastic services is grouped together in financial statistics. Such expenditure in Wales in 1982-83 was £4,236,600 and in 1986-87 was £6,810,300. This represents an increase in real terms of 34·2 per cent. over the period.

Elm Crossroads, Mold (Improvements)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish the Clwyd county council report on Elm crossroads, Alltami, Mold Clwyd; and if he will make a statement; if he will implement urgently the findings of the report and make available cash for the proposed improvements; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the short-term measures Clwyd county council proposes to improve road safety at Elm crossroads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Clwyd county council has reported that Elm junction has a comparatively low accident record and should not be improved in advance of consideration of possible overall improvement of the A494 between Hawarden bypass and the proposed Mold bypass. In the meantime the county council has been instructed to implement its recommended alteration to traffic signs at the junction and their illumination.

Belmont Special School, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make special funds available to the Training Commission to enable Belmont special school, Buckley, Clwyd to participate in the current work experience scheme for those aged 16-plus years who are slow learners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The decision whether to adapt the existing community programme provision in respect of Belmont special school to meet the requirements of employment training rests with the training manager at the north-east Wales institute. Any question of allocating education resources to this project is for the local education authority in the light of its priorities.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will invite the chairman of the Training Commission to visit Ysgol Belmont, Buckley, Clwyd, to discuss the difficulties facing the school's work experience scheme by senior students in January 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We have no plans to do so.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will organise and address an all-Wales conference of dairy farmers, the farming unions, consumer organisations, retail dairymen, supermarket and shop owners, medical consultants and general practitioners to receive reports and debate the current field trials of bovine somatotropin in milk production.

Mr. Peter Walker: No.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to disclose where field trials concerning bovine somatotropin in Wales are taking place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: No. Section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968 prohibits the disclosure of information supplied by applicants for product licences and test certificates. It is therefore not possible to divulge the location of the trials.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the impact upon the dairy milk quota system of the use of bovine somatotropin in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The overall level of milk production in the EC is controlled by quotas. Bovine somatotropin, which is currently under test in a limited number of field trials, has had no impact on the milk quota system.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will seek to ensure by regulation and legislation that companies dealing in hazardous wastes will demonstrate that they have used legal means to dispose of their waste.

Mr. Grist: Provision for the certification of the proper disposal of special wastes exists under the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will seek to ensure that companies, involved in managing tips receiving hazardous waste, will, when the tipping site is exhausted, make the site safe; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will introduce legislation and regulations which will give greater powers to local authorities, as waste disposal authorities, to sue hazardous waste diposing companies which break the law; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Amendments to waste disposal law which will strengthen the powers of waste disposal authorities to enforce site licensing conditions and extend the licensing arrangements to apply after a site has been closed were amongst the proposals announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 29 June. The necessary legislation will be introduced as soon as parliamentary time permits.

Hazardous Waste Inspectors

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many hazardous waste inspectors there are in Wales; how many were in post 1979; if he will take steps to increase the number of hazardous waste inspectors; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will indicate from which locations hazardous waste inspectors work.

Mr. Grist: The hazardous waste inspectorate was formed in 1983 and incorporated into Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in 1987. One inspector, based in Cardiff, has worked in Wales since 1983. The staffing of the inspectorate is kept under continuous review.

Golftyn High School

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet the town council in Connah's Quay, the parent-teachers association of Golftyn high school for separate talks at the town council chambers on the future of Golftyn high school.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many pupils are on roll at Golftyn high school; when Golftyn high school was opened; and what was its cost of building and furnishing at 1988 prices.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: At January 1988 the number of pupils on roll at Connahs Quay (Golftyn) high school was 644. Information is not available in the Department on the date of the school's opening and its cost.

Adult Training Programme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many employees of the community task force have had redundancy notices sent to them as a result of replacing the community programme and the job training scheme with the adult training programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) on 19 October 1988, at column *869*, by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment. Thirty-five people left the community task force in Wales.

Traws Goed and Pwllpeirian Experimental Farms

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has had any direct or indirect consultations with any organisations regarding any future plans to close or run down Traws Goed and Pwllpeirian experimental farms in Cardiganshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: My officials have been in discussions with the industry in Wales on the Government's proposals to withdraw public funding from near market research. It is too early to say what effects the proposals will have on individual establishments. Much will depend on the amount of that research industry is prepared to fund.

Health Services, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the amount of money paid by Clwyd health authority to *(a)* the Clwyd north and *(b)* the Clwyd south parts of the authority for health services for each of the years from 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The accounts presented by Clwyd health authority to the Department do not separately identify the expenditure incurred by units within the authority. This information can only be obtained from the authority itself.

Enveloping Schemes

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the enveloping schemes undertaken since the inception of the scheme, together with those in progress, the forecast and actual time taken to complete the schemes and the total cost of these schemes;

(2) what monitoring is undertaken by his Department of enveloping schemes; and whether he is satisfied with the current level of supervision by local authorities of contractors' work carried out in conjunction with these schemes.

Mr. Grist: Since we introduced enveloping in Wales in 1982, 85 schemes have been undertaken or are currently under way. The information is shown in the following tables:

District	*Scheme*
Arfon	Glanadda
Blaenau Gwent	Harcourt Street, Ebbw Vale
Blaenau Gwent	Six Bells, Abertillery
Blaenau Gwent	Marine Street, Cwm
Cardiff	Rhymney Street, Cardiff
Cardiff	Riverside, Cardiff
Cardiff	South Grangetown (Phase I)
Cardiff	South Grangetown, Kent Street
Cardiff	South Grangetown (Phase II)
Cardiff	South Grangetown (Phase III)
Cardiff	Blackweir, Cardiff
Cardiff	Wyndham Road, Canton
Carmarthen	Llanybydder
Carmarthen	Catherine Street/Morley Street
Carmarthen	Clunderwen
Carmarthen	Dobell & Norman Terrace, Gorslas
Carmarthen	Laugharne
Carmarthen	Littlewater Street, Carmarthen Town
Carmarthen	Banc-y-Felin
Carmarthen	Park Terrace, Carmarthen
Ceredigion	Lampeter
Cynon Valley	Wyndham Crescent, Aberaman
Cynon Valley	Penrhiwceiber
Cynon Valley	Abercwmboi
Cynon Valley	Abercwmboi
Cynon Valley	Glanlay Street, Penrhiwceiber
Dinefwr	Victoria Street/Water Street/Adelaide Street, Llandovery
Dinefwr	Llandeilo
Dinefwr	Orchard Street/Queen Street, Llandovery
Islwyn	Blackwood
Islwyn	William Street, Crumlin
Islwyn	West End, Abercarn
Islwyn	Cwmfelinfach
Islwyn	Woodside Terrace, Crumlin
Llanelli	Silver Terrace, Barry Port
Neath	Canalside
Newport	Witham Feering (Phase I)
Newport	Witham Feering (Phase II)
Newport	Argyle Street, Crindau
Meirionnydd	Blaenau Ffestiniog
Meirionnydd	Dolgellau
Montgomery	Newtown
Ogwr	Nantyffylon
Preseli/Pembs	Neyland
Rhondda	Maerdy (Phase I)
Rhondda	Pen Yr Englyn
Rhondda	Blaen-y-Cwm
Rhondda	Ynyselo
Rhondda	Tylorstown
Rhondda	Ystrad & Clydach Vale
Rhondda	Maerdy (Phase II)
Rhondda	Maerdy (Phase III)
Rhondda	Maerdy (Phase IV)
Rhondda	Cwmparc
Rhondda	Ynyswen
Rhondda	Cwmmer
Rhuddlan	Wood Road Area, Rhyl
Rhuddlan	Gronant Street, Rhyl
Rhuddlan	South Kinmel Street, Rhyl
Rhuddlan	West Kinmel Street, Rhyl
Rhuddlan	Princess Street, Rhyl
Rhuddlan	Morley Road Area, Rhyl
Rhymney Valley	Jubilee Road, New Tredegar (Phase I)
Rhymney Valley	Brithdir Village
Rhymney Valley	Jubilee Road, New Tredegar (Phase II)
South Pembs	Narberth
South Pembs	Monkton
South Pembs	Tenby (North & South)
Torfaen	Plas-y-Coed (Phase I)
Torfaen	Plas-y-Coed (Phase II)
Torfaen	Hanbury Road (Phase 1) Pontypool
	Hanbury Road (Phase 2)
	Hanbury Road (Phase 3)
Torfaen	Osborne Road, Pontypool
Ynys Mon	Llanerchymedd (Phase I)
Ynys Mon	Llanerchymedd (Phase II)
Ynys Mon	Llanerchymedd (Phase III)
Ynys Mon	Llanerchymedd (Phase IV)
Ynys Mon	Kingsland (Phase I)
Ynys Mon	Llanfechell
Ynys Mon	Amlwch (Phase I)
Ynys Mon	Kingsland (Phase II)
Ynys Mon	Kingsland (Phase III)
Ynys Mon	Llanddeusant
Ynys Mon	Amlwch (Phase II)

The time taken to complete schemes varies considerably from project to project and largely depends on their size and the programming arrangements adopted by individual local authorities. To date, more than 7,000 dwellings have benefited by this innovative approach at a cost of more than £47 million.

The Department liaises very closely with local authorities as schemes are being developed and while the work is in progress.

Redberth and Sageston Bypass, Pembrokeshire

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on the case for a bypass for the villages of Redberth and Sageston, Pembrokeshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Apart from the representation from my hon. Friend, a petition has been received signed by 13 residents of Redberth and representations from South Pembrokeshire district council, Carew community council and two local residents.

The start date of the Sageston bypass scheme remains post-1990 as shown in "Roads in Wales" (1985). The latest position of bypasses for Redberth and Sageston will be announced in the next edition of "Roads in Wales".

Chronically Ill Patients (Travelling Expenses)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provision is made for reimbursing chronically ill patients who use their own transport when travelling for treatment at a hospital in a separate health district; how many reimbursements were made in the last year for which figures are available; and what was the average reimbursement made.

Mr. Grist: Chronically sick patients who use their own transport may qualify for reimbursement under the National Health Service hospital travel costs scheme. Individual payments made by health authorities are not recorded centrally.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has as to the annual cost of inter-authority transport arrangements for chronically ill patients requiring treatment in a hospital run by a different health authority; what was the average cost per patient in the last year for which figures are available; and what was the total number of journeys undertaken.

Mr. Grist: The information is not held centrally.

Cash Limits

Mr. Gwilyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if there is to be any change to the cash limit for class XVII, vote 5 for the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit on class XVII, vote 5, is to be changed from £24,784,000 to £223,766,000. This is the net effect of two changes to the cash limit.

There is a reduction of £1,203,000 to compensate for an overspend in 1987-88. This follows the normal practice of reducing the cash limit for one financial year by the amount of the previous year's overspend. The reduction is partly offset by an increase of £185,000 which represents part of the £383,000 allocated to Wales for disbursement to various voluntary sector bodies following the error in the calculation of the retail prices index as announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services on 18 December 1987.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Gross Domestic Product

7. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast for the growth of gross domestic product in 1988.

64. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast for the growth of gross domestic product in 1988.

120. **Mr. John Townend:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast for the growth of gross domestic product in 1988.

129. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast for the growth of gross domestic product in 1988.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be publishing a new forecast in the autumn statement next month.

International Debt

16. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next intends to meet other Finance Ministers to discuss international debt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend frequently meets other Finance Ministers and international debt problems are often discussed.

CBI

17. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the president of the Confederation of British Industry; and what matters were discussed.

104. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the president of the Confederation of British Industry; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend meets the president of the CBI from time to time, and a wide range of subjects are discussed.

Building Society Lending

18. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the amount of money lent by the building societies for purposes other than house purchase, in the period since they were permited to do so by recent changes in regulations governing their activities.

Mr. Norman Lamont: So far this year, societies have advanced around £300 million in unsecured loans, representing less than 1 per cent. of their business.

Channel Tunnel

20. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been mde in simplifying the proposed customs procedures on Channel tunnel rail connections.

Mr. Brooke: For trains terminating in London, we envisage customs checks at Waterloo using the familiar red and green channel system. This should involve no delay at all for the vast majority of passengers.

Discussions are still going on between Customs and British Rail particularly about the facilities required for on-train controls for services going beyond London.

Public Expenditure

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about increases in public expenditure in the forthcoming financial year.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about increases in public expenditure in the forthcoming financial year.

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about increases in public expenditure in the forthcoming financial year.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about increases in public expenditure in the forthcoming financial year.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has received a number of such representations.

Productivity

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the level of productivity in the British economy.

Mr. Brooke: Output per head in the whole economy is now at its highest ever level. It has grown by an average of 2¾ per cent. a year since 1980, a rate similar to that of Japan and faster than all other major industrialised countries.

Base Interest Rates

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the current base interest rate or equivalents in each of the Group of Seven countries.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the current base interest rate or equivalents, in each of the Group of Seven countries.

Mr. Leadbitter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the current base interest rate or equivalents, in each of the Group of Seven countries.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the current base interest rate or equivalents, in each of the Group of Seven countries.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information on interest rates in the Group of Seven countries is readily available from a number of sources. The latest figures are shown in the table.

Three month interest rates[1] (26 October 1988)

	Rate
United Kingdom	12·1
United States of America	8·5
Japan	4·7
Germany	5·1
France	8·1
Italy	11·6
Canada	10·4

[1] Certificate of Deposit or Interbank rate.

Interest Rates

24. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will assess the impact of current levels of interest rates on the economy.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to an earlier question from the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke).

30. **Mr. Blair:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will assess the impact of current interest rates on the economy.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to a question from the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke).

34. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will assess the impact of current levels of interest rates on the economy.

52. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the impact of current levels of interest rates on the level of demand in the economy.

53. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the impact of current levels of interest rates on the level of demand in the economy.

116. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the impact of current levels of interest rates on the level of demand in the economy.

119. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the impact of current levels of interest rates on the level of demand in the economy.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to a question from the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke).

48. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

61. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

73. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

98. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

99. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: Bank base rates are 12 per cent.

OECD Finance Ministers

25. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, at the next meeting with Finance Ministers from other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, he will make it his policy to proffer advice to his colleagues on the management of their economies.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor meets his opposite numbers in other OECD countries at the annual meeting of the ministerial council, to exchange views on a range of economic issues. The next meeting will be in the summer of 1989.

Public Sector Debt

26. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast for the public sector debt repayment for 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As my hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has indicated, the PSDR will be considerably larger than projected at Budget time. A new forecast will be given in the autumn statement next month.

Balance of Payments

27. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the impact of the balance of payments on the current level of pound sterling.

31. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the impact of the balance of payments on the current level of pound sterling.

81. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the impact of the balance of payments on the current level of sterling.

103. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the impact of the balance of payments on the current level of sterling.

Mr. Major: The current level of sterling reflects the strength of the economy and confidence in the Government's medium-term financial strategy.

39. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what forecasts he has regarding long-term trends in the balance of payments.

69. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what forecasts he has regarding long-term trends in the balance of payments.

72. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what forecasts he has regarding long-term trends in the balance of payments.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy).

70. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his forecast for the balance of payments position in the next financial year.

78. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his forecast for the balance of payments position in the next financial year.

97. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his forecast for the balance of payments position in the next financial year.

126. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his forecast for the balance of payments position in the next financial year.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be making a new forecast in his autumn statement.

European Monetary System

28. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what research is being carried out by his Department into the future development of the European monetary system.

Mr. Lilley: The development and prospects of the European monetary system is monitored continuously.

49. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on his policy towards the European monetary system.

Mr. Lilley: The Government's position on the United Kingdom's participation in the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system remains that the United Kingdom will join when the time is right.

Pound Sterling (Exchange Rate)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on his policy towards the exchange rate for pound sterling.

75. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his policy towards the exchange rate for sterling.

79. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his policy towards the exchange rate for sterling.

105. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his exchange rate policy.

109. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on his policy towards the exchange rate for sterling.

Mr. Lilley: The need to curb inflation is paramount. Subject to that overriding objective, the Government aim to maintain a reasonable degree of exchange rate stability.

Group of Seven

32. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met his counterparts in the Group of Seven; and if he will make a statement.

47. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met his counterparts in the Group of Seven; and if he will make a statement.

63. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met his counterparts in the Group of Seven; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The Group of Seven Finance Ministers and central bank governors met on 24 September, and issued a communiqué in which they renewed their commitment to policies leading to sustained growth, low inflation and exchange rate stability.

Business Investment

33. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate for the growth of business investment in 1988.

92. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for growth of business investment in 1988.

Mr. Major: As the Chancellor of the Exchequer stated in his budget forecast, total business investment is expected to grow by 9 per cent. in 1988.

Balance of Payments

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the outturn of the balance of payments position at the end of the current financial year.

36. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the outturn of the balance of payments position at the end of the current financial year.

101. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the annual deficit for 1988 on the current account.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Members to the answers given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, (Mr. Michael).

General Aviation and Manufacturers Association

37. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the chief executive of the General Aviation and Manufacturers Association; and what was discussed.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has not met the chief executive of GAMTA and nor have I.

Personal Disposable Income

38. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in real personal disposable income over the latest period for which official figures are available.

96. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in real personal disposable income over the latest period for which official figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In the first half of 1988 real personal disposable income was 3 per cent. higher than in the first half of 1987.

Pound Sterling (Exchange Rate)

40. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the Confederation of British Industry about the exchange rate of pound sterling.

50. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the Confederation of British Industry about the exchange rate of pound sterling.

87. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the Confederation of British Industry about the exchange rate of pound sterling.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner).

Corporation Tax

41. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Chancellor ot the Exchequer if he will make a statement on levels of corporation tax in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* in the United Kingdom's major international competitors.

Mr. Norman Lamont: International comparisons of the levels of corporation tax are difficult to make because of the variations in tax structures and the different rules for measuring profits. The table sets out the top corporation tax rate for the United Kingdom and a number of other countries.

Top Corporation Tax Rate

	Percentage
United Kingdom	35
Australia	39
Belgium	43
Canada	28
Denmark	50
France	42
Germany	56
Greece	49
Ireland	47
Italy	36
Japan	42
Luxembourg	36
Netherlands	42
Portugal	35
Spain	35
United States	34

Notes:
1. Some of these countries have lower rates or special reliefs for companies with profits below certain levels.
2. There are also local or additional company taxes in some of these countries and some have different rates for distributed profits. Some countries have lower rates for particular types of company.
3. The rates shown are those currently in force. Lower rates are proposed in Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

Industrial Production

42. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest figures for the growth of industrial production in the British economy.

128. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest figures for the growth of industrial production in the British economy.

Mr. Major: Output of the production industries grew by 4·3 per cent. in the three months up to August compared with the same period a year earlier.

Budget Statement

43. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to begin considering proposals for his next Budget statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend is already considering proposals for his next Budget statement. Options are kept continually under review.

Public Expenditure

44. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the priorities he will have in preparing his statement on public expenditure for the forthcoming financial year.

54. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the priorities he will have in preparing his statement on public expenditure for the forthcoming financial year.

62. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the priorities he will have in preparing his statement on public expenditure for the forthcoming financial year.

71. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate the areas of expenditure to which he attaches priority in making decisions on public expenditure for the forthcoming year.

102. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate the areas of expenditure to which he attaches priority in making decisions on public expenditure for the forthcoming year.

111. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the priorities he will have in preparing his statement on public expenditure for the forthcoming financial year.

117. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate the areas of expenditure to which he attaches priority in making decisions on public expenditure for the forthcoming year.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) on 29 July at column *744*.

Manufacturing Investment

45. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the lastest figures for the growth of manufacturing investment.

100. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of manufacturing investment.

121. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of manufacturing investment.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter).

Share Sales (Privatisation)

46. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many share sales have taken place since 1979 as a result of the Government's policy of privatisation.

74. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many share sales have taken place since 1979 as a result of the Government's policy of privatisation.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth).

Personal Taxation (Yields)

51. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the effect of the reduction of income tax rates in the United Kingdom and in other countries on total tax yields from personal taxes.

94. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has of the extent to which a further reduction of the marginal rate of income tax may generate more tax revenue; and if he has any indication of the extra revenue generated to date by his Budget measures.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates of the direct revenue costs of the reductions in income tax rates were published in the financial statement and Budget report on Budget day. Notwithstanding those reductions, provisional figures suggest that income tax receipts in the first six months of 1988-89 are 6½ per cent. higher than in the corresponding period in 1987-88 as a result of the growth in employment and earnings. It is not possible to isolate the effects of the Budget measures on these factors; nor is it possible to estimate corresponding effects of any further reductions in tax rates. Experience in other countries supports the view that there are significant benefits from reducing high rates of personal tax.

Balance of Payments (Tax Cuts)

56. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated effect to date of tax cuts announced in his Budget on the balance of payments.

Mr. Major: I expect the cuts in income tax rates to improve the United Kingdom's economic performance, and so to increase output and exports.

Excise Duties and VAT

57. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement concerning the latest proposals of the Commission of the European Economic Communities concerning the reinstatement of excise duties and value added tax.

Mr. Lilley: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the European Commission's proposals for the approximation of indirect tax rates. No new proposals have been put forward since the original package published in August 1987. The Government remain of the view that tax approximation is unnecessary for the completion of the single market. It could not be introduced without the unanimous consent of all member states. At an informal meeting of Economic and Finance Ministers in September my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented a paper setting out an alternative, market based approach to completing the single market. Copies have been placed in the Library. The paper remains on the table for further consideration alongside the Commission's proposals. The Commission is currently re-examining its proposals in the light of the many serious reservations expressed by member states.

Investment (Economy)

58. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of investment in the economy.

113. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of investment in the economy.

114. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of investment in the economy.

Mr. Major: Total fixed investment in the whole economy at 1985 prices grew by 10·5 per cent. in the second quarter of this year compared to the same period in 1987.

Earnings

59. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the contribution to falling unemployment of 1 per cent. off the annual increase in average earnings.

122. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the contribution to falling unemployment of 1 per cent. off the annual increase in average earnings.

Mr. Major: A decrease in the level of pay settlements which brought them more closely into line with increases in productivity would have an important effect in reducing unemployment. This is now on a firm downward trend, and greater wage restraint would help to keep it there.

Labour Statistics

60. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in total employment in the economy since 1983.

Mr. Major: Total employment in the whole economy has risen by over 2 million since March 1983. This is more than in any other EC country.

Self-employment

65. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in total self-employment in the economy since 1979.

76. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in total self-employment in the economy since 1979.

125. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in total self-employment in the economy since 1979.

Mr. Major: Since 1979 self-employment has increased by more than 1 million, or over 50 per cent., which is more than six times as much as in the previous 30 years.

Manufacturing Productivity

66. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of manufacturing productivity in the economy since 1980.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt).

Manufacturing Productivity

118. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give his latest estimate of the growth of manufacturing productivity over the latest three-months period for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: In the three months to August 1988, output per head in manufacturing was 7½ per cent. higher than the same period a year earlier.

Civil Servants (Locations)

67. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants employed in *(a)* the Treasury, *(b)* Customs and Excise, *(c)* Inland Revenue and *(d)* other departments for which he is responsible work in the (i) north of England, (ii) south of England and (iii) midlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: At 1 April 1988, the staff numbers in the Chancellor's departments were:

Full time equivalents

Department	*North of England*	*South of England*	*Midlands*
HM Treasury (inclusive CISCO)	62	2,810	117
HM Customs and Excise	4,300	16,891	1,947
Inland Revenue	17,623	28,594	8,595
Others	4,908	3,509	52

National Economics Development Council

68. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last attended a meeting of the National Economic Development Council; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 16 June at columns *268-69* to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs).

MF and World Bank

80. **Mr. Stuart Holland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the action taken by Her Majesty's Government in the light of the September meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Mr. Lilley: At the Berlin meetings, Finance Ministers of the main industrialised countries renewed their commitment to policies leading to sustained growth, low inflation and exchange rate stability.

The meetings welcomed the agreement reached by the Paris Club to implement proposals which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer first made in April 1987 to provide substantial relief on the official debts of some of the poorest and most heavily indebted countries in Africa which are following approved adjustment programmes. The United Kingdom will play its part in these reschedulings, the first of which is due to be discussed this month.

Independent Advisers

82. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many independent advisers he has who are paid from public funds.

84. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many independent advisers he has who are paid from public funds.

132. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many independent advisers he has who are paid from public funds.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald).

Manufacturing Output

83. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of manufacturing output during the first half of 1988.

90. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of manufacturing output during the first half of 1988.

91. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of manufacturing output during the first half of 1988.

124. **Mr. Mills:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of manufacturing output during the first half of 1988.

Mr. Major: Manufacturing output grew by 6·9 per cent. in the three months up to August compared with the same period a year earlier.

IMF and World Bank

88. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the joint annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones).

Departmental Staff (Work Rate)

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has made any estimate of the increase in work rate of those members of his Department whose marginal rates of tax were cut by the budget to 40 per cent.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 12 April 1988 at column *66*.

Scotch Whisky

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount of revenue accruing to the Exchequer from *(a)* exports of Scotch whisky and *(b)* domestic sales of Scotch whisky for the financial year 1987-88.

Mr. Lilley: It is estimated that about half the £2.1 billion VAT and excise duty revenue on spirits in 1987-88 came from domestic sales of Scotch whisky. Indirect taxes are not charged on exports of Scotch whisky.

Gold Stocks (Bank of England)

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the value of gold currently held by the Bank of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: $8.1 billion.

Company Taxation

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the latest position on the European harmonisation of company taxation.

Mr. Lilley: I understand that the European Commission is still considering its draft proposals for harmonisation of the business tax base.

VAT

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals to extend the range of goods and services covered by value added tax are currently being considered; how many recent representations he has received on this topic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The Government are considering how to implement the European Court of Justice's ruling that certain of our VAT zero rates do not comply with existing Community law. The European Commission has proposed approximation of VAT rates, which would involve VAT being charged on all items currently zero-rated; but we have made it clear that we do not consider tax approximation to be a necessary precondition for completing the internal market and that we cannot accept any proposals which would restrict our present ability to use VAT zero rating. We have received a number of representation on these, and other, aspects of VAT zero rating.

Price Stability

110. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on progress in achieving the Government's ultimate objective of price stability.

Mr. Major: The Government's decisive action in raising interest rates this summer shows our determination to keep on top of inflation.

Company Cars

112. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any further plans to seek to increase the taxation paid by individuals enjoying the benefits of a company car.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I cannot anticipate what changes my right hon. Friend might want to make in his Budget. However, in his last Budget, when proposing increases to the scale charges which apply where an individual has the benefit of a company car, my right hon. Friend pointed out that the scale of undertaxation of company cars was too great to be put right in a single year.

EC (Finance Ministers)

115. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met his counterparts in the EEC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met his counterparts in the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend attended the informal meeting of European Community Finance Ministers in Crete from 16-18 September, at which the question of the approximation of indirect taxation was further discussed. No conclusions were reached.

Government Revenue

127. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much his latest estimate of total Government revenue in 1988-89 differs from his Budget forecast.

Mr. Major: Given the expectation of higher economic growth than previously forecast, it is likely that receipts will be higher in 198-89 than forecast at Budget time. A new forecast of general Government receipts will be given in the autumn statement next month.

Fiscal Policy

130. **Sir Peter Emery:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to prepare British fiscal policy for 1992.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend circulated a paper on 8 September to other EC Finance Minister on a market-based approach to harmonisation of indirect taxation within the EC. This was discussed at an informal Ecofin in Crete on 17 September. The Commission has not yet published its formal proposals for the harmonisation of the business tax base.

Company Taxation

131. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what resources the Inland Revenue is currently devoting to investigations of the tax affairs of companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: For the year to April 1988 the Inland Revenue estimates that some 1,200 man-years of its staff resources were devoted to the examination of company accounts.

Balance of Trade

133. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will call a conference of Government, the Trades Union Congress and the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the implications for the British economy of the adverse balance of trade.

Mr. Major: No.

Official Report

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the price per issue of the *Official Report;* the amount of subsidy per issue; and what was the figure for each year since 1970;

(2) how many copies of the *Official Report* are sold; and what were the figures for each year since 1983.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friend to the replies I gave him on 26 October.

Civil Servants (Leave)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce a scheme whereby all established civil servants receive one day's increased annual leave per year of service to a maximum limit of 30 days; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Civil Service leave allowances compare favourably with those offered by other employers, and their competitiveness will increase still further as improvements already agreed are brought in. From 1 April 1991 all non-industrial civil servants with one year's service will enjoy five weeks' leave, arising to six weeks after 10-20 years service, depending on grade.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amount of annual leave granted to civil servants of the following grades *(a)* administrative assistant, *(b)* administrative officer, *(c)* executive officer, *(d)* higher executive officer, *(e)* SEO, *(f)* grade 7, *(g)* grade 6 and *(h)* grade 5.

Mr. Brooke: The information is as follows:

Annual Leave Allowance for non-Industrial Civil Servants (with effect from 1 April 1988)

Grade and Annual Leave

(a) Administrative Assistant
4 weeks 2 days on entry
5 weeks after 9 years' total service
6 weeks after 23 years' total service

(b) Administrative Officer
As Administrative Assistant

(c) Executive Officer
4 weeks 2 days on entry
5 weeks after 7 years' total service
6 weeks after 23 years' total service

(d) Higher Executive Officer
4 weeks 2 days on entry
5 weeks after 6 years' total service
6 weeks after 18 years' total service

(e) Senior Executive Officer
5 weeks on entry
6 weeks after 10 years' total service

(f) Grade 7
As Senior Executive Officer

(g) Grade 6
As Senior Executive Officer

(h) Grade 5
As Senior Executive Officer

Flexible Working Hours

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will increase the existing limit on flexible working hours to four days per month; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: No. I have no such plan.

Civil Servants (Pay)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the rates of pay of civil servants of the following grades *(a)* administrative assistant, *(b)* administrative officer, *(c)* executive officer, *(d)* higher executive officer, *(e)* SEO, *(f)* grade 7, *(g)* grade 6 and *(h)* grade 5.

Mr. Brooke: The pay scales of the grades in question are as follows (with effect from 1 April 1988 unless other wise stated):

Age	*£*
Administrative Assistant	
16	3,523
17	3,823
18	4,667
19	4,960
	5,299
	5,670
	6,081
Administrative Officer	
16	3,873
17	4,223
18	5,352
19	5,882
20	6,386
	6,836
	7,555
Executive Officer	
18	6,134
19	6,798
20	7,641
	8,221
	8,907
	9,696
	10,755
Higher Executive Officer	
	10,434
	10,858
	11,278
	11,805
	12,436
	13,458
Senior Executive Officer	
	12,806
	13,334

Age	£
	13,966
	14,653
	15,362
	16,489
Grade 7—1 October 1988	
	16,692
	17,443
	18,228
	19,048
	19,905
	20,801
	21,737
	[1]22,715
	23,737
	24,805
	25,921
Grade 6—1 October 1988	
	19,905
	20,801
	22,715
	24,805
	27,087
	[1]28,154
	29,255
	30,387
	31,563
Grade 5—1 October 1988	
	27,087
	28,154
	29,255
	30,387
	[1]31,563
	32,784
	34,053
	35,371

[1] Performance-related increments

Staff at grades AA to grade 5 working in London also receive London Weighting at the following rates with effect from 1 July 1988:

	Adult (18+)	*Juvenile (under 18)*
Inner	1,750	1,313
Intermediate	1,000	750
Outer	725	544

Since June this year Departments have been able to meet particular recruitment and retention difficulties with local pay additions of up to £600 per annum.

Public Bills (Reprinting)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report*, a list of Public Bills which were reprinted during the 1987-88 Session; what was the reason for reprinting each Bill; and what was the cost.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* The information requested is given in the table:

Bill Number			*Reason for Reprinting*
Commons			
2	Local Government		Demand
18	Urban Development Financial Limits		Error
20	Protection of Official Information		Demand
21	Scotch Whisky		Demand
22	Abortion (Amendment)	(i)	Error
		(ii)	Demand
23	Consumer Arbitration Agreements		Demand
24	Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts by Children)		Demand
27	Slaughter of Deer		Demand
35	Abortion (Treatment of Non-Resident Women)		Demand
37	Housing (Waiting List Restrictions)		Demand
39	Abortion (Financial Benefit)		Demand
40	Licensing		Demand
42	Planning Permission (Demolition of Houses)		Demand
49	Immigration		Demand
50	Scotland		Demand
53	Education Reform		Demand
54	Housing	(i)	Error
		(ii)	Demand
63	Housing (Scotland)	(i)	Error
		(ii)	Demand
65	Local Government		Demand
70	Criminal Justice		Demand
76	Civil Evidence (Scotland)		Demand
81	Licensing		Error
102	Protection of Animals (Amendment)		Error
124	Local Authorities (General Powers)		Demand
137	Abortion (Amendment)		Demand
Lords			
3	Criminal Justice		Demand
4	Sunday Sports		Demand
12	Copyright, Design and Patents		Demand
12(b)	Copyright, Design and Patents		Demand
15(-1aARR)	Criminal Justice		Demand
15-II	Criminal Justice		Demand
15-II(a)	Criminal Justice		Demand
15-III	Criminal Justice		Demand
21	Civil Evidence (Scotland)		Demand
26	Legal Aid		Demand
35	Local Government		Demand
36(a)	Farmland and Rural Development		Demand
37(a)	Copyright, Design and Patents		Error
44	Local Government		Demand
50	Employment		Demand
53	Immigration		Demand
63	Employment		Error
65(R-a)	Public Utilities Transfers and Water Charges		Error
71	Education Reform		Demand
82-I	Local Government—Finance		Demand
82-II	Local Government—Finance		Demand
94-I	Education Reform		Demand
105(a)	Local Government—Finance		Demand
109	Housing		Demand
109-II	Housing		Demand
109-V	Housing		Error

The cost of reprinting all those Bills that have been reprinted because demand exceeded the initial print run should be covered by income from sales. The additional cost of reprinting Bills as a result of press and other errors is estimated to be £13,468. Those costs were borne by HMSO.

Advance Forecasts

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his response to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee's recommendations that Parliament should be provided with advance forecasts in the autumn to set beside expenditure decisions.

Mr. Major: *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* The Government's response to the Treasury and Civil Service

Select Committee's recommendations was published on 25 October by the Committee in its fourth special report (House of Commons paper 675).

Elton John

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Minister for the Arts how much Sothebys paid the Victoria and Albert museum for the preview they staged on the sale of the possessions of Elton John.

Mr. Luce: The recent exhibition of part of the collection of Elton John was staged at the Victoria and Albert museum with the support of Sothebys. The cost of setting up the exhibition was met by Sothebys.

The museum's purpose in exhibiting the collection was to reach a new audience, a sector of the public who may not traditionally visit museums. I understand that visitor numbers to the museums more than doubled during the period of the exhibition.

CIVIL SERVICE

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service, if he will state the amounts reclaimed from his office for expenditure incurred by Her Majesty's embassies and high commissions arising from ministerial visits abroad in each year since 1985.

Mr. Luce: The information is not held in the form requested and cannot be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Norman Shaw North Issue Office

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council if there are any plans to review the opening hours of the Norman Shaw north issue office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: The opening hours of the Norman Shaw north issue office are kept continuously under review. Most recently, on 2 February 1988, the Services Committee resolved that the experimental arrangement, to extend the opening hours from 6 pm to 10 pm be made permanent.

Vote Office

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any plans to review the access to the Vote Office of staff of hon. Members before 8.45 am on sitting days; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: The Deliverer of the Vote keeps this matter under constant review with the object of commencing service to the staff of right hon. and hon. Members as early as possible. As my hon. Friend may be aware, the House of Commons (Services) Committee, recently recommended in its second report, Session 1987-88: "Access to the Precincts of the House" (para 37 and 38; HC 580), that the Deliverer of the Vote should retain the discretion to vary his services to non-Members.

Palace of Westminster (Security Officers)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, when the grade 3/4 security officers employed at the Palace of Westminster will receive their 1988 pay award.

Mr. Beith: The House of Commons Commission has no responsibility for determining the salaries of security officers employed at the Palace of Westminster, whose services are provided by the Commissioner for the Metropolitan Police. The House's contribution to the cost of the service is, however, carried on sub-head A9 of the Vote for House of Commons: Administration, the Estimate for which is approved by the Commission. I understand that a settlement of the security officers' 1988 pay award is now in prospect, and I have asked the responsible authority to write to the hon. Gentleman to explain the position.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Criminal Jurisdiction Act 1975

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report*, the text of his letter of 19 October to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North where he refers to the difficulties involved in the use of the Criminal Jurisdiction Act 1975 and its equivalent to the Republic of Ireland to try alleged offenders in one jurisdiction for offences committed in the other.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend wrote to the hon. Member on 19 October 1988 in the following terms:

"You wrote to the Prime Minister on 26 September advocating greater use of the Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Act 1976 to have fugitive terrorist offenders tried in the Republic of Ireland rather than seeking their extradition.

The provision of our Criminal Jurisdiction Act 1975 and the 1976 Act which is the equivalent Irish legislation give rise to certain difficulties which make its use more restrictive than extradition. But I can assure you that the Attorney General and the prosecuting authorities do bear the Act very much in mind when seeking to bring fugitives to justice. If a suitable case arises it will be used. Our policy is to use the most effective route in any given instance.

It is the Government's expressed concern that there should be no hiding place for terrorists anywhere in the island of Ireland and that those accused of serious crimes should not be able to escape justice by fleeing the jurisdiction. The Irish Government shares that concern. That is why we are working together to make the arrangements for dealing with fugitive offenders as effective as possible".

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the difficulties referred to in his letter to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North of 19 October.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The main difficulties with the use of the extraterritorial legislation to proceed against terrorists apprehended in the Republic of Ireland stem from the fact that a case prepared in one jurisdiction has to be run in another, with a differing system of justice, particularly with regard to rules of evidence. The precise areas will of course vary accordingly to the particular details of each case.

As my right hon. Friend stated in his letter of 19 October to the hon. Member, the Attorney-General and the prosecuting authorities do bear the legislation very much in mind when seeking to bring fugitives to justice. Both we and the Government of the Republic of Ireland are working together to make the arrangements for dealing with fugitive offenders as effective as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

London Docklands

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what facilities the employment service has in London docklands; and what percentage of new jobs in docklands are advertised through his Department's jobcentres.

Mr. Nicholls: The employment service has a network of thirteen jobcentres and unemployment benefit offices in and around the docklands.

The existing network is to be further enhanced by a new docklands mobile jobcentre which will be operational from November 1 this year. This office will visit five sites each week in the boroughs of Newham and Tower Hamlets and will provide access to the full facilities of the employment service. During the period April-September this year 10,798 vacancies were notified to offices in and around docklands. It is not possible to calculate what percentage of the total vacancies available in the docklands this represents.

Northamptonshire (Labour Statistics)

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed *(a)* full-time and *(b)* full-time equivalents in Northamptonshire and in each of its seven districts in March 1979 and March 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: Employee estimates for counties and smaller areas are available only for dates when censuses of employment are taken and cover only estimates of the numbers of full-time and part-time workers in different industries and services. The available information, taken from the September 1981 and September 1984 censuses of employment, is given in the table below. The information collected in the census of employment is not sufficiently detailed to support the accurate calculation of full-time equivalents.

Employees in employment[1] (thousands)

County and districts[2]	*September 1981*			*September 1984*		
	Full time	*Part time[3]*	*All*	*Full time*	*Part time[3]*	*All*
Northamptonshire	150·3	41·8	192·1	156·4	46·9	203·2
Corby	14·0	3·4	17·5	16·0	3·6	19·5
Daventry	13·3	3·2	16·5	14·3	3·5	17·7
East Northamptonshire	15·5	4·0	19·4	15·0	3·5	18·5
Kettering	19·1	5·8	25·0	20·1	10·2	30·3
Northampton	61·7	17·9	79·4	62·7	19·0	81·7
South Northamptonshire	9·4	3·1	12·5	9·7	2·8	12·5
Wellingborough	17·1	4·6	21·7	18·6	4·3	22·9

[1] The figures exclude the self-employed and members of HM Forces.
[2] The areas are defined in terms of ward boundaries as at 1981.
[3] Part-timers are defined as those working not more than 30 hours a week.

Piper Alpha

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what resources of the Health and Safety Commission and Executive were involved in work subsequent upon the Piper Alpha incident.

Mr. Nicholls: A total of approximately 25 man weeks have been spent to date by nine Health and Safety Executive staff, acting on behalf of the Health and Safety Commission, on work relating to the technical investigation subsequent to the Piper Alpha incident.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what work the Health and Safety Commission and Executive had to postpone owing to resources being allocated to work consequent upon the Piper Alpha incident.

Mr. Nicholls: The main effect of the assignment of Health and Safety Executiveinspectors to assist with the investigation of the Piper Alpha incident was to delay some planned preventive work.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of industrial accidents which result in an emergency services call-out do not receive attention from the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of accidents in the construction industry are not visited by inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: Between 1 April 1987 and 31 March 1988 all accidents involving fatal injuries were investigated. In the same period 91·7 per cent. of the total of reportable injuries occurring in the construction industry which were reported to the Health and Safety Executive's factory and agricultural inspectorates were not investigated. Reported accidents are selected for investigation after considering the gravity of the apparent breach, the need to give advice and the value of any information that would be obtained to prevent similar accidents.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the time of Health and Safety Executive's construction inspectors is now taken up with work relating to so-called blitzes, fatalities and prosecutions.

Mr. Nicholls The amount of time devoted to work by construction inspectors on the blitzes, which ended in September 1988 and on investigating fatal accidents is not recorded separately.

Information about the amount of time construction inspectors devote to prosecutions is also not recorded separately. However, it is expected that construction inspectors during the current year will devote about 13 per cent. of their time to legal work, most of which will relate to prosecutions.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement concerning the number of experienced factory inspectors leaving the Health and Safety Executive; and what steps he intends taking to reduce such losses in the future.

Mr. Nicholls: The staffing of the factory inspectorate is a matter for the Health and Safety Commission and Executive. Between 1 January 1979 and 31 December 1987, 333 experienced factory inspectors left HSE of whom 178 resigned, 135 retired and 20 left for other reasons. During the same period 242 factory inspectors joined HSE.

New long-term pay arrangements, agreed last year, allow greater flexibility in determining future salaries, and improvements are currently being discussed between HM Treasury and the Institution of Professional Civil Servants. Also, within the HSE, training and career development arrangements for all inspectors are being re-examined, with a view to broadening and enhancing what is already rewarding, if demanding, work. Particular attention is being focused on inspectors in mid-career.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what priority he attaches to the enforcement of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations; and what assessment he has made as to whether there are sufficient Health and Safety Executive inspectors in place to fully implement these regulations.

Mr. Nicholls: Health and Safety enforcement priorities, and allocation of appropriate resources, are matters for

the Health and Safety Commission and Executive, whose total resources are reviewed annually. I am satisfied that sufficient resources will be available to the Executive to enforce the regulations.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many written reports have been received under the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazard Regulations; what proportion this represents of reports that are required for submission before June 1989; and what assessment he has made as to whether there are sufficient inspectors in the Health and Safety Executive adequately to scrutinise the reports.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive has received centrally 123 safety reports as required by the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards (CIMAH) Regulations 1984. There are currently about 300 sites subject to the more specific requirements of CIMAH ("top tier" sites) where compliance with regulation 7 is required.

It is impossible to give a precise estimate of the number of safety reports which Health and Safety Executive expect to receive by July 1989. This is because there are several distinct "top tier" activities on some large sites, each in a separate installation, and operators have discretion to decide whether to submit a comprehensive single report covering all activities, or a separate report for each activity.

Allocation of resources is a matter for the Health and Safety Commission and Executive and I am satisfied that Health and Safety Executive is able to carry out its scrutiny of safety cases effectively.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the problems the Health and Safety Executive faces, and anticipates facing, over recruiting new graduate scientists; and what plans it has made to help overcome these problems.

Mr. Nicholls: Responsibility for the recruitment of scientists rests with the Health and Safety Executive which recognises the importance of attracting good quality candidates in an environment where there is strong competition from other employers.

Pay is obviously important. New long-term arrangements agreed last year between Her Majesty's Treasury and the Institution of Professional Civil Servants will provide for greater flexibility in determining salaries for the grades at which most scientists are recruited.

In addition, the executive is seeking to publicise more widely to potential recruits—through closer contacts with universities, and greater use of vacation studentships—the wide range of interesting and rewarding work available. More school leavers may also be recruited, with support to pursue further education on day release.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what work is being done, or is planned by the Health and Safety Executive in investigating flour allergy among biscuit and pastry makers; and what sources of expertise are available to it in this area.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive plans to assist the Federation of Baker's safety sub-committee working party which has been set up to identify where dust occurs in bakeries and to consider practical and engineering methods of reducing dust levels. The Health and Safety Executive employs expert doctors and scientists concerned with occupational health and hygiene and is also in touch with other leading specialists.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what additional numbers of inspectors are *(a)* needed and *(b)* in place to implement and enforce the Food and Environment Protection Act, the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazard Regulations, the Road Traffic (Carriage of Dangerous Substances in Packages) Regulations and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive enforces these and other health and safety regulations concurrently and resources cannot be allocated specifically to particular items of legislation. These additional responsibilities were however recognised in the Government's decision to allocate an additional £6·7 million for the executive's work in 1988-89.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the information he has as to the reasons for the increases in fatal and major accident incidence rates in manufacturing industry from 1981 to 1985.

Mr. Nicholls: An analysis of trends in reported occupational accidents 1981 to 1985 was discussed in an article by HSE which appeared in the *Employment Gazette* in January 1988. A copy has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make his policy not to allow the transfer to the Health and Safety Executive of areas of work currently allocated to other departments without a concomitant increase in resources.

Mr. Nicholls: When such transfers take place, proper consideration is given to implications for resources.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether any work is being undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive to reduce hazards in underground transportation in mines, following the two serious accidents in the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive has always paid particular attention to the hazards of underground transport in mines and is currently undertaking a survey of transport accidents in mines as well as projects related to individual types of transport systems.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations the Health and Safety Executive has received on the extension of the working life of mine winding ropes; and what response the Executive has made.

Mr. Nicholls: No representations on the extension of the working life of mine winding ropes have been received by HSE since the mining industry commented in 1985 on proposed new legislation on shafts and winding in mines.

The proposals have been revised to take account of these comments and are to be issued for a further period of informal consultation.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what work has been undertaken by Health

and Safety Executive scientists on the emergency shut-down system for offshore gas production platforms; and when this work will be completed.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive's work in this area arose as a constituent part of a wider programme on the assessment of programmable electronic systems. A PES-based system is used on the SEAN P gas production platform in the North sea which was selected as an example to evaluate the PES guidance documents published by HSE. The assessment was limited to the wellhead area of the platform and is now complete. The draft report is now being approved for issue.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what work is planned by the Health and Safety Executive into dimethylformamide as a cause of testicular cancer in the shoe manufacturing industry.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive's employment medical advisory service is compiling information about workplaces known to be using dimethylformamide (DMF), including the circumstances in which it is being used, the numbers of workers and the levels of exposure to DMF which they experience. This will be used to assess the feasibility of the executive carrying out an epidemiological study of exposed workers.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list the responsibilities that the Health and Safety Executive has lost since 1979; and whether he will describe the major areas since that year where the Health and Safety Executive has become more cost-effective.

Mr. Nicholls: Since 1979 the Health and Safety Executive has lost the following responsibilities:

(i) Her Majesty's industrial air pollution inspectorate was transferred to the Department of Environment on 1 april 1987.

(ii) inspection and enforcement responsibility at most zoos was transferred to local authorities from October 1985.

Over the same period, sources of improved cost-effectiveness have included:

better planning and targeting of inspections, helped by the development of work recording systems and systems for rating premises according to their level of risk;

use of information technology and the development of investigation databases; and

reduced administrative burdens following codification of advice and reform of out-dated legislation.

A fuller account of efficiency and effectiveness improvements will be included in the annual report of the Commission and the Executive for 1987-88, to be published shortly.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list the additional responsibilities taken on by the Health and Safety Executive since 1979; and if he is satisfied that the Health and Safety Executive is adequately enforcing these responsibilities.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 laid upon the Health and Safety Commission and Executive responsibility for virtually all aspects of occupational health and safety, and most aspects of the protection of the public from work activity. Within this overall competence HSE has acquired the following new responsibilities since 1979:

(i) carriage by road, classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances;

(ii) notification of new and existing substances before they are placed on the market;

(iii) action under the European directive on the control of industrial major accident hazards;

(iv) mains gas safety;

(v) asbestos licensing;

(vi) the enforcement of part 3 of the Food and Environment Protection Act and its related Control of Pesticides regulations.

In addition, the HSE has acquired new or substantially expanded work in connection with the nuclear industry and the control of dangerous substances in harbour areas, radiation and noise and the health and safety implications of the development and use of new technology including programmable electronics and biotechnology. There has also been a significant growth of EC activity and regulations in areas affecting safety and health, and a general growth in public and international interest in relevant environmental and major hazards issues requiring action by HSE.

I am satisfied that HSE is adequately enforcing these responsibilities.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many times since 1984 the Health and Safety Commission or the Health and Safety Executive, directly or through his Department, has asked for additional funding over and above its original public expenditure survey allocation; and what sums were requested and granted in each case.

Mr. Nicholls: Discussions regarding the funding for the Health and Safety Commission are confidential and take place in the context of the annual public expenditure survey round. These discussions have resulted in the allocation of the following amounts additional to the previously planned gross provision:

£ million

	Additional amounts agreed
PES 1985 covering years:	
1986-87	1·1
1987-88	2·9
1988-89	3·0
PES 1987 covering years:	
1988-89	6·7
1989-90	6·9
1990-91	7·1

In addition, during the estimates round for 1987-88 the Health and Safety Commission received further gross provision of £1 million above the previously agreed planned provision, as well as a winter supplementary estimate of £1 million gross.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest number of factory and agricultural inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 October 1988 the Health and Safety Executive employed 601·5 factory and 165 agricultural inspectors.

Fireworks

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many laboratories external to the Health and Safety Executive have been identified by it as suitable and capable of testing fireworks.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive has so far accepted 25 sites as being suitable and capable for testing fireworks.

King's Cross Fire

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what amount of the Health and Safety Executive's resources were allocated to the scientific investigation of the causes of the King's Cross fire; and what work was postponed or abandoned to allow for this task.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive contribution to the scientific investigation is estimated at £0·75 million, including eight man years' work. Work on the investigation was accommodated primarily by changing priorities in research programmes and delaying work on particular projects, for example, the European Commission's major technological hazards research programme.

Coal Tar Pitch Volatiles

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the Health and Safety Executive will undertake a survey of exposure levels for coal tar pitch volatiles.

Mr. Nicholls: A survey of exposure levels for coal tar pitch volatiles already forms part of the review of these substances being undertaken during the current work programme of the advisory committee on toxic substances (ACTS). This committee advises the Health and Safety Commission on methods of controlling health hazards arising from the use of toxic substances at work.

Organotin Compounds

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what work is planned by the Health and Safety Executive into the study of toxicity of organotin compounds in fungicides; and how many requests have been made by the employment medical advisory service for such work to be undertaken.

Mr. Nicholls: The executive is carrying out a review of the use of the organotin compound tributyl tin oxide in wood preservatives. The review has been requested by the independent advisory committee on pesticides and reflects concern that pesticides introduced some years ago do not meet current, more stringent safety and environmental standards. The employment medical advisory service has not specifically requested this work.

Accident Statistics

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list, in standard industrial classification order, the fatal and major incident rates for each of the past 10 years for all major industries.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information is set out in the following three tables. Some of the older data analysed by the previous standard industrial classification could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Table 1
Fatal Injuries to Employees Reported to All HSC/E Enforcement Authorities[1], 1981-1986/87

Standard Industrial Classification (1980) Division	*Fatal injury incidence rates per 100,000 employees*					
	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*[2]1986-87*
0. Agriculture, Forestry and fishing	8·8	7·8	8·6	8·8	6·1	8·6
1. Energy and Water Supply Industries	7·8	11·4	7·4	7·9	7·5	5·8
2. Extraction of minerals and ores other than fuels; Manufacture of metals, mineral products and chemicals	5·3	6·6	3·8	7·3	5·2	5·5
3. Metal goods, Engineering and Vehicle Industries	1·4	1·9	1·4	2·0	1·9	1·7
4. Other Manufacturing Industries	1·5	1·4	2·3	1·7	1·8	1·4
2-4. Total Manufacturing Industries	2·0	2·4	2·1	2·7	2·4	2·1
5. Construction	9·7	9·7	11·6	9·8	10·8	10·2
6. Distribution, Hotels and Catering; Repairs	0·8	1·0	1·0	0·8	0·7	0·5
7. Transport and Communication	3·3	3·7	3·0	3·3	3·6	2·6
8. Banking, Finance, Insurance, Business Services and Leasing	—	0·2	—	—	0·1	0·4
9. Other Services	0·4	0·4	0·5	0·5	0·3	0·3
Total All Industries	2·1	2·3	2·2	2·1	1·9	1·7

[1] Based on the number of fatal injuries to employees reported to the Health & Safety Executive or other appropriate enforcing authorities under, and as defined in, the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NADOR), 1980, for the period 1 January 1981 to 31 March 1986, and the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 1985 for the year commencing 1 April 1986. Similarly for Table 2 (non-fatal major injuries). From 1981-1985, the rates may include some injuries to the self-employed, and from 1981-1983 to members of the public.

[2] In the first quarter of 1986, 98 fatal injuries to employees were reported compared with 402 in the whole of 1985.

Table 2

Non-fatal major injuries to employees reported to all HSC/E enforcement authorities, 1981 to 1986-87[1]

Standard Industrial Classification (SIC80) — *Major injury incidence rates per 100,000 employees*

Division	1981[2]	1982	1983	1984	1985	RIDDOR 1986-87 Actual[3]	RIDDOR 1986-87 Adjusted to NADOR[4]
0. Agriculture, forestry and fishing	46·9	42·3	59·1	82·2	71·2	131·6	89·1-106·3
1. Energy and water supply industries	162·2	173·1	173·1	92·7	173·7	331·1	—
2. Extraction of minerals and ores other than fuels; manufacture of metals, mineral products and chemicals	124·3	131·8	144·7	161·9	155·3	214·7	—
3. Metal goods, engineering and vehicle industries	56·0	56·5	63·2	70·3	75·8	114·6	—
4. Other manufacturing industries	62·5	68·2	74·2	84·7	87·3	143·6	—
2-4. Total manufacturing industries	68·8	72·3	79·6	89·6	92·3	141·4	77·9-99·2
5. Construction	155·6	188·5	213·2	225·2	225·8	263·5	167·4-180·3
6. Distribution, hotels and catering; repairs	34·3	39·3	31·6	34·6	36·1	42·9	—
7. Transport and communication	40·4	38·7	42·3	39·2	41·7	85·2	—
8. Banking, finance, insurance, business services and leasing	0·9	0·7	1·1	1·0	1·4	8·9	—
9. Other services	45·8	40·1	40·6	36·4	38·0	74·8	—
Total all industries	57·8	59·0	60·5	60·1	62·7	95·6	—

[1] See note (a) to table 1.
[2] 1981 to 1985 as defined by NADOR, which introduced the definition of major injury.
[3] 1986-87 as defined by RIDDOR. Definition of major injuries significantly wider than in NADOR.
[4] Estimated rates, from the estimated numbers of major injuries reported under RIDDOR that would also have been reportable under NADOR. These estimates available for only some Divisions of SIC(80).

Table 3

Fatal Injuries to Employees Reported to HM Factory Inspectorate, 1976-1980

Standard Industrial Classification (1968) Order	Fatal injury incidence rates per 100,000 employees at risk[1] 1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
III. Food, drink and tobacco	3·1	4·0	3·1	3·1	2·8
IV. Coal and petroleum products	19·2	19·8	8·2	22·0	21·9
V. Chemicals and allied industries	7·0	5·0	4·9	5·0	2·4
VI. Metal manufacture	9·4	12·3	10·4	10·3	7·2
VII. Mechanical engineering	3·9	3·4	3·0	2·7	3·5
VIII. Instrument engineering	—	1·1	—	—	1·2
IX. Electrical engineering	1·4	0·8	—	0·6	0·5
X. Shipbuilding and marine engineering	13·3	10·3	3·8	8·2	7·3
XI. Vehicles	0·9	0·9	1·7	0·8	2·2
XII. Metal goods not elsewhere specified	2·5	2·9	2·7	1·8	3·3
XIII. Textiles	0·8	2·3	1·9	1·1	0·6
XIV. Leather, leather goods and fur	—	3·0	6·3	—	—
XV. Clothing and footwear	0·6	0·3	—	0·3	—
XVI. Bricks, pottery, glass, cement etc.	7·9	3·4	7·5	5·1	3·3
XVII. Timber, furniture etc.	3·5	3·5	4·1	2·6	2·2
XVIII. Paper, printing and publishing	1·9	2·2	3·9	2·8	2·0
XIX. Other manufacturing industries	0·8	2·4	0·4	3·3	1·9
All manufacturing industries	3·4	3·4	3·1	2·9	2·7
XX. Construction	15·3	13·1	12·2	11·8	13·0

[1] Relates to employees at risk, ie operatives. After 1980, rates refer to all employees.

Specialist Inspectors

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many specialist inspectors are employed by the Health and Safety Executive; in what disciplines they are employed; and whether he has any plans to increase the number of specialist inspectors.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 October 1988 there were 204 specialist inspectors in post in the Health and Safety Executive working in the explosives, construction engineering, mechanical engineering, chemical (including biotechnology) and electrical disciplines. Of these, 192 were working in the Health and Safety Executive's technology division. The executive plans to increase the number of specialist inspectors in the Health and Safety Executive's technology division to around 230 by the end of 1988-89.

Fire Precautions

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment why the Health and Safety Executive's technology division has not completed the task of inspecting and certifying fire precautions at the United Kingdom's 1,500 most potentially dangerous work places; and whether he has set a new target date for completion.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive has issued over 600 fire certificates and has completed the survey work at another 35 premises. The majority of those remaining will already have fire certificates issued under the Factories Act 1961, or the Fire Precautions Act 1971 which remain valid until superseded by a certificate issued under the Fire Certification (Special Premises) Regulations 1976. Priority has been given to those premises having no certificate.

Additional specialist inspectors have been trained this year with the aim of largely completing this work by 1991.

Research and Planned Support Work

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list the work that constitutes the backlog of research and planned support work caused by a period of diminishing staff resources described in the 1987 Health and Safety Executive annual report.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive has a rolling programme of research and planned support work and so by its very nature, there is always a queue of further work awaiting action. Examples of work that are currently in the queue include the safety assessment of mine winding ropes, studies of the mechanical properties of non-metallic materials, the safety assessment of expert systems, failure rate data of engineering components, predictive models for the safe venting of explosions and work on occupational hygiene projects.

Occupational Ill-health

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new cases of occupational ill-health there are each year.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 5 July 1988 at column *576*.

Food and Environment Protection Act

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidance has been issued to the agricultural inspectorate on the implementation and enforcement of the Food and Environment Protection Act; and what duties have been dropped to accommodate this additional work.

Mr. Nicholls: Written instructions providing guidance on the interpretation and enforcement of the Food and Environment Protection Act and its regulations have been issued to all HSE agricultural inspectors. These formal instructions are supported by relevant publications and training when necessary.

It has not been necessary to drop any duties to accommodate the work, which arises gradually as regulations come successively into force; some priorities in the work programme have been adjusted.

Pesticides

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many complaints relating to pesticide usage were received by each Health and Safety Executive area office during the first nine months of 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: The information for individual area offices could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The total number of complaints relating to pesticide usage received by the Health and Safety Executive during this period was 105.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the extent of the backlog in non-agricultural pesticide approvals undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive's medical division.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive currently has 300 outstanding applications for approval of non-agricultural pesticides under the Control of Pesticides Regulations, 1986. About one third of these have been received in the last three months.

Hazard Rating System

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the factory inspectorate's hazard rating system; and if he will review it.

Mr. Nicholls: The inspection rating systems used in the factory and agricultural inspectorate division of Health and Safety Executive are designed to ensure that basic inspection is applied systematically, and most frequently to those premises where the hazard is greatest or where for other reasons close monitoring is desirable. The system has operated since 1977 and its effectiveness as a tool for allocating the division's resources is currently under review.

Workplaces

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number of fixed workplaces; how many are registered with the Health and Safety Executive; and what plans he has to increase the number of workplaces that are registered.

Mr. Nicholls: There are approximately 695,000 fixed workplaces currently registered with the Health and Safety Executive. The Health and Safety Executive has published two leaflets "Don't wait until an Inspector Calls" and "500 Dead" to encourage small firms to comply with statutory requirements.

Preventive Inspections

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many preventive inspections were under taken by the factories inspectorate in each of the following years: 1970, 1973, 1974, 1980 and 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available in the form requested for the years 1970, 1973, 1974, and 1980. Between 1 April 1987 and 31 March 1988 factory inspectors made 100,815 preventive inspection visits.

Disabled People

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the procedure under the employment training scheme for referring disabled people to employment rehabilitation centres.

Mr. Nicholls: Employment rehabilitation centres are part of the employment rehabilitation service and are freely available without charge to support training agents and training managers under employment training.

The services are available for clients with special needs and trainees may be referred at any stage in their assessment or training. A training agent may refer a client if there is difficulty in producing an action plan because of a disability or may recommend rehabilitation or further assessment as part of the action plan. A training manager could refer a trainee if there is difficulty in implementing an action plan.

Employment Medical Advisory Service

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current staffing level of nurses in the employment medical advisory service; how many posts are unfilled; how many applications were received for the last advertisement; how many people were offered jobs; and how many of these accepted.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 October 1988, 45 nurses were employed in the Health and Safety Executive's employment medical advisory service. Three full-time and four part-time posts are unfilled. The most recent recruitment competition attracted 11 applications. An offer of employment will be made to the three successful candidates in the near future.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current staffing level for doctors in the employment medical advisory service; how many posts are unfilled; how many applications were received for the last job advertisement; how many people were offered jobs; and how many of these people accepted the offer.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 October 1988, 45 doctors were employed in the Health and Safety Executive's employment medical advisory service. Five posts are vacant. The most recent recruitment competition attracted 25 applications. Offers of employment will be made to seven successful candidates in the near future. Five candidates will be offered posts in the Employment Medical Advisory Service with the remaining two filling vacancies in the Health and Safety Executive's medical division head office.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the ways in which the employment medical advisory service will encourage the development of occupational health services in industry.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Commission has embarked on a programme to encourage employers to review their specific needs for health advice and make suitable arrangements for obtaining it. This includes the publication of guidance and promotional activities intended to raise awareness of occupational health issues and to create the right atmosphere for action by employers. It also involves encouragement to employers already making adequate provision to make their facilities more widely available. The employment medical advisory service is playing a central role in these activities.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the role of doctors and nurses employed by the EMAS in relation to the introduction of Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations; and what additional staff resources will be made available to effect this.

Mr. Nicholls: Responsibility for implementing requirements in the COSHH regulations for medical surveillance rests with employers. The employment medical advisory service will continue to advise employers on these obligations and appropriate arrangements to meet them. No requirement for additional doctors and nurses is envisaged at present.

Employment Rehabilitation Centres

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement concerning the two employment rehabilitation centres at Egham and Preston.

Mr. Nicholls: Egham and Preston are the two purpose-built residential employment rehabilitation centres. They offer assessment and rehabilitation courses for people with disabilities who live beyond daily travelling distance of an employment rehabilitation service establishment or have special need for residential provision.

They also offer non-residential services to people who can travel daily and operate mobile assessment services.

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will update the numbers of deaths from occupational diseases that was published in the foreword to the "Control of Substances Hazardous to Health" consultation document.

Mr. Nicholls: In 1986, the latest date for which a figure is available, there were 631 awards of death benefit, excluding awards for asbestosis, in Great Britain. Other figures are for 1985, when the total number of deaths from chronic bronchitis, asthma and emphysema were about 16,000 and the total number of deaths from cancer just under 142,000. It is not known what proportion of deaths are occupationally related, but for cancer it has been variously estimated as between 28 and 30 per cent.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, what additional resources he expects will be necessary for the Health and Safety Executive fully to implement the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations; and in what areas and disciplines additional staff will be needed.

Mr. Nicholls: Responsibility for compliance with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations when they come into force in October 1989 will rest with industry. The Executive intends to work closely with industry organisations in the coming months, to encourage them to develop guidance for their members.

The regulations will be enforced by the Health and Safety Executive as part of its continuing programmes of visits to premises. Although the regulations largely replace out-dated existing requirements, their introduction can be expected to increase employers' awareness of health problems, and generate more requests to the Health and Safety Executive for advice and assistance.

There will be a shift in the balance of scientific support required by inspectors, from checking exposure problems directly, to appraising employers' control systems. Possible changes in the Health and Safety Executive's total costs are unquantifiable at present. Resourcing for the commission and the Health and Safety Executive is, of course, reviewed annually as part of the public expenditure survey.

Youth Training

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on restructuring youth training and on what emphasis is placed on raising the level of foundation skills.

Mr. Cope: We will be discussing training matters in our forthcoming White Paper.

Hazardous Goods (Carriage by Road)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of joint roadside checking exercises of road vehicles carrying hazardous goods that the police have undertaken in conjunction with the Health and Safety Executive in each of the past three years in England and Wales, and if he will indicate the number of prosecutions that have followed.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not readily available and could not be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost.

ENVIRONMENT

Irish Sea (Pollution)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if pollution of the Irish sea will be placed on the agenda of the next North sea Ministers conference in March 1990.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There is no provision at present for specific discussion of pollution in the Irish sea at the third North sea ministerial conference in March 1990. This accords with the scope of the agenda at the first and second conferences.

Aspects of pollution in the Irish sea were recently considered in a report by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas and are currently being discussed by the Irish sea study group, an independent forum bringing together a wide range of interested parties.

At intergovernmental level issues related to dumping at sea and discharges from land based sources are discussed in the Oslo and Parish Commissions which cover the north-east Atlantic area and whose membership includes both Ireland and the United Kingdom. In addition the Governments of both countries are regularly in touch to discuss matters of mutual interest in this area.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to end radioactive discharges into the Irish sea.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The largest source of man-made radioactive discharges to the Irish sea is the British Nuclear Fuels plc reprocessing plant at Sellafield. As a result of major investment, discharges of low-level radioactive liquid waste to sea from Sellafield have decreased considerably over recent years and now are only one tenth of what they were in 1979. Further major reductions will be achieved in the early 1990s as the result of investment by British Nuclear Fuels in new plant. The main objective is to ensure that the radiation exposure arising from radioactive wastes should be as low as reasonably achieveable.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for the environment if he will introduce legislation to prohibit the dumping of industrial waste and sewage sludge in the Irish sea and take steps immediately to reduce at source the volume and complexity of toxic waste presently being discharged into rivers flowing into the Irish sea.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The dumping of waste at sea, including sewage sludge, and the discharge of waste to rivers are already controlled in all United Kingdom inland and coastal waters under legislation which is the responsibility of fisheries and environment Departments.

There are no current licences permitting the dumping of industrial waste in the Irish sea. The disposal of treated sewage sludge is permitted only where the licensing authority is satisfied that there will be no damage to the marine environment and dump sites are carefully monitored for this purpose.

Discharge to rivers are primarily the responsibility of water authorities in England and Wales, river purification boards in Scotland, and in Northern Ireland, the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. On 28 July the Department of the Environment published a consultation document setting out proposals for tighter controls on the discharge of dangerous substances to water in England and Wales, including a "red list" of 26 substances or compounds, for which substantial reductions, of the order of 50 per cent. will be sought by 1995. These proposals will also be incorporated into the framework of controls in Scotland and Northern Ireland and will spearhead action to reduce inputs of dangerous substances to rivers and estuaries taken as a result of the London North sea conference declaration. They will be applicable to all United Kingdom coastal waters.

Pollution and Hazardous Wastes

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a White Paper on the Government's policy to deal with pollution and hazardous wastes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans at present to do so.

Commercial and Domestic Waste

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review section 30 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 to redefine the nature of commercial and domestic waste.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no plans to do so.

Rate Precepts (Shire Counties)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the rate precepts for all the English shire counties in the years 1985-86, 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Shire County Precepts (p)

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Avon	190·60	224·70	228·50	246·50
Bedford	161·10	191·40	232·20	246·40
Berkshire	150·80	170·20	178·50	193·60
Buckinghamshire	147·50	191·80	208·50	227·70
Cambridge	146·00	194·00	206·00	216·00
Cheshire	178·00	193·45	211·00	232·00
Cleveland	210·00	235·00	252·00	282·00
Cornwall	143·50	169·80	184·00	207·70
Cumbria	176·00	240·00	246·50	260·00
Derbyshire	185·00	233·00	262·00	297·50
Devon	146·75	175·75	188·50	209·75

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Dorset	149·00	172·00	189·00	203·00
Durham	168·00	197·00	214·00	246·00
East Sussex	147·30	176·60	190·30	217·10
Essex	151·50	180·00	199·50	235·00
Gloucestershire	152·40	180·02	194·26	217·30
Hampshire	147·50	169·00	184·10	200·30
Hereford and Worcester	146·50	162·50	168·50	185·00
Hertfordshire	157·70	192·30	205·60	240·40
Humberside	171·00	196·00	217·00	261·00
Isle of Wight	157·00	188·39	207·14	227·23
Kent	144·59	162·97	170·60	192·00
Lancashire	158·50	184·00	197·50	234·00
Leicestershire	149·50	189·80	199·30	221·20
Lincolnshire	143·50	175·00	179·00	204·00
Norfolk	143·00	170·20	179·60	190·90
Northamptonshire	153·00	172·10	199·00	229·00
Northumberland[1]	175·00	212·96	214·30	244·50
North Yorkshire	151·00	175·00	194·00	217·00
Nottinghamshire	186·00	219·00	236·00	253·00
Oxfordshire	151·00	188·50	218·30	238·60
Shropshire	143·00	171·00	184·00	200·00
Somerset	147·00	186·00	200·50	224·00
Staffordshire	169·00	185·50	198·50	215·00
Suffolk	150·00	176·50	189·00	204·00
Surrey	152·50	170·80	183·50	202·70
Warwickshire	151·60	181·70	196·00	227·10
West Sussex	141·00	168·00	176·00	192·00
Wiltshire	147·00	185·00	203·40	219·30

[1] Includes Northumbria Police Authority Precept.

Rural Housing

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on recent initiatives that he has taken to stimulate rural housing.

Mr. Trippier: We have been considering the responses to the Secretary of State's statement of 5 July, outlining measures to increase the supply of low cost housing in rural areas. I have nothing further to add to this statement at present.

Rents (Basildon)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the rent income per year from the houses and flats owned by the Commission for New Towns in Basildon; how this compares with each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The annual rent income from the houses and flats owned by the Commission for the New Towns amounted to £14,740,927 in 1987-88. This compared with the following income for each of the last five years:

Year	£
1982-83	13,704,356
1983-84	14,148,055
1984-85	14,508,715
1985-86	14,575,222
1986-87	14,703,523

Empty Properties

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further proposals he has for bringing into use privately owned empty properties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Private property is left empty for a number of reasons, of which reluctance to let under Rent Act controls is one. Our proposals for the deregulation of new private lettings in the Housing Bill will enable owners to let at market rents, and to have certainty of possession at the end of a short fixed term letting if they use shorthold. This should encourage owners of empty private houses and flats to make their property available for letting.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been empty for six months or more during the last five years in the Basildon area; and what were the figures for each year since 1983.

Mr. Trippier: The number of council dwellings vacant for more than six months has been provided by local authorities, since 1987, on their annual housing investment programme returns. Basildon district council has reported 19 such dwellings at 1 April 1987 and 3 at 1 April 1988.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what current estimates he has for the numbers of publicly-owned empty properties in *(a)* the Basildon area and *(b)* England and Wales; and what were the figures for the last five years.

Mr. Trippier: The information derived from the annual housing investment programme returns from local authorities is as follows:

Vacant dwellings owned by local authorities and other public sector bodies at 1 April

	Local authority[1]		other public[2]	
	Basildon	England	Basildon	England
1983	146	113,600	361	23,000
1984	130	112,700	349	21,800
1985	86	116,500	359	19,100
1986	77	113,300	294	18,500
1987	66	112,400	169	15,500
1988	221	[3]103,000	182	[3]16,000

[1] Includes dwellings which are closed or have been acquired for demolition and, since 1987, dwellings on overspill estates.

[2] Includes housing owned by new towns, county councils (for example, police houses), Government departments and nationalised industries and other public bodies. Many of these dwellings are vacant because of operational requirements, notably those owned by the Ministry of Defence, and others have been acquired for demolition, for example by the Department of Transport. Government are encouraging the sale of housing which is not required and many of those that are vacant are in the process of disposal.

[3] Provisional estimate.

For information about Wales I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Small Businesses

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what further proposals he has for encouraging the growth of small businesses; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps his Department has taken to encourage the development of small businesses in *(a)* the Basildon area and *(b)* England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: My Department has taken the following steps to encourage small businesses:

Encouraged the more effective provision of assistance to small firms in rural areas through the merger of the Development Commission and CoSIRA to create the Rural Development Commission on 1 April 1988.

Enabled the Development Commission and CoSIRA together to spend £30 million. in 1987-88, compared with £27·5 million. in 1986-87.

Published, in January 1988, a new series of planning policy guidance notes. These notes provide concise and practical guidance on planning policies, in a clearer and more accessible form than in earlier departmental circulars and other official publications. They include a PPGN on industrial and commercial development and small firms.

Implemented, in November 1987, regulations to allow simplified planning zones. The first two have already been adopted and further proposals are being prepared.

Implemented, in June 1987, changes to modernise the Use Classes Order and enable a wider range of changes of use to take place without the need for planning permission.

Simplified outdoor advertisement control.

Established nine urban development corporations in England to regenerate inner city areas.

Provided the following assistance under the urban programme:

In 1987-88 £19·6 million urban programme expenditure was allocated to the provision of new or converted industrial units for small firms. This compared with £11·6 million allocated in 1986-87. Many of these units are small (less than 2.500 square feet) and in areas where the private sector is unwilling to make such provision.

Support is also given to preparatory works such as reclamation and assembly of sites intended to make land available for industrial development by the private sector. £9·3 million was allocated to this in 1987-88 compared to £6·6 million in 1986-87.

In addition, expenditure on highway access works to assist development accounted for £7·8 million in 1987-88 compared to £6·2 million in 1986-87.

Direct loans and grants to firms chiefly to help with high inner city land and building costs and to businesses in commercial and industrial improvement areas accounted for £12 million in 1987-88 compared with £9·8 million in 1986-87.

General environmental projects to improve physical conditions and raise private sector confidence accounted for £6·8 million in 1987-88 compared to £4·6 million in 1986-87.

Advisory services to small businesses accounted for £3·9 million in 1987-88 compared to £5·1 million in 1986-87 and additional miscellaneous expenditure on business promotion, trades fairs, tourism, etc. accounted for £6·1 million in 1987-88 compared to £5 million in 1986-87. One project funded was for two pilot schemes to set up local authority One Stop Shops coordinating the activities of LA departments with other organisations helping small firms and start up businesses.

The effect of urban programme assistance on small firms cannot always be separately identified. However, research evidence shows that assistance is targetted closely on small firms particularly those employing fewer than 10 people.

All the planning and land use measures apply to Basildon as elsewhere. In addition, the Secretary of State is considering the first alteration to the Essex structure plan, which will provide for the county's development requirements up to the year 2001. The first alteration contains new policies designed to encourage development providing employment throughout the county and identifies Basildon as a location where such development should particularly be promoted.

Specific measures relating to Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Further proposals by my Department that can be expected to encourage the development of small businesses include the following:

An order to extend the Merseyside Development Corporation which is before Parliament.

An order to establish an urban development corporation in Bristol which is currently being considered by a Select Committee in the other place.

The Rural Development Commission proposals for encouraging the private sector to play a greater role in the provision of workshops for small firms.

Review of the planning system to identify further measures to remove unnecessary restrictions on development and to simplify procedures where this is justified.

The second stage of a review of building regulations which will cover technical aspects with the aim of ensuring that the legal requirements are easy to unerstand and do not go beyond what is clearly necessary, particularly for health and safety reasons; and that the guidance provided on methods of compliance is clear, simple and accurate.

In addition, the other programmes described earlier in this answer, while not always targeted specifically at small businesses, will continue to benefit them.

Council House Sales (Greenwich)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against valuations under the right-to-buy scheme have been made by Greenwich council tenants in each year since the scheme began; and in how many cases the valuation was reduced on appeal.

Mr. Trippier: This information is as follows:

	Appeals against valuation	*Valuations reduced on appeal*
1980	—	—
1981	8	7
1982	76	69
1983	15	13
1984	21	18
1985	52	43
1986	28	25
1987	48	46
1988[1]	265	264

[1] To date.

Seals

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment has been made of the levels of *(a)* lead, *(b)* cadmium, *(c)* mercury, *(d)* nickel, *(e)* phosphorus and *(f)* cholrinated hydrocarbons including polychlorinated biphenyls dioxins and naphthalenes found in dead seals collected on the east coast of England in August and September.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The sea mammal research unit of the Natural Environment Research Council is co-ordinating a large programme of analyses on contaminant levels in dead seals from the whole coastline of the British Isles. This study is part of an international collaborative programme in part funded by DOE, MAFF, DAFS and the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology are undertaking the analyses on heavy metals, pesticides and PCB's. Measurements of some of the more complicated organic compounds such as dioxins and organotins are being made on the same samples in Holland.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many letters he has received from *(a)* organisations, *(b)* members of the general public and *(c)* overseas in the periods (i) January to June and (ii) July to present time on the welfare on seals in the North sea and coastal waters around the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Previous to July of this year occasional letters received in the Department made a

reference to this subject. Since July over 500 letters have been received from members of the public including those forwarded by hon. Members, 16 from organisations and 10 from overseas, mostly since the spread of the seals disease to the United Kingdom was confirmed in late August.

Waste Disposal

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all grants from the European Economic Community by amount awarded, date awarded and project for which award was made, in the period 1979 to the most recent date for which information is available towards the development of landfill sites for toxic and hazardous wastes in the United Kingdom; and what was the total awarded over the same period to other European Economic Community member states.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I know of no grants from the EEC for the development of landfill sites for toxic and hazardous waste in the United Kingdom since 1979 nor do I have information on such grants to other member states.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if any studies have been undertaken by his Department, or consultants to his Department, or have been brought to the attention of his Department by RWMAC or Her Majesty's pollution inspectorate, on the effect on metal, concrete and glass containers designed to isolate nuclear wastes of the microbes, gallionella, thiobacillus, thiobacillus ferro-oxidans, and the fungi asperigullus and penicillum.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes. Studies continue to be conducted in the United Kingdom as part of the DOE programme and overseas, into the possible effects of micro-organisms on the performance of radioactive waste repositories.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the immunity of repository containment barriers to geomicrobiological degradation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Some substances produced by microbes may be capable of degrading repository containment barriers. Investigations continue to establish the existence of such organisms and their significance.

Ozone Layer

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if any evaluation has been made by *(a)* his Department, *(b)* the Natural Environment Research Council and *(c)* the European Commission Environment Directorate into the effects of carbon tetrachloride released in eastern Europe on the ozone layer over western Europe.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The stratospheric ozone review group report, published in October 1988 estimates that global carbon tetrachloride emissions account for 8 per cent. of global ozone depletion. We know of no evaluation by the Department's research contractors, NERC or the European Commission Environment Directorate which looks specifically at the impact of emissions of carbon tetrachloride from eastern Europe.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been undertaken to evaluate the benefits and disbenefits of CFC-22 in regard to reducing ozone depletion.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The potential impact of CFC-22 on the ozone layer has been evaluated in this and other countries by using mathematical models of atmospheric chemistry. These models estimate the amount of ozone depletion likely to occur as a result of emission of a particular CFC. The ozone depletion potential is defined as the ratio of ozone depletion from a given CFC to that of CFC-11, one of the most common. For CFC-22 the ozone depletion potential is about 0·05. The 1988 stratospheric ozone review group report estimates that CFC-22 was responsible for only 0·4 per cent. of the total ozone depletion in 1985.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how his Department was represented at the United Nations environmental programme meeting in Yugoslavia in early October, which discussed the greenhouse effect and possible solutions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A meeting of task teams on the regional impact of climate change under the UNEP ocean and coastal areas programme of the global climate programme was held in Split between 3 and 8 October 1988. This meeting was a working scientific meeting and not one for national delegations. I understand that scientists from the Institute of Oceanographic Sciences, University College London, and the University of East Anglia were present.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department made any commitment to support research into ozone layer depletion in Western Europe at the international meeting on the ozone hole in Göttingen, in the Federal Republic of Germany, in August.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 26 October]*: The meeting in question was one of scientists to discuss all aspects of atmospheric ozone, not only the ozone hole. No commitments to support research were sought from the Department. We did, however, issue for information a short statement on a proposal from the United Kingdom, Norway and the European Commission to set up a unit to co-ordinate European research on stratospheric ozone.

Pollution

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the departmental scheme, announced on 13 September, for special environmental protection research and implementation to mitigate pollution of the North sea and rivers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The environmental protection technology scheme aims to encourage technical innovation where this will enable higher environmental standards to be set. The scheme offers support for approved projects up to the stage where the concept is proved. Grant is available at up to 25 per cent. of costs for projects proposed by single companies and up to 50 per cent. for collaborative projects. The first set of priority areas for the scheme were announced in June, when proposals were invited which

would reduce emissions from municipal incinerators and tackle odour problems. More than 30 applications are being considered.

On 13 September, I announced that the second set of priority areas would be the reduction of discharges of heavy metals and organic compounds in industrial effluents.

This announcement was closely linked to actions agreed following last year's ministerial declaration at the international conference on the protection of the North sea, to reduce the amounts of the most dangerous substances entering rivers and estuaries. The Government have already published consultation proposals for stringent controls on a "Red List" of these substances.

Environmental Protection

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received following his interview on the Radio 4 "Today" programme broadcast on 7 October, concerning Government successes and failures in implementing and developing international environmental protection agreements.

Mr. Ridley: I have received 20 letters from the public as a result of the interview on Radio 4's "Today" programme on 7 October.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his policies on the protection or enhancement of the environment have changed since he last made a statement thereon to Parliament.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. The Government's policies represent a long-standing commitment to the protection and enhancement of the environment.

Radioactive Reactor Parts (Disposal)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has had any recent discussions with the chairman of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority concerning the policy preference declared by the chairman on 11 October at a nuclear facilities decommissioning conference, that large mildly radioactive reactor parts should be disposed of in the Atlantic ocean.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has not had any recent discussions with the chairman of the UKAEA on this subject. It is Government policy that the sea disposal option should be kept open for large items arising from decommissioning operations.

Nuclear Power (Policy)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards his departmental witness at the Hinkley Point C public inquiry answering questions on the merits of departmental policy.

Mr. Ridley: Departmental witnesses at the Hinkley Point C public inquiry will explain the Government's radioactive waste management policy and strategy. In accordance with rule 12(3) of the inquiry procedure rules 1987, they will not be expected to discuss the merits of that policy.

Mr. Jonathan Jackson

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretry of State for the Environment if, further to the letter dated 30 September from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes, he is now in a position to decide whether or not he will call in for determination by himself planning applications in the name of Mr. Jonathan Jackson.

Mr. Chope: The matter is still under consideration, but my right hon. Friend hopes to announce his decision in the near future.

Rating Reform

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to adjust the workings of the home loss payments scheme in the light of the introduction of the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Since home loss payments are calculated as a multiple of rateable value, some adjustment will be necessary as a consequence of the introduction of the community charge. My right hon. Friend is currently considering this matter.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there are any plans to compensate *(a)* members of the armed forces, *(b)* civilian employees of the Ministry of Defence, *(c)* other civil servants and *(d)* police officers, for high levels of poll tax, on the grounds that they have no choice as to where to live.

Mr. Ridley: Members of each of these groups will, unless exempt, be subject to the personal community charge in the same way as other members of the population. In respect of the Armed Forces, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Defence, is still considering the detailed practical implications of the charge.

There are no plans for compensating civilian employees of the Ministry of Defence, other Civil Servants or police officers.

Dolphins

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement regarding the steps taken by Her Majesty's Government to protect dolphins in British waters.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All species of dolphin in British waters are protected by the provisions of Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, by virtue of their listing in schedule 5 of the Act.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to assist and co-ordinate action by local authorities for the safe disposal of unwanted domestic refrigerators and other equipment containing chlorofluorocarbons.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department is in regular discussion with the user industries about reducing emissions of chlorofluorocarbons by better housekeeping, recycling or recovery. There is at present no safe disposal method that we could ask local authorities to undertake.

Local Government Finance

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the extra grant entitlement that would accrue to each authority if block grant were *(a)* £200 million and *(b)* £512 million higher than the amount planned to be distributed in 1988-89 on the basis of his 7 July announcement and if that increase in grant were effected by an adjustment in the notional grant related poundage for spending at grant-related expenditure.

Mr. Ridley: The information requested is shown in the following table:

£ million

	(a)	(b)
Shire Counties		
Avon	3·813	9·467
Bedfordshire	2·545	6·318
Berkshire	4·099	10·177
Buckinghamshire	3·286	8·158
Cambridgeshire	2·860	7·101
Cheshire	4·277	10·620
Cleveland	2·391	5·936
Cornwall	1·499	3·721
Cumbria	1·591	3·951
Derbyshire	3·494	8·675
Devon	3·615	8·976
Dorset	2·771	6·879
Durham	1·790	4·445
East Sussex	3·144	7·806
Essex	7·360	18·273
Gloucestershire	2·081	5·166
Hampshire	6·827	16·950
Hereford and Worcester	2·762	6·858
Hertfordshire	2·659	10·437
Humberside	3·048	7·568
Isle of Wight	0·420	1·042
Kent	6·008	14·917
Lancashire	4·482	11·129
Leicestershire	3·606	8·954
Lincolnshire	2·027	5·033
Norfolk	2·935	7·286
Northamptonshire	2·414	5·995
Northumberland	·971	2·411
North Yorkshire	2·493	6·191
Nottinghamshire	3·847	9·552
Oxfordshire	2·630	6·530
Shropshire	1·429	3·549
Somerset	1·649	4·095
Staffordshire	3·924	9·744
Suffolk	2·533	6·288
Surrey	·775	8·778
Warwickshire	2·175	5·400
West Sussex	3·213	7·978
Wiltshire	2·010	4·989
Greater London		
City of London	—	—
Camden	—	—
Greenwich	0·242	0·614
Hackney	0·312	0·792
Hammersmith and Fulham	0·316	0·802
Islington	0·498	1·264
Kensington and Chelsea	0·727	1·850
Lambeth	0·512	1·300
Lewisham	0·287	0·730
Southwark	0·444	1·127
Tower Hamlets	0·290	0·737
Wandsworth	0·442	1·125
Westminster	—	—
Barking and Dagenham	0·567	1·432
Barnet	1·276	3·220
Bexley	0·685	1·728
Brent	1·080	2·719
Bromley	1·051	2·651
Croydon	1·509	3·808
Ealing	1·222	3·084
Enfield	1·047	2·641
Haringey	0·696	1·753
Harrow	0·769	1·941
Havering	0·821	2·071
Hillingdon	1·251	3·156
Hounslow	1·077	2·716
Kingston-upon-Thames	0·589	1·486
Merton	0·670	1·690
Newham	0·746	1·880
Redbridge	0·789	1·989
Richmond-upon-Thames	0·689	1·739
Sutton	0·640	1·614
Waltham Forest	0·644	1·621
ILEA	—	—
London Fire and CD Authority	1·410	3·467
Metropolitan Police	4·593	11·310
Greater Manchester		
Bolton	0·844	2·097
Bury	0·577	1·432
Manchester	2·33	5·543
Oldham	0·681	1·690
Rochdale	0·0625	1·552
Salford	0·911	2·263
Stockport	1·165	2·893
Tameside	0·640	1·588
Trafford	1·140	2·832
Wigan	0·934	2·320
Greater Manchester Police Authority	0·701	1·703
Greater Manchester Fire and CD Authority	0·246	0·682
Greater Manchester Transport Authority	0·348	1·113
Merseyside		
Knowsley	0·588	1·461
Liverpool	1·746	4·338
St. Helens	0·648	1·610
Sefton	1·062	2·637
Wirral	1·206	2·995
Merseyside Police Authority	0·387	0·951
Merseyside Fire and CD Authority	0·139	0·384
Merseyside Transport Authority	0·203	0·633
South Yorkshire		
Barnsley	0·564	1·400
Doncaster	0·854	2·121
Rotherham	0·703	1·747
Sheffield	1·888	4·689
South Yorkshire Police Authority	0·290	0·705
South Yorkshire Fire and CD Authority	0·102	0·282
South Yorkshire Transport Authority	—	—
Tyne and Wear		
Gateshead	0·611	1·518
Newcastle upon Tyne	1·200	2·981
North Tyneside	0·614	1·525
South Tyneside	0·413	1·026
Sunderland	0·842	2·092
Northumbria Police Authority	0·272	0·660

	(a)	(b)
Tyne and Wear Fire & CD Authority	0·094	0·261
Tyne and Wear Transport Authority	0·108	0·336
West Midlands		
Birmingham	5·166	12·831
Coventry	1·291	3·206
Dudley	1·288	3·200
Sandwell	1·390	3·452
Solihull	0·923	2·293
Walsall	1·108	2·753
Wolverhampton	1·226	3·044
West Midlands Police Authority	0·755	1·832
West Midlands Fire & CD Authority	0·285	0·818
West Midlands Transport Authority	0·425	1·361
West Yorkshire		
Bradford	1·452	3·607
Calderdale	0·509	1·263
Kirklees	0·982	2·440
Leeds	2·663	6·615
Wakefield	1·010	2·509
West Yorkshire Police Authority	0·467	1·133
West Yorkshire Fire & CD Authority	0·164	0·454
West Yorkshire Transport Authority	0·240	0·749
Avon		
Bath	0·008	0·023
Bristol	0·155	0·427
Kingswood	0·028	0·079
Northavon	0·051	0·143
Wansdyke	0·024	0·066
Woodspring	0·055	0·154
Bedfordshire		
North Bedfordshire	0·060	0·168
Luton	0·099	0·275
Mid Bedfordshire	0·041	0·115
South Bedfordshire	—	—
Berkshire		
Bracknell	0·049	0·138
Newbury	0·058	0·162
Reading	0·073	0·202
Slough	0·055	0·153
Windsor and Maidenhead	0·050	0·139
Wokingham	—	—
Buckinghamshire		
Aylesbury Vale	0·066	0·183
South Bucks	—	—
Chiltern	—	—
Milton Keynes	—	—
Wycombe	—	—
Cambridgeshire		
Cambridge	0·070	0·195
East Cambridgeshire	0·019	0·054
Fenland	0·026	0·072
Huntingdonshire	0·053	0·149
Peterborough	0·064	0·176
South Cambridgeshire	0·056	0·155
Cheshire		
Chester	0·051	0·140
Congleton	0·030	0·084
Crewe and Nantwich	0·033	0·092
Ellesmere Port and Neston	0·052	0·146
Halton	0·052	0·142
Macclesfield	0·064	0·178
Vale Royal	0·044	0·120
Warrington	0·082	0·226
Cleveland		
Hartlepool	0·029	0·079
Langbaurgh-on-Tees	0·055	0·151
Middlesbrough	0·040	0·109
Stockton-on-Tees	0·081	0·224

	(a)	(b)
Cornwall		
Caradon	0·019	0·054
Carrick	0·025	0·069
Kerrier	0·027	0·075
North Cornwall	0·021	0·057
Penwith	0·016	0·046
Restormel	0·029	0·081
Cumbria		
Allerdale	0·023	0·064
Barrow in Furness	0·019	0·053
Carlisle	0·029	0·081
Copeland	0·021	0·058
Eden	0·013	0·037
South Lakeland	0·029	0·081
Derbyshire		
Amber Valley	0·033	0·092
Bolsover	0·016	0·044
Chesterfield	0·033	0·091
Derby	0·085	0·235
Erewash	0·032	0·090
High Peak	0·025	0·070
North East Derbyshire	0·024	0·066
South Derbyshire	0·028	0·079
Derbyshire Dales	0·019	0·053
Devon		
East Devon	0·035	0·097
Exeter	0·040	0·110
North Devon	0·022	0·060
Plymouth	0·097	0·271
South Hams	0·020	0·056
Teignbridge	0·030	0·084
Mid Devon	0·015	0·043
Torbay	0·055	0·151
Torridge	0·011	0·029
West Devon	0·011	0·031
Dorset		
Bournemouth	0·078	0·216
Christchurch	0·017	0·048
North Dorset	0·017	0·047
Poole	0·061	0·171
Purbeck	0·017	0·047
West Dorset	0·026	0·072
Weymouth and Portland	0·021	0·059
East Dorset	0·026	0·073
Durham		
Chester-le-Street	0·012	0·034
Darlington	0·033	0·091
Derwentside	0·017	0·047
Durham	0·023	0·063
Easington	0·024	0·067
Sedgefield	0·020	0·055
Teesdale	0·006	0·016
Wear Valley	0·013	0·037
East Sussex		
Brighton	0·049	0·1137
Eastbourne	0·041	0·13
Hastings	0·030	0·083
Hove	0·007	0·019
Lewes	0·031	0·086
Rother	0·026	0·071
Wealden	0·039	0·107
Essex		
Basildon	—	—
Braintree	0·045	0·125
Brentwood	0·010	0·027
Castle Point	0·030	0·082
Chelmsford	0·069	0·191
Colchester	0·063	0·174
Epping Forest	0·050	0·138
Harlow	—	—
Maldon	0·024	0·067

	(a)	(b)
Rochford	0·029	0·081
Southend-on-Sea	0·074	0·206
Tendring	0·044	0·123
Thurrock	—	—
Uttlesford	0·024	0·066
Gloucestershire		
Cheltenham	0·043	0·120
Cotswold	0·026	0·071
Forest of Dean	0·018	0·051
Gloucester	0·041	0·113
Stroud	0·035	0·098
Tewkesbury	0·037	0·104
Hampshire		
Basingstoke and Deane	0·060	0·166
East Hampshire	0·034	0·094
Eastleigh	0·043	0·121
Fareham	0·040	0·111
Gosport	0·030	0·083
Hart	—	—
Havant	0·050	0·141
New Forest	0·063	0·173
Portsmouth	0·065	0·181
Rushmoor	0·033	0·091
Southampton	0·090	0·250
Test Valley	0·040	0·111
Winchester	0·037	0·104
Hereford and Worcester		
Bromsgrove	0·037	0·102
Hereford	0·020	0·055
Leominster	0·010	0·028
Malvern Hills	0·027	0·074
Redditch	—	—
South Herefordshire	0·015	0·042
Worcester	0·040	0·109
Wychavon	0·041	0·113
Wyre Forest	0·032	0·089
Hertfordshire		
Broxbourne	0·035	0·097
Dacorum	0·065	0·181
East Hertfordshire	0·051	0·142
Hertsmere	0·038	0·105
North Hertfordshire	0·054	0·149
St. Albans	—	—
Stevenage	—	—
Three Rivers	—	—
Watford	0·045	0·123
Welwyn Hatfield	—	—
Humberside		
Berverley	0·034	0·096
Boothferry	0·014	0·040
Cleethorpes	0·022	0·061
Glandford	0·024	0·068
Great Grimsby	0·032	0·088
Holderness	0·015	0·041
Kingston upon Hull	0·078	0·216
East Yorkshire	0·020	0·056
Scunthorpe	0·021	0·059
Isle of Wight		
Medina	0·024	0·068
South Wight	0·018	0·050
Kent		
Ashford	0·033	0·091
Canterbury	0·042	0·116
Dartford	0·027	0·075
Dover	0·032	0·089
Gillingham	0·009	0·024
Gravesham	0·034	0·094
Maidstone	0·048	0·134
Rochester upon Medway	0·064	0·179
Sevenoaks	0·037	0·102
Shepway	0·034	0·095

	(a)	(b)
Swale	0·035	0·098
Thanet	0·042	0·117
Tonbridge and Malling	0·038	0·107
Tunbridge Wells	0·033	0·091
Lancashire		
Blackburn	0·036	0·100
Blackpool	0·059	0·163
Burnley	0·019	0·052
Chorley	0·026	0·073
Fylde	0·027	0·074
Hyndburn	0·017	0·047
Lancaster	0·041	0·115
Pendle	0·016	0·045
Preston	0·044	0·121
Ribble Valley	0·013	0·037
Rossendale	0·013	0·035
South Ribble	0·030	0·083
West Lancashire	0·037	0·102
Wyre	0·028	0·079
Leicestershire		
Blaby	0·029	0·082
Charnwood	0·056	0·156
Harborough	0·023	0·064
Hinckley and Bosworth	0·038	0·106
Leicester	0·097	0·269
Melton	0·008	0·022
North West Leicestershire	0·029	0·081
Oadby and Wigston	0·019	0·053
Rutland	0·013	0·035
Lincolnshire		
Boston	0·017	0·048
East Lindsey	0·038	0·104
Lincoln	0·031	0·087
North Kesteven	0·024	0·066
South Holland	0·019	0·054
South Kesteven	0·030	0·083
West Lindsey	0·022	0·060
Norfolk		
Breckland	0·035	0·097
Broadland	0·031	0·086
Great Yarmouth	0·031	0·087
North Norfolk	0·028	0·077
Norwich	0·058	0·161
South Norfolk	0·032	0·088
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	0·045	0·125
Northamptonshire		
Corby	0·022	0·062
Daventry	—	—
East Northamptonshire	0·022	0·062
Kettering	0·022	0·061
Northampton	0·093	0·256
South Northamptonshire	0·022	0·060
Wellingborough	0·023	0·064
Northumberland		
Alnwick	0·007	0·020
Berwick-upon-Tweed	0·008	0·023
Blyth Valley	0·019	0·052
Castle Morpeth	0·018	0·049
Tynedale	0·016	0·045
Wansbeck	0·018	0·051
North Yorkshire		
Craven	0·013	0·037
Hambleton	0·023	0·063
Harrogate	0·042	0·117
Richmondshire	0·012	0·035
Ryedale	0·023	0·065
Scarborough	0·028	0·079
Selby	—	—
York	0·034	0·095

	(a)	(b)
Nottinghamshire		
Ashfield	0·031	0·087
Bassetlaw	—	—
Broxtowe	0·034	0·094
Gedling	0·035	0·096
Mansfield	0·021	0·059
Newark and Sherwood	0·029	0·082
Nottingham	0·130	0·362
Rushcliffe	0·039	0·109
Oxfordshire		
Cherwell	0·055	0·153
Oxford	—	—
South Oxfordshire	0·060	0·166
Vale of White Horse	0·057	0·159
West Oxfordshire	0·033	0·091
Shropshire		
Bridgnorth	0·018	0·049
North Shropshire	0·015	0·041
Oswestry	0·009	0·025
Shrewsbury and Atcham	0·035	0·096
South Shropshire	0·009	0·025
Wrekin	0·044	0·123
Somerset		
Mendip	0·032	0·088
Sedgemoor	0·030	0·083
Taunton Deane	0·030	0·084
West Somerset	0·018	0·049
South Somerset	0·050	0·138
Staffordshire		
Cannock Chase	0·031	0·087
East Staffordshire	0·036	0·100
Lichfield	0·037	0·104
Newcastle-under-Lyme	0·038	0·107
South Staffordshire	0·039	0·107
Stafford	0·047	0·130
Staffordshire Moorlands	0·028	0·077
Stoke-on-Trent	0·087	0·240
Tamworth	0·021	0·060
Suffolk		
Babergh	0·026	0·072
Forest Heath	0·017	0·049
Ipswich	0·056	0·154
Mid Suffolk	0·023	0·062
St. Edmundsbury	0·038	0·106
Suffolk Coastal	0·041	0·112
Waveney	0·032	0·089
Surrey		
Elmbridge	0·073	0·202
Epsom and Ewell	—	—
Guildford	—	—
Mole Valley	0·004	0·004
Reigate and Banstead	—	—
Runnymede	—	—
Spelthorne	0·023	0·064
Surrey Heath	0·044	0·124
Tandridge	0·023	0·063
Waverley	0·051	0·142
Woking	0·005	0·005
Warwickshire		
North Warwickshire	—	—
Nuneaton and Bedworth	0·034	0·094
Rugby	0·034	0·096
Stratford on Avon	0·044	0·124
Warwick	0·053	0·149
West Sussex		
Adur	0·022	0·061
Arun	0·046	0·126
Chichester	0·038	0·107
Crawley	—	—
Horsham	0·041	0·113
Mid Sussex	0·047	0·132
Worthing	0·039	0·109
Wiltshire		
Kennet	0·019	0·052
North Wiltshire	0·032	0·088
Salisbury	0·038	0·106
Thamesdown	0·054	0·150
West Wiltshire	0·035	0·096
All Purpose Authority		
Isles of Scilly	0·011	0·029

Crown Prosecution Service (Office Space)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what rental has been agreed by his Department for office space in Artillery Row, SW1, on behalf of the Crown Prosecution Service; and what information he has about average rental prices in the Victoria area.

Mr. Nicholas Ridley: Negotiations by the Property Services Agency for the acquisition of 4-16 Artillery Row, SW1, were conducted on a strictly commercial and therefore confidential basis. The agency operates in the market and also makes the widest possible use of commercially available sources of information on rents and other property market intelligence.

Housing (Defects Provision)

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if there are any proposals to amend the housing defects provisions in the light of the four years' experience with the scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: We have been monitoring the working of the housng defects legislation since it came into force in December 1984. This has enabled us to identify some proposals, of a mainly technical nature, which might help streamline the day-to-day operation of the scheme. The main suggestions are that local authorities should be free to pay owners reinstatement grant at whatever level local authorities believe is justified under the housing defects rules, but with a revised degree of Exchequer contribution; and that there could be scope for grant-aided demolition and rebuild of individual properties in specific circumstances.

The Department's officials are writing to the local authority associations, homeowners' groups and other bodies known to have an interest in the housing defects scheme, to seek their views on these possible changes; the Welsh Office are taking similar action.

Copies of the Department's letter are being placed in the Library.

Drigg Dump Site

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the outcome of the investigation into the nuclear fuel canister at the Drigg dump site; what response he intends to make to the investigation report; and when his Department first learned from British Nuclear Fuels plc., about the canister.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 26 October]:* The canister was unearthed on 12 July. British Nuclear

Fuels informed both Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the nuclear installations inspectorate the same day. A detailed investigation was undertaken by the inspectorates and completed by 28 July. A report is being finalised for submission to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Northern Seas (Pollution)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what departmental Ministers and officials were present, and what written and oral representations were made from the United Kingdom, at the special meeting convened on 18 August by the Prime Minister of Sweden on pollution of the northern seas and waterways.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* The United Kingdom was represented at the international conference on problems in the marine environment convened by the Swedish Government on 18 August in Stockholm by Mr. J. H. Cleary, marine branch, Department of the Environment, and Dr. John Harwood, director, sea mammal research unit, Natural Environment Research Council. The United Kingdom gave a report on research and monitoring in the marine environment and on progress in implementing the measures agreed at the second North sea ministerial conference in London in November 1987.

Bradford

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations have taken place with representatives of Bradford during the past three months regarding the provision of services and further financial assistance to the city; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 24 October]:* I met a delegation from the council on 29 September 1988 at their request, to receive their representations about the 1989-90 rate support grant settlement and about European regional development fund grant. The council is also in regular contact with officials of this Department on various matters.

Bathing Beaches

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received from regional water authorities with regard to the implications of upgrading bathing beaches.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 21 October 1988]:* The financial implications of upgrading bathing waters have been considered in this year's round of corporate plan discussions with water authorities. These discussions took place against the background of a request to the industry to examine the feasibility of accelerating investment programmes to achieve compliance with the EC bathing water directive.

Storm Damage

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what assistance his Department has given to private householders to remove fallen trees following the October 1987 hurricane; and if he will make a statement.

(2) what compensation his Department has paid to individuals in the Basildon area as a result of fallen trees damaging their property in the October 1987 hurricane; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Assistance has not been provided by central Government to private householders or individuals: it is for them to ensure that their property is adequately insured against accidental damage.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the additional expense that was incurred by local councils in the Basildon area in consequence of the October 1987 hurricane; what assistance his Department offered towards these costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Local authorities have reported to the Department gross expenditure on dealing with the effects of the storm of £113·4 million, of which some £55 million was met through insurance claims or would have been insurable, or was capital expenditure. Of the remainder, some £30·9 million is eligible expenditure above the threshold on which special financial assistance under the Bellwin scheme will be paid. The rate of grant is 75 per cent. giving an entitlement of £23·2 million. In addition, extra capital allocations of £11·9 million were made for 1987-88. For the current year additional capital allocations of £5 million have been made for housing and other services, for which individual authorities are currently bidding.

In Basildon gross expenditure was £279,000 and grant will be £39,000. The equivalent figures for authorities in the Basildon area (ie Basildon, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Brentwood, Thurrock and Rochford) are £2 million and £0·4 million respectively, and for the whole of London are £27·6 million and £4·0 million.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have taken place between his Department and local authorities in Essex concerning the consequences of the storm on the morning of 16 October 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: On 2 December 1987 the Secretary of State met councillors from Essex county council and other county councils to discuss the effects of the October storm. In addition, there has been correspondence with individual local authorities in Essex about the details of their claims for special financial assistance with expenditure on storm damage.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his estimate of how many trees had to be felled in the Basildon area as a result of the October 1987 hurricane; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his estimate of how many trees had to be felled as a result of the October 1987 hurricane; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Felling has taken place in a wide range of circumstances. No detailed statistics are available. In the affected areas as a whole the number of trees felled as a consequence of the storm is unlikely to have exceeded 10 per cent. of the number blown down.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps his Department has taken to replace those trees damaged in the October 1987 hurricane in the Basildon area:

(2) what further steps his Department has taken to replace those trees damaged in the October 1987 hurricane; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have made significant additional resources available for the replacement planting of amenity trees destroyed in the storm of 16 October last year. A special unit of the Countryside Commission—"Task Force Trees"—is administering the main programme of aid in close liaison with the local authorities concerned. During the last planting season £3 million was provided for "Task Force Trees" to assist restoration and grant allocated to Essex county council totalled £120,000. Currently the unit is considering bids for a further £3·3 million of aid made available by the Department for work in the coming season.

Aid for restocking woodlands over ¼ hectare and for replanting orchards has been the subject of separate announcements by my right hon. Friend, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table giving estimates, broken down by counties, of the number of non-woodland trees blown down and damaged in the October 1987 hurricane;

(2) how many non-woodland trees are known by his Department to have been blown down *(a)* in the Basildon area and *(b)* in England and Wales during the October 1987 hurricane; what is the percentage of the latter to the former; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many trees are now known by his Department to have been blown down in the October 1987 hurricane; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In total an estimated 15 million trees were destroyed by the storm of 16 October last year. Most of these were in woodlands but an estimated 200,000 non-woodland trees were blown down in the wider countryside. In addition large numbers of trees were destroyed in orchards, parks, gardens, streets and by highways. Detailed statistics, by county and other categories, were published in the recent report "The Effects of the Great Storm" available from HMSO.

Local statistics of losses in the Basildon area are not held centrally. However I understand that Basildon district council estimates that some 30,000 woodland and non-woodland trees were destroyed in the borough during the storm.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Argentina

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the acquisition by Argentina of the Condor II missile; and if this matter has been discussed in the context of the seven-nation missile technology control regime of which the United Kingdom is a part.

Mr. Eggar: The missile technology control regime is intended to control the transfers of equipment and technology which could make a contribution to nuclear weapons delivery systems other than manned aircraft, capable of delivering a payload of 500 kg or more to a range of at least 300 km. Missile projects such as Condor II which fall within these parameters are a subject of concern to Her Majesty's Government and are discussed with our partners in the regime.

Nuclear Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there have been any initiatives taken by any contracting parties to the 1959 Antarctic treaty, under articles IX and XII, to modify the prohibition on the disposal of nuclear waste in the Antarctic territories under treaty article V.

Mr. Eggar: No such initiative has been taken. At the VIII Antarctic treaty consultative meeting held in Oslo in 1975 the consultative parties noted the increasing production of nuclear materials and the growing concern over the disposal of nuclear waste. Against this background the consultative parties recalled their commitment to article V of the Antarctic treaty and adopted recommendations VIII-12 to the effect that no one should dispose of radioactive waste in the Antarctic treaty area.

Central America

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding the progress towards elections to the Central American Parliament.

Mr. Eggar: We understand that Costa Rica has yet to ratify the Central American Parliament treaty, although legislation is in train to allow it to do so. We hope that elections to the Central American Parliament may take place not long thereafter.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador concerning their failure to abide by the terms of the Esquipaulas II peace accord; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We and our European partners have on a number of occasions called on all signatories of the Esquipulas II peace agreement to fulfil their outstanding obligations under the agreement without delay.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State intends to visit Nicaragua when he is in Central America in 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have no plans at present to visit Nicaragua.

European Commission

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the chairmanships and membership of committees including committees on technical standards by nationality within the European Commission and within the economic and social committee.

Mrs. Chalker: Committees set up by the Commission to deal with matters the Council has delegated to it are

chaired by the relevant Commission officials, regardless of nationality, and consist of representatives of member states. This includes committees in the area of technical standards.

The economic and social committee has specialised sections for the main areas covered by the treaties. Representatives in the various sections decide among themselves who should chair their meetings for formulating opinions on Commission proposals.

"A World Apart"

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the reasons for the cancellation by Her Majesty's consulate in Lugano of the reception for Chis Menges' film entitled "A World Apart"; and which Ministers were consulted before the decision was made.

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Member is misinformed. I can confirm that a reception was hosted in Lugano on 9 August by Her Majesty's chargé d'affaires in Berne to mark British Week at the Lugano international film festival. There is no question of Ministers being consulted over the programme of a foreign film festival.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 24-25 October.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and I attended the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 24-25 October. Following agreement on the framework regulation in June, the Council held the first discussion of the implementing regulations for the Community's structural funds. Agreement was reached on the thresholds for the minimum sizes of projects and programmes eligible for support from the funds. All other issues were referred back for further consideration in Coreper, with a view to agreement being reached at the Foreign Affairs Council in November.

The Council finalised the decision to establish a court of first instance, which will relieve the burden on the Court of Justice. Its jurisdiction will cover staff, competition, subsidies and steel cases. The question whether jurisdiction should be extended also to anti-dumping cases will be reconsidered after the court has been running for two years.

There was a preliminary discussion of the Community's generalised system of preferences for developing countries for 1989. There will be further discussion at the November Council.

The president of the Social Affairs Council reported on the informal meeting of Labour and Social Affairs Ministers in Athens on 20 September.

The Council also agreed that the November Council should review developments in the Community's textile industry, on the basis of a Commission report.

Cash Limits

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it is proposed to make any changes to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office cash limits for 1988-89.

Mr. Eggar: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class II, vote 2 (Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Other External Relations) will be increased by £428,000 from £129,270,000 to £129,698,000 to take account of additional provision required to cover the costs of the United Kingdom-Iran compensation agreement dated 7 July 1988. The increase will not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

United Nations Military Observer Group

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution the United Kingdom has made to the United Nations Iran-Iraq military observer group.

Mr. Eggar: As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, we have a special responsibility towards financing such operations as the United Nations Iran-Iraq military observer group. Our assessed share of the total cost is 5·9 per cent. or £2,640,000. Of this we have already paid £1,244,440·20 with the balance due in November.

Parliamentary approval for this expenditure will be sought in a winter Supplementary Estimate for the "Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Other External Relations" Vote. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure of £1,244,440·20 has been met by a repayable advance already issued from the contingency fund. The balance will also be met by a repayable advance from the contingency fund.

International Foundation for the Survival of Humanity

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had any invitation from the board of the International Foundation for the Survival of Humanity to meet to discuss matters for which his Department has responsibility.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no such invitation.

Chemical Weapons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when his Department first learnt of allegations of chemical weapons use against Kurds by Iraqi military forces; on what date this allegation was verified; and on what date Her Majesty's Government made representations to the Government of Iraq on the use of chemical weapons against Kurds.

Mr. Waldegrave: Allegations of Iraq's military operations against the Kurds involving the use of chemical weapons were first made during the week beginning 22 August. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office issued a statement on 2 September. Having established that there were compelling indications that chemical weapons had been used, we made representations to the Government of Iraq through the Iraqi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs on 21 September. We have called for an authoritative, independent investigation to establish the truth.

TRANSPORT

Wildlife (Motorway Verges)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are taken by his Department to encourage, preserve and monitor wild life on motorway verges.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Tree and shrub planting is the major landscape activity of the Department. Over 32 million have been planted in 25 years. This creates an invaluable wildlife habitat.

The selection of native species, mainly broadleaves, form linear woodlands of significant conservation value, especially in the case of motorways where there is no human disturbance.

The major tree and shrub species used are:

oak supports 284 insect species
hawthorne supports 149 insect species
willow supports 266 insect species
birch supports 229 insect species
pine supports 91 insect species
alder supports 90 insect species
hazel supports 73 insect species
beech supports 64 insect species
ash supports 41 insect species

The extensive grasslands encompassed by our motorway boundaries are not regularly cut and no overall herbicide treatments are used. Wild flowers are increasingly colonising these verges/slopes, and we are using, on an experimental basis, wild flower seed mixtures on new road schemes in different parts of the country.

These linear woodlands are managed by our agent foresters to provide a natural and structural diversity of vegetation offering nesting opportunities for birds and protection to many small animals and insects including butterflies.

Animals that would be at risk from motorway traffic, notably badgers and deer, are kept from the verges by special fencing and diverted to crossings: tunnels for badgers, bridges and underpasses for deer.

The Department's horticultural officers and Forestry Commission foresters monitor wild life on the verges of our roads as part of their routine inspections.

Hazardous Goods (Carriage by Road)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to improve the inspection methods used to check dangerous goods consignments transported by road to ensure that the transport documents correctly reflect the dangerous goods actually carried.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The enforcement of the regulations covering the transport of dangerous goods by road is the responsibility of the Health and Safety Executive. The Department's traffic examiners and the police also undertake regular checks of goods vehicles carrying dangerous goods to ensure that documentation and the marking of the vehicle correctly reflect the consignments.

We are considering with the Health and Safety Executive the feasibility of prescribing a transport document identifying dangerous goods carried.

Railways (Conversion)

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any proposals from private sector firms to convert sections of railways into motorways over the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: No proposals for particular schemes have been put to me.

Air Piracy and Terrorism

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made to achieve a common policy on handling and preventing air piracy and terrorist action against airlines and passengers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The prevention of acts of unlawful interference with civil aviation, and the development of procedures for dealing with them when they occur, is regarded as a high priority by both the International Civil Aviation Organisation and the European civil aviation conference. Both have developed international standards and guidance material for preventive measures, and they keep these under constant review.

ICAO has sponsored the development of three international conventions (the Tokyo, Hague and Montreal conventions), which together establish an international legal framework making acts of unlawful interference into international offences for which signatory states will either bring suspects in their custody to justice or permit their extradition to another competent state, and providing for the re-establishment of lawful control in cases where aircraft have been seized.

Roads (Privatisation)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has and plans to privatise in whole or in part the existing Queen's highway, to encourage the investment by private funds in the road network, or to introduce any charging policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We aim to add the private sector's innovation, enterprise and efficiency to the provision of transport infrastructure. We will consider seriously any well-based proposal for involving private funds in the road network. We have no plans at present to toll existing roads.

Intimidatory Driving

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will seek to introduce an offence of intimidatory driving.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The report of the road traffic law review rejected this on the grounds that its proposal for redefining the present reckless driving offence would be adequate to cover intimidatory driving. We aim to announce our conclusions on the report as a whole early in the new year.

M1 Motorway

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the average journey time

between junctions 8 and 16 on the M1, for traffic travelling *(a)* north and *(b)* south for (i) Fridays between 2 pm and 7 pm, (ii) Sundays between 5 pm and 11 pm and (iii) Monday to Thursday between (1) 7 am and 10 am and (2) 10 am and 1 pm for each of the last eight years, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is not collected.

Highways (Direction Powers)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he plans to transfer highway direction powers from county councils to district councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is proposed to replace the power of direction of local highway authorities with a right to be consulted on development proposed near roads. The change will be included in the new consolidated Town and Country Planning General Development Order for England and Wales which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment proposes to lay before Parliament early next week. It is to come into effect on 5 December this year.

Bonby Lodge Interchange

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement regarding progress on the Bonby Lodge interchange.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's proposals for the Bonby Lodge interchange, on the A15 trunk road, were published on 29 July in the form of draft orders under the Highways Act 1980. The period for the receipt of objections expires on 28 October.

Further progress on the scheme will be governed by the time needed to complete the necessary statutory procedures.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each of the last five years, the number of heavy goods vehicles in the United Kingdom and in the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the publication "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1977-1987", published by HMSO for the Government statistical service, a copy of which is in the Library.

Table 6·7 provides data on number of road vehicles by type.

Data for earlier years were published in previous editions of "Transport Statistics Great Britain."

Rigid Goods Vehicles (Thousands)

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
United Kingdom	1,713	1,700	1,792	1,806	1,815	1,840
Belgium	223	227	229	232	239	240
Denmark	238	231	231	239	253	265
Federal Republic of Germany	1,307	1,291	1,277	1,278	1,281	1,295
France	2,629	2,739	2,810	2,868	3,001	3,087
Greece	458	508	550	572	593	619
Irish Republic	67·0	68·1	70·0	84·1	93·4	101·5
Italy	1,357	1,461	1,562	1,683	1,788	1,900
Luxembourg	9·00	9·01	9·11	9·14	9·27	9·40
Netherlands	316	317	322	345	378	415
Portugal	399	448	473	492	500	510
Spain	1,397	1,462	1,529	1,643	1,529	1,679

Data extracted from the UN/ECE publication "Annual Bulletin of Transport Statistics for Europe".

A36 (West Wellow)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimate in round figures of the cost of the proposed bypass on the A36 at West Wellow.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The estimated cost is about £3·5 million at November 1985 prices. The actual cost will depend on the route and detailed design.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what traffic counts have been carried out on the A36 at West Wellow; and if he will publish the results in the *Official Report*, showing the vehicles by type.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The lastest traffic count, on 20 June 1986, showed a 24-hour flow of 12,500 vehicles. Analysis of vehicle type was carried out over a 12-hour period between 7 am and 7 pm. Categories were as follows:

	Number
Pedal Cycles	12
Motor Cycles	138
Car and Taxi	7,796
Bus and Coach	64
Light Goods Vehicles	1,014
Medium Goods Vehicles	279
Heavy Goods Vehicles	1,211

King's Cross

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the last date before the fire at King's Cross underground station in November 1987 on which the railway inspectorate inspected any part of King's Cross underground station.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* The Victoria line escalator machine room at King's Cross LUL station was inspected on 24 March 1987.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the alterations in progress at King's Cross underground station booking hall in November 1987 had been inspected by the railway inspectorate.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* No.

Railway Maintenance

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on whose authority it was decided that the railway inspectorate should refrain from making any preventive checks on railway maintenance of operating equipment.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* No such decision has been taken.

Railway Inspectorate

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of the time of *(a)* The chief inspecting officer of railways and *(b)* the professional staff of the railway inspectorate, including the employment inspectors, was spent in 1987 before the King's Cross fire, and in 1986 on the work on the channel tunnel, on work for Hong Kong and Singapore, talks with the Chinese Government, British Rail, London Underground and minor railways, respectively.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* This information is not available in the form requested. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible giving such information as can readily be obtained.

Private Streets (Adoption)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has any proposals for the reform of the law on the adoption of private streets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following a consultation paper issued in 1983, the Department has reviewed the law on private street works. It is concluded that the provisions of the present law are in general satisfactory and that in particular the basic principle of frontager liability should be maintained.

Earlier this year, with our encouragement, the Housebuilders Federation and the local authority associations negotiated a revised model agreement to provide for the adoption of newly constructed estate roads. We commend this as a substantial improvement on the previous arrangements.

We are currently considering certain detailed amendments of the law with a view to introduction when a suitable opportunity arises for legislation.

A2 (Roadworks)

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of months and weeks that the A2 between the Black Prince, Bexley and Swanscombe Cutting has been under roadworks from 1 January 1984 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have had a substantial programme of maintenance and improvement for this section of the A2. Major works, consisting of maintenance, replacement of safety fences and construction of hard shoulders, have taken 70 weeks in total since 1 January 1984. There are no records of the timing of minor maintenance.

Major works were carried out over the following periods:

May 1986–October 1986 (23 weeks)—replacement of safety fences
March 1987–July 1987 (19 weeks)—major maintenance
October 1987–January 1988 (16 weeks)—major maintenance
August 1988–To date (12 weeks)—construction of hard shoulders

In addition, this section of the A2 is subject to regular patching.

A1(M), Hatfield

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of the underpass on the A1(M) at Hatfield; and what is its total length.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The structure at Hatfield, constructed by the cut-and-cover process, accommodates a full three-lane motorway. Raised walkways along both sides of each carriageway contain the extensive cabling and service ducts required for tunnel services and motorway communications.

As well as offering environmental advantages this approach, with appropriate strengthening, allow the redevelopment of an area of some 25 acres on and around the tunnel lid.

The final gross construction cost of the tunnel and carriageways, excluding land/compensation costs, was £35 million, some of this being recovered by receipts associated with the development scheme.

The tunnel is 1,150m (¾ mile) long.

Common Market (Commercial Tonnage)

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the increase in commercial road tonnage carried in the common market over the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the publication "International comparisons of transport statistics 1970-1985; Part I intermodal". Table 8 gives data on freight lifted by mode.

Data for 1986 are published in table 6.6 of "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1977-1987." Both publications are issued by HMSO for the Government statistical service; copies are held in the Library.

A36 (West Wellow)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the reported accidents on the stretch of the A36 through West Wellow over the last 10 years, showing how many have involved injuries and fatalities.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information available for the section of the A36 from the county boundary to C17 Whinwhistle road is as follows:

	Accidents			
	Fatal	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*
1978	0	4	6	10
1979	0	3	4	7
1980	1	2	4	7
1981	0	2	3	5
1982	0	1	0	1
1983	0	0	4	4

	Fatal	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*
1984	0	2	6	8
1985	0	3	6	9
1986	2	4	3	9
1987	1	2	7	10
[1]1988	1	2	5	8

[1] To July.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether consultants have been appointed to consider alternative routes for a bypass on the A36 at West Wellow; when the study is likely to take place; when the study will be completed; and when he expects to publish his recommendations for the proposed route.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We hope to appoint consultants early next year to prepare for public consultation in late 1990. The announcement of a preferred route will depend on the outcome. It could be made in 1991.

Health and Safety

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for how long before and after April 1987 the responsibility for enforcing health and safety legislation, investigating staff accidents and inspecting railway premises on the whole of the British Rail southern region and London Underground was carried out by a sole inspector.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* From May 1986 up to the present date one inspector under the supervision of a principal inspector and an inspecting officer have been responsible for enforcing the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act on British Rail southern region and London Underground.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 28 October 1988

HOME DEPARTMENT

Guardian Angels

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the west midlands on the implications for the maintenance of law and order of the activities of the group from the United States of America known as the Guardian Angels.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that the chief constable of the west midlands is compiling a full report on the activities of this group which will be sent to the Home Secretary shortly. In the meantime the chief constable has advised my right hon. Friend that officers of the West Midlands police have met representatives of the Guardian Angels and have made clear their views that, while they welcome the support of members of the community in crime prevention initiatives of various kinds, groups which seek to take over the role of the police, for example by patrolling the streets, are not acceptable. I fully support this view.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will use his powers to order the removal from the United Kingdom of the group known as the Guardian Angels.

Mr. Renton: No. I am not aware of any justification for the use of these powers.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Her Majesty's Government will take steps to seek representation at the European Court deliberations on the legality of Sunday trading restrictions in the United Kingdom, raised by Messrs. Cullen Stores; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We have not yet received details concerning any application to the European Court in respect of Messrs. Cullen Stores but the Government have submitted written observations in respect of five similar applications to the European Court and have instructed counsel.

Ford Prison

Mr. Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when a response will be sent to the chief executive of the Arun district council following his letters to the Home Ofice of 28 July and 28 August on the future of Ford prison.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I much regret the delay in replying to the letters from the chief executive of the Arun district council on the allocation of prisoners to Ford open prison. The prison service regional director is looking into the matter and a reply will be sent by the end of next week.

ENERGY

Home Insulation Scheme Grants

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish the number of 90 per cent. home insulation scheme grants given in 1987, and the number of households insulated by councils by insulation projects in 1987.

Mr. Peter Morrison: 45,825 90 per cent. homes insulation scheme grants were paid in 1987. Additionally, in excess of 165,000 homes were treated in 1987 by community insulation projects operating under the Government's community programme.

Atomic Energy Conference (Vienna)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations from Her Majesty's Government were made at the International Atomic Energy Authority conference held in Vienna on 21 September on the relationship between the Vienna convention on civil liability for nuclear damage 1963 and the Paris convention on third party liability in the field of nuclear energy 1960.

Mr. Michael Spicer: At the conference on 21 September representatives of Her Majesty's Government gave full support to, and signed, the joint protocol to establish a relationship between the Vienna convention on civil liability for nuclear damage and the Paris convention on third party liability in the field of nuclear energy.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many departmental Ministers or officials were present at the 32nd annual conference of the International Atomic Energy Authority, held in Vienna on 19 to 23 September.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In addition to members of the United Kingdom's permanent mission to the International Atomic Energy Agency, two officials from the Department of Energy and one from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office attended the IAEA's 32nd general conference. No Ministers were present at the conference.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if any initiatives on *(a)* nuclear safety, *(b)* nuclear safeguards, *(c)* precautions against nuclear terrorism and non-state proliferation, *(d)* nuclear waste management and *(e)* nuclear emergency planning were made by the United Kingdom delegation to the 32nd regular session of the International Atomic Energy Agency general conference held on 19 to 23 September, in Vienna.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The United Kingdom delegation played a full and active role in the proceedings of the International Atomic Energy Agency's 32nd general conference, which covered a wide range of issues affecting all aspects of the agency's work. The United Kingdom joined in the sponsoring of resolutions on nuclear safety and on the dumping of radioactive waste and was among the signatories of a protocol linking the Paris and Vienna conventions on nuclear liability.

"Earthing Electricity"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the report, "Earthing Electricity", published by the Centre for Economic and Environmental Development in September.

Mr. Parkinson: A copy of the report is already available in the departmental library.

Hinkley Point C

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many *(a)* individual, *(b)* organisations and *(c)* foreign objections to the Hinkley Point C pressurised water reactor application by the Central Electricity Generating Board had been registered at his Department by 4 October.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Over 9,000 individuals and over 350 organisations are registered as objectors to Hinkley Point C pursuant to section 34 of the Electricity Act 1957.

Overseas objectors cannot be so registered and have no entitlement to appear at the public inquiry. However, the inquiry inspector has the discretion to allow overseas objectors to appear.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many departmental officials have attended, and for what period of time, the Hinkley Point C public inquiry since it opened on 4 October; and what level of departmental representation he expects to maintain during the remainder of the inquiry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Three officials from my Department attended the opening day of the inquiry on 4 October; one attended on 19 October.

My Department's witness to the inquiry began giving evidence on 26 October and is supported by six officials. These officials will continue to attend the inquiry for as long as the Department's witness is required to give evidence although not all of them will necessarily be present throughout that period.

After my Department has given evidence my officials might attend on particular days as necessary.

Euratom Safeguards, Sellafield (Report)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether, following the vote in the European Parliament in Strasbourg on the report from the Energy, Research and Technology Committee on the application of Euratom safeguards at Sellafield, the Llewellyn Smith report, his Department has received any representations on its implications for the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Up to 27 October my Department had received no representations on the CERT report.

Electricity Supply Industry (Privatisation)

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the advisers who have been appointed to assist the Government, the CEGB, the Electricity Council and the 12 area boards in the proposed privatisation of the ESI and the amount of money that has been paid to each of those advisers in the last financial year; and how much it is estimated will be paid to them in this financial year and in the next financial year.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department is being provided with advice by Kleinwort Benson, Touche Ross, Slaughter and May, Merz and McLellan, Professor Stephen Littlechild, James Capel, Warburg Securities, Lloyds Bank, Lowe Bell, BMRB and the reporting accountants for the 12 area boards and the CEGB.

Expenditure in 1987-88 was £771,000. There is estimate provision in 1988-89 of £6 million. It is not usual practice to publish details of individual contracts. Advice received by the industry is a matter for the bodies concerned.

Electricity Generation (Advertising Campaign)

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the total budget for the advertising campaign on electricity power generation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the electricity supply industry. I have asked the chairman of the Electricity Council to reply to the hon. Member.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Maladministration

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Attorney-General how many investigations in the past year into alleged maladministration in the courts the ombudsman has had to suspend because a purely administrative decision has been made on the instructions of a judge rather than by the Lord Chancellor's Department; what alternative remedy is available to the public for such maladministration; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: In the past year, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration had to suspend three investigations into alleged maladministration in the courts. This results from the view taken by the Lord Chancellor, on the advice of Treasury counsel, that the PCA has no jurisdiction to investigate the actions of court staff who are exercising the administrative functions of the courts as distinct from the limited range of administrative functions conferred on the Lord Chancellor by statute.

In one of the three suspended investigations, the LCD has accepted the PCA's jurisdiction to investigate part of the complaint and is assisting the PCA with that part. In a fourth case, the PCA has been able to investigate the bulk of the complaint but the LCD has denied his jurisdiction in relation to certain matters which were the subject of the court orders.

The following alternative remedies may be available to members of the public who believe they have suffered loss as a result of maladministration by staff in the courts: to draw their complaint to the attention of the court or court officials concerned; to exercise any right of appeal available in relation to the decision or order of the court concerned; to institute civil proceedings if they have a cause of action; or to apply for judicial review. Also, the Lord Chancellor is prepared to consider claims for compensation where loss is sustained through any negligence of court officials in matters for which he is responsible. Members of the public may submit such claims directly, or through their Member of Parliament, to the Lord Chancellor or his Department's headquarters, or circuit offices.

The Lord Chancellor's present view on the jurisdiction of the PCA emerged in late 1986 following Treasury counsel's advice in a particular case. The PCA has seen that advice as have Members of the Select Committee on the PCA, to whom Lord Chancellor Hailsham explained on 31 March 1987 why the Lord Chancellor was obliged to comply with the advice.

In all the cases suspended since 1986, the Lord Chancellor's Department has conducted its own thorough investigation and, where justified, paid ex gratia compensation.

Wapping (Police Behaviour)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Attorney-General what action is being taken by the Director of Public Prosecutions on the reports referred to him by the Northamptonshire police on the behaviour of the metropolitan Police at Wapping.

The Attorney-General: The director is presently considering such reports as have already been received by him. Further police reports are anticipated.

"The Wilson Plot"

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General if he has any plans to take legal action to seek to prevent the publication of the book "The Wilson Plot" by David Leigh.

The Attorney-General: The Government are considering this matter in the light of the speeches of their lordships in AG *v.* Sunday Times, Guardian and Observer.

ENVIRONMENT

Rate Support Grant (Warwickshire)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent rate support grant to Warwickshire county council has fallen below the rate of inflation for each year since May 1985; and what are the reasons for the shortfall in each year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The table sets out the amount of rate support grant paid to Warwickshire county council for each year since 1985-86. The figures are shown in both cash and real terms, together with the shortfall each year. The changes in grant from each year to year reflect changes in the total amount of grant available and changes in the distribution of that total between authorities. Changes in grant distribution in turn reflect changes in GRE methodology and data, changes in grant mechanisms—such as the abolition of targets and holdback and steeper slopes of the poundage schedule introduced in 1986-87—and authorities' spending decisions.

	1985-86 £ million	*1986-87 £ million*	*1987-88 £ million*	*1988-89 £ million*
Cash	53·777	52·743	53·804	46·098
Constant 1985-86 prices	53·777	51·018	49·550	40·625
Shortfall		2·759	1·468	8·925

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total amount of rate support grant paid to Warwickshire county council in 1984-85; what was the amount in 1987-88; and if he will express the answer both in actual amounts and in real terms.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Warwickshire county council has received £62·874 million rate support grant for 1984-85 and £53·804 million for 1987-88. In constant 1987-88 prices, the amount received for 1984-85 was £72·350 million.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much Government grant in total has been lost by Warwickshire county council as a result of penalties imposed because of overspending.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Grant abatement was a feature of the rate support grant system from 1981-82 to 1985-86. Expenditure guidance was issued to local authorities each year and those spending above target were liable to abatement of block grant (holdback). The only year in which Warwickshire county council lost grant as a result of spending above the expenditure guidance issued to it was 1983-84, when holdback amounted to £0·551 million.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will use his powers under the Local Government Finance Act to stop access to the community charge register by debt collectors and mail order companies; and how he intends to protect the privacy of an individual when the register is available for public inspection for purposes not connected to the community charge.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The community charge register will not be available for public inspection. An extract of the register showing addresses, initials and surnames will be available for public inspection, but regulations will prohibit registration officers from supplying or selling copies to anyone. No one will have the right to take copies from the extract.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which student nurses will pay 20 per cent. of the community charge.

Mr. Gummer: On 23 May, the Government announced major changes in nurse training, to be introduced over a number of years, including a substantial reduction in the time spent by student nurses working during their training, and giving them non-taxable bursaries rather than salaries. The Government made clear, during the passage of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, that student nurses training under the new arrangements would pay only 20 per cent. of the personal community charge, like other full-time students. The Government also said that they would consider further the position of student nurses who continue to be trained under the existing arrangements and are paid salaries. They have decided that the definition of "full-time student" for community charge purposes should not be widened to include such nurses, whose average earnings this year are between £5,400 and £6,200.

Multi-occupied Properties

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if his Department has yet decided on any action on multi-occupied properties; and if he will make a statement.

(2) if he has received any recent representatives on multi-occupied properties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: We have received so far over 200 responses to our consultation paper on houses in multiple occupation issued on 18 July, copies of which are in the Library. We are currently considering possible legislative changes in the light of those responses.

Hazardous Wastes

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proportion of the annual total of special hazardous wastes has been imported through airports in each of the past nine years for which data are available;

(2) for each of the last 10 years, how many tonnes of what is now defined as special hazardous waste have been imported to the United Kingdom via *(a)* ports and *(b)* airports.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information on imports of special waste is collected by waste disposal authorities. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution (and its predecessors) has collected some information from the authorities since the financial year 1981-82. These records show the following information:

Financial Year	*Estimated Quantity Imported (Tonnes)*
1981-82	3,786
1982-83	4,986
1983-84	14,824
1984-85	5,000
1985-86	24,548
1986-87	53,000
1987-88	80,000

The inspectorate is aware of imports by air in only two of these years, 60 tonnes in 1985-86 and 25 tonnes in 1987-88, and of 3 tonnes to date this year.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has had any meetings with the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive to discuss the recommendations of the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities report, "Radioactive Waste Management (HL 99)".

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has had no discussions with Nirex on this report.

Toxic Wastes Import (Air Canada)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what authorisations were sought by Air Canada between November 1987 and June 1988 to import 27 tonnes of toxic wastes, including PCBs, on its aircraft into the United Kingdom; and which airports were used for these imports.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No specific authorisations are required for the import of wastes from Canada but there are pre-notification procedures under Canadian law and our own Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980. All consignments of waste shipped by Air Canada during the period November 1987 to June 1988 came into Heathrow airport.

Rimnet Radiation Monitoring Programme

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the implementation of the Rimnet radiation monitoring programme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Forty-six monitoring stations became operational in June and are now feeding data to London. The next phase of the development of Rimnet will double the number of monitoring stations and progressively introduce fully automated facilities.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by local authority, and by standard economic region, the changes in expenditure allowed under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 in the event that the proposals contained in the Government's response to the Widdicombe committee of inquiry are enacted; and if he will show these figures in both cash and percentage terms.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is not immediately available in the precise format sought. I will therefore write to the hon. Gentleman when the necessary data have been collated.

Home Loss Payments Scheme

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the arrangements and formula of the home loss payments scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him yesterday.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the levels of award payable under the home loss payments scheme; and what the levels would be at today's prices, adjusted to take account of inflation.

Mr. Chope: The amount of home loss payment under section 30 of the Land Compensation Act 1973 has, since 1 April 1973, been three times the rateable value of the claimant's home, subject to a minimum of £150 and a maximum of £1,500. Since that date the retail prices index has increased by a factor of 4·65.

Hampstead Heath

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions he has reached on the future of Hampstead heath; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Following a recommendation from the London residuary body last April that its functions, properties, rights and liabilities in respect of Hampstead heath be transferred to the corporation of the City of London, my Department invited comments on the contents of the proposed order to give effect to the LRB's recommendation. Comments were received from 36 local authorities, organisations and individuals.

After careful consideration of the comments I have concluded that an order shall be laid before Parliament to give effect to the proposals set out in the consultation letter of 14 June 1988 subject to one modification.

We have concluded that, with one exception, it is appropriate that the city corporation should be able to exercise all powers that were exercisable by the GLC in respect of Hampstead heath. The exception relates to section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 (power to dispose of land).

Sewer Collapses

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has, for each water authority, on the number of significant sewer collapses in 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 21 October 1988]:* I will write to the hon. Member as soon as I have the information available.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what British groups, university research departments and scientists have been approached by him in order to prepare proposals to tackle the problems of *(a)* the destruction of rain forests and *(b)* the protection of the ozone layer.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* Scientists from Cambridge University, the Meteorological Office the Harwell Laboratory and the private sector are currently engaged on work related to the ozone layer under the Department's air pollution research programme. The Department is considering what further work on this topic should be undertaken in 1989-90; and will take into account the recommendations made by the stratospheric ozone review group in its second report, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Proposals for tackling the destruction of rain forests are the responsibility of my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development.

Stratospheric Ozone Review Group

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the implications for departmental research resources currently allocated to ozone layer and chlorofluorocarbons research of the report of the United Kingdom stratospheric ozone review group, published on 4 October.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 25 October 1988]:* The Department of the Environment plans to continue to fund research at least at the current level covering all the areas of work discussed by the stratospheric ozone review group. The Department funds research primarily to provide scientific advice on policy matters. The funding of basic research is more properly the role of NERC and SERC as mentioned in the group's second report.

Travelling Families (Darenth)

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate when he is likely to publish his decision on the illegal occupation by travelling families of agricultural land at Darenth hill, Dartford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* I regret the delay in issuing my right hon. Friend's decision on the enforcement appeals to which my hon. Friend refers. The decision is now about to be issued. I am arranging for a copy of it to be sent to my hon. Friend and inviting him to discuss problems with enforcement of planning control in his constituency.

Sports Council

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has reached any conclusions about the membership of the Sports Council.

Mr. Moynihan *[pursuant to his reply, 1 July 1988, c. 388]:* On 1 July I announced our intention to reduce the size of the Sports Council in order to provide a leaner, more efficient and responsive organisation; and at the same time to make a number of new appointments. I am delighted to announce that from today the following are to become members of the Council:

Richard Fox
Margaret Hohmann
Norman Jacobs
Tim Marshall
Mary Peters
David Simon
Peter Yarranton

These seven appointments bring the membership of the Sports Council to 14. We believe that a smaller council will be able to respond more quickly and flexibly to the changing demands and expectations in sport. It will also bring its size into line with many other non-departmental public bodies. We are confident that our new appointments from today's sportsmen and women, disabled sport, governing bodies and the private sector will bring invaluable experience to enable them to play a full role on preparing British sport and recreation for the 1990s.

DEFENCE

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the report of the Institute of Community Medicine of its findings on aircraft noise, following the realignment of the flight paths on Royal Air Force Upper Heyford.

Mr. Freeman: The report is being prepared in two parts. The first part covering the areas worst affected by noise to

the west of Royal Air Force Upper Heyford has been completed and a copy has been placed in the Library. The second part covering areas to the east of the station is not yet available.

Royal Engineers

Mr. Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made with the formation of the Royal Engineers TA unit in Jersey announced during the Army debate on 26 January at column *189*.

Mr. Freeman: Agreement has been reached with the States of Jersey authorities on the terms for establishment of the unit. Initial recruitment has been encouraging and I shall be visiting the new unit on 29 October.

Service Children's Education Authority

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reductions have recently been imposed in the level of cost-of-living allowance paid to teachers employed by the Service Children's Education Authority in the Federal German Republic; how these have been calculated; and what effect these have had on the pay of an average teacher.

Mr. Sainsbury: Although reductions in the order of 40 per cent. in the cost of living addition (COLA) for civilian staff serving in the FRG were originally published as a result of the regular monitoring of price levels, exchange rate variations and salary increases, and so on, the recent discovery of some incorrect local prices used in the earlier calculation has now resulted in a re-calculation of the allowance. The average reduction for married staff introduced at 1 October 1988 will now be about £200 per annum or 11 per cent. of the allowance.

Equipment Exports

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the countries to which the United Kingdom has exported defence equipment in each year from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not the practice to publish such detailed lists but statistics of United Kingdom defence sales by broad geographic regions are set out in volume 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates."

Sir Colin Chandler

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the appointment of Sir Colin Chandler as head of defence export services made for three years in 1985 has been extended; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I can confirm that the appointment of Sir Colin Chandler as head of defence export services has been extended to March 1989.

Defence Export Services Organisation

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the overseas offices of the defence export services organisation, giving in each case the date when the office was opened.

Mr. Sainsbury: DESO's interests are covered by MOD staff at embassies throughout the world, but specific defence sales offices have been set up in:

Washington
New Delhi
Riyadh
Kuala Lumpur
Seoul
Ankara
Kuwait

The latter three were established only this year while the remainder have been in existence for some time. The establishing of additional offices is a reflection of the outstanding performance of the DESO in supporting increased defence sales.

CIVIL SERVICE

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether any individuals from ethnic minorities are now enrolled in the top management programmes in 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: Yes. At least one of the participants on the top management programme course beginning in January 1989 will be from an ethnic minority, and we expect another participant from an ethnic minority to be on the programme beginning in April 1989. There may be others from ethnic minorities on these and other programmes in 1989, but as we do not know the ethnic background of most individuals put forward for the programme it is impossible to say at this stage. We remain keen to attract suitable nominations from a wide range of backgrounds to the top management programme.

Trade Unions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he next proposes to meet Civil Service trade union leaders to discuss terms and conditions of service.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 27 October 1988]:* I have informal meetings from time to time with representatives of the Civil Service trade unions. I have no plans to discuss terms and conditions of service with them. These are mainly the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General.

THE ARTS

Foco Novo Theatre

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last saw a performance by the Foco Novo theatre company.

Mr. Luce: I have seen no performances by the Foco Novo theatre company.

Theatres

Mr. Amess: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has recently visited any newly built theatres employing shared use facilities with sporting and other activities.

Mr. Luce: I visited the new Towngate theatre in Basildon just before its opening in April this year. I was impressed by the versatility of the facilities which allow for a wide variety of uses.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Business Investment

Mr. Speller: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for the growth of business investment in 1988.

Mr. Major: As the Chancellor of the Exchequer stated in his Budget forecast, total business investment is expected to grow by 9 per cent. in 1988.

Pensions

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the uprating of public service pensions from 1989.

Mr. Brooke: Public service pensioners were affected by the understatement in the retail prices index announced in December 1987. In my written answer of 18 December, at column *845-6*, I made it clear that, in order to ensure that these pensioners suffered no continuing loss, levels of public service pensions from April 1989 would be what they would have been if the error in the RPI had not occurred.

Under the Social Security Pensions Act 1975, the Treasury is required to increase public service pensions in line with state earnings-related pensions. In the forthcoming Pensions Increase (Review) Order public service pensions will therefore be uprated by the 5·9 per cent. increase announced yesterday by the Secretary of State for Social Security for SERPS. In consequence, they will have the value from April 1989 that they would have had if the RPI error had not occurred.

Survey Interviewers

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer why job advertisements for Government survey interviewers placed in *The Observer* specify that people should be aged between 20 and 50 years.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 27 October 1988]:* The Civil Service applies age limits to recruitment only where they are necessary to ensure the requirements of the work and the needs of the Department are fully met.

The age limits for social survey interviewers are set in accordance with the demands of the work and the need to secure a reasonable period of service to justify the training investment.

My officials keep the matter of age limits for all competitions under continuous review.

PRIME MINISTER

Abortion (Amendment) Bill

Mr. Amess: To ask the Prime Minister what is the total number of representations, to date, she has received *(a)* supporting and *(b)* opposing the provision of additional parliamentary time for the remaining stages of the Abortion (Amendment) Bill; what percentage the latter represents of the former; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Following the debate of the Abortion (Amendment) Bill, I received over 15,000 letters on this matter. The great majority of these supported the provision of additional parliamentary time.

Zionism is Racism (Resolution)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government will support the overturning of the Zionism is Racism resolution (Resolution 3379 (XXX)) at the United Nations General Assembly; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom (in common with most Western countries) voted against the United Nations General Assembly resolution 3379 in the General Assembly in November 1975. Since then we have consistently opposed the resolution but there is no specific provision for repealing United Nations resolutions, and in our judgment there is therefore little prospect of obtaining an effective counter resolution.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received supporting the overturning of the United Nations General Assembly Zionism is Racism resolution; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have not received any recent representations concerning the overturning of United Nations General Assembly resolution 3379. I refer my hon. Friend to my answer to his previous question.

Mr. Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Amess: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has made to the Government of the USSR concerning the case of Raoul Wallenberg; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 28 July to his question about Mr. Wallenberg.

The head of our delegation to the Vienna CSCE meeting referred to the unresolved questions surrounding Mr. Wallenberg's fate in a speech to delegates on 16 September. The leader of the American and Canadian delegations spoke in similar terms.

We continue to hope that the expressions of international concern about Mr. Wallenberg's fate, and increasing openness about the past in the Soviet Union itself, will make it possible for the Soviet authorities to give a full and frank account of the facts of the case.

Mr. Natan Shcharansky

Mr. Amess: To ask the Prime Minister when she last met Mr. Natan Shcharansky; what was discussed; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As was announced at the time, I met Mr. Shcharansky in Downing street on 6 May last year. I was much impressed with his courage and conviction.

Jordan is Palestine Group

Mr. Amess: To ask the Prime Minister when she last met officials from the Jordan is Palestine group; what was discussed and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have not met officials from the Jordan is Palestine committee.

PLO

Mr. Amess: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on the current policy of Her Majesty's Government towards official contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

The Prime Minister: At official level contacts are kept with the PLO. Ministerial contact with the PLO will remain difficult until it unambiguously renounces the use of violence, accepts UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and recognises Israel's right to a secure existence.

Royal Society (Speech)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she will arrange for a copy of her speech on the environment to the Royal Society on 27 September to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The Prime Minister: I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Prince Sihanouk

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister when she last met Prince Sihanouk; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I had talks with Prince Sihanouk on 25 October. We discussed the current situation in Cambodia and the prospects for a negotiated settlement.

TRANSPORT

East London River Crossing

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost to public funds of the public inquiry into the east London river crossing.

Mr. Channon: Approximately £3·25 million, excluding the normal salary costs of departmental staff involved.

MV Ardlough

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has conducted an investigation into the safety implications for shipping of the sinking of the MV Ardlough, on 28 September, off the Lancashire coast; and what special container cargoes were released to the sea following the sinking.

Mr. Portillo: One of the Department's marine surveyors is investigating the circumstances surrounding this accident. To maintain safety for shipping, the wreck of the vessel is marked by three buoys and a racon radar beacon.

Twelve freight and tank containers are known to have floated free when the vessel sank. Of the eight washed ashore, two tanks contained ethyl acetate and dimethyl acetamide, both listed as dangerous substances. It is likely that the remaining containers eventually sank but it is not thought that they contaned dangerous substances. Other dangerous substances declared on the manifest are assumed to be trapped in the vessel. None of these is considered to pose a significant threat to the environment.

Vigilante Groups

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the policy of British Transport police towards possible co-operation with vigilante groups, including that known as the Guardian Angels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that British Transport police have made clear that the force does not welcome and cannot support proposed patrolling of either the British Rail or London Underground systems by the Guardian Angels or similar groups.

A590 (Bypasses)

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made regarding the A590 bypasses at Dalton, Lindal and Swarthmoor, in Furness; when he expects building work to commence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We intend to publish statutory orders for the Dalton bypass very soon. If all goes well, construction might start in 1991.

We are considering the results of preliminary investigations into the Swarthmoor bypass.

The trunk road forward programme does not include a bypass of Lindal. We are considering whether there is any case for future inclusion of such a scheme.

Air Traffic Distribution

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether the review of London air traffic distribution will take account of the economic basis on which any future rule excluding charter airlines from access to peak-time slots at London airports would be made; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the review of London air traffic distribution will take account of the current imbalance between scheduled and charter peak-time slot allocation at Gatwick before drafting any proposals on slot allocation or traffic distribution for comment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's letter of 22 June to the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority set out the considerations he wished the authority to take into account in advising him on traffic distribution policy for airports serving the London area. A copy of this was placed in he Library. Section 31(4) of the Airports Act 1986 requires the authority to consult, as it considers appropriate, airport and aircraft operators who appear to it likely to be affected, and organisations representing such operators. We have no doubt some of them will raise these questions. We are confident the authority will weigh them carefully in producing options for my right hon. Friend's decision.

A34 (Traffic Flow)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the actual flow for the A34 near the Robin Hood roundabout, Newbury, based on a 12-hour period on a weekday in May 1988.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The 12-hour average weekday traffic flows on the A34 near the Robin Hood roundabout in May 1988 were:

	Traffic flow
A34 Ring Road	40,600
A34 Donnington Link	25,800

Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate the nature of the topics that require resolution prior to his publications of draft legislation to replace the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950; and what timetable he envisages in resolving problems still outstanding between representatives of the interests principally concerned.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Work is substantially complete on the substance of the legislative proposals. Final decisions have still to be taken on the question of diversions of utilities apparatus consequential on highway works, and the related balance of liability as between the highway authority and utility. I hope that these matters can be resolved within the next few weeks.

Detailed drafting will be necessary before the terms of a Bill can be finalised. Submission of a Bill will depend on finding a suitable opportunity for it.

Hired Motor Vehicles (Offences)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many fines have been imposed under section 109 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 on owners of motor vehicles in circumstances where the driver who committed the offence had hired the vehicle, but was not the owner.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

In 1986 in England and Wales, 14,322 convictions were recorded for the offence of failing to furnish the statutory statement of ownership following the issue of an excess charge notice. It is not possible to determine how many of these related to hired vehicles.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Reform

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure that school governors are made aware of the health and safety provisions of the Education Reform Act before local financial management of schools is brought into operation.

Mr. Butcher: The Department's guidance on implementing local management of schools, circular 7/88, deals with responsibilities for health and safety. A copy has been sent to the chairmen of governing bodies of all primary and secondary schools. The guide to the law, being sent to all school governors, reminds them that schools with delegated budgets will have to comply with their local authority's policy for health and safety.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schemes under which industrial and commercial companies sponsor local schools are known to his Department; what assessment has been made of the value of such schemes; and whether he plans to encourage their development.

Mr. Butcher: There are many types of link activities between schools and industry. Some involve written agreements between employers and local schools, such as the new compacts initiative; others are less formal. In addition, the city technology college initiative provides an opportunity for the direct sponsorship of schools by companies. The Government welcome such activities as a valuable means of extending the experiences of pupils and teachers, and enriching the curriculum.

National Union of Students

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met representatives of the National Union of Students; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has not met the National Union of Students recently, but I met it on 29 February 1988 to discuss the membership of student unions.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is yet in a position to announce the date of publication of the report of the inquiry now taking place into the activities of the National Union of Students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: We shall analyse responses to the questionnaire issued to a sample of institutions on 29 July when these are received. Thereafter, as indicated by my right hon. Friend in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) on 18 April, at column *292*, we shall reach conclusions on the best action to take and consult all concerned about these conclusions. I cannot at present predict how long this will take.

University of Wales

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of the proposed method of funding of University of Wales college after 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Funding of the University of Wales colleges after 1990, along with all other British universities, will be a matter for the Universities Funding Council established under the Education Reform Act.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many undergraduate courses in the arts and science subjects are taught wholly or partly through the medium of Welsh in the University of Wales; and if he will list such subjects, with the colleges at which they are taught and the numbers of students registered under each subject in each college.

Mr. Jackson: According to the University of Wales registry, there are 25 departments in the university which offer courses wholly or partially in Welsh. In addition, 24 other departments can arrange seminars, tutorial classes and laboratory classes in Welsh if demand is sufficient. The number of students registered in 1987-88 was as follows:

	Students
University College of Wales, Aberystwyth	
Education	72
Drama	46
History	28
Welsh History	23
Philosophy	4
French	17
Geography	25
Religious Studies	2

	Students
Music	14
International Politics	22
University College of North Wales, Bangor	
Education	53
Drama	30
History and Welsh History	26
Religious Studies	12
Music	20
Social Theory and Institutions	52
University of Wales College of Cardiff	
Home Economics	14
St. David's University College, Lampeter	
History	3
Theology	1
Religious Studies	4

In addition, Welsh language and Welsh studies courses are taught in Welsh.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide a statistical breakdown of the characteristics of University of Wales' students in 1988-89 analysed by *(a)* age, *(b)* sex, *(c)* country of origin and *(d)* number of Welsh speakers.

Mr. Jackson: The latest available information for 1987 is shown in the following table. Information on the number of Welsh speakers is not collected.

Full-time and sandwich students at the University of Wales

	Academic year beginning in 1987
UK domiciled new entrants	
Age as at 31 August	
less than 21	4,345
21-24	1,300
25 or more	1,003
Total	6,648
Total students	
Men	11,612
Women	9,066
Total	20,678
of which	
UK domiciled	17,826
Other European Community	250
Other overseas	2,602

Universities Funding Council

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the membership and constitution of the Welsh committee of the Universities Funding Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: While the UFC is required, under paragraph 10 of schedule 8 to the Education Reform Act, to establish a Welsh committee, the composition and membership of the committee are, by virtue of paragraph 9 of the schedule, for the council itself to determine.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EC Internal Market

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many of the 286 proposals to complete the European Economic Community internal market *(a)* have been agreed and implemented, or *(b)* are yet to be agreed; and if he will list them.

Mr. Maude: Of the 286 proposals set out in the European Commission's third report on the implementation of the internal market programme, issued in March this year, 118 have so far been wholly or partially agreed and 168 have yet to be agreed. I am writing to the hon. Member with a full list of these measures and will arrange for a copy of my letter to be placed in the Library of the House. A comprehensive and regularly updated summary of progress on individual single market measures is available on my Department's Spearhead computer database.

Knitwear (Imports)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table in ranked order showing the value and proportion of imports of knitted outerwear garments into the United Kingdom, on a country of consignment basis, for the latest year for which figures are available, indicating whether or not each country is a signatory to the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Alan Clark: A table showing the top 10 countries, representing nearly 74 per cent. of total imports, from which knitted outerwear garments were consigned is as follows. A full list including the remaining 88 countries has been placed in the Library.

United Kingdom imports of knitted outerwear garments January—December 1987

	Country of consignment	*Value (£)*	*Per cent.*
1.	Hong Kong[1]	131,178,379	19·11
2.	Italy[1]	100,516,265	14·65
3.	Portugal[1]	77,541,788	11·30
4.	South Korea[1]	52,863,673	7·70
5.	Taiwan	42,609,516	6·21
6.	Greece[1]	27,107,412	3·95
7.	Fed. Rep. Germany[1]	23,604,387	3·44
8.	Mauritius	18,528,669	2·70
9.	Thailand[1]	16,435,407	2·39
10.	Singapore	15,907,422	2·32

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics December 1987.
Notes: [1]Indicates a signatory to the multi-fibre arrangement. Knitted outerwear garments are defined as Standard International Trade Classification Sub-Group 854.0. All figures provisional.

Israel

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current state of trade between Israel and the United Kingdom; and what were the figures for each month since 1983.

Mr. Alan Clark: For the first eight months of 1988 the value of United Kingdom-Israeli trade was exports £321·8 million and imports £321·2 million.

The monthly information is given in the following table:

United Kingdom trade with Israel

Value £ million

	1983		1984		1985		1986		1987		1988 (January-August)	
	Exports	*Imports*	*Exports*	*Imports*	*Exports*	*Imports*	*Exports*	*Imports*	*Exports*	*Imports*	*Exports*	*Imports*
January	22·1	25·2	20·6	39·2	27·1	42·1	33·0	41·5	41·1	37·8	34·7	36·2
February	26·4	23·5	39·0	36·0	37·5	33·6	36·8	30·4	46·5	39·0	30·8	43·6
March	32·7	28·4	34·7	35·7	40·1	42·1	39·4	34·9	45·9	39·6	47·9	47·0
April	27·0	27·8	30·6	29·8	43·8	42·8	47·7	44·8	52·4	43·6	47·3	40·3
May	30·0	29·3	31·9	55·0	45·5	38·2	36·2	24·0	42·8	33·0	46·7	36·5
June	34·3	36·9	34·1	29·4	37·3	34·8	35·9	29·4	44·4	34·0	49·7	39·7
July	24·6	23·5	28·5	28·1	37·1	30·6	38·3	31·5	45·4	39·8	39·5	38·4
August	30·0	20·2	30·4	25·6	26·4	28·3	25·9	26·5	30·8	33·7	25·3	39·3
September	34·3	24·5	31·5	24·1	31·0	24·3	43·5	30·4	46·6	32·3	n/a	n/a
October	29·2	21·6	32·5	29·3	40·9	30·7	45·1	31·2	48·5	34·1	n/a	n/a
November	31·2	29·2	36·5	32·2	35·2	29·2	46·0	26·2	36·2	31·2	n/a	n/a
December	33·0	23·9	42·4	29·2	32·6	27·2	34·6	34·5	42·9	39·4	n/a	n/a

n/a—Not available.
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.
Note: 1987 and 1988 figures are provisional.

Cattle Skins (Exports)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what was the quantity of sheep and lamb skins exported in, respectively, the raw, salted and pickled state in each of the years 1985, 1986 and 1987 respectively; (2) what was the quantity of cattle skins exported in, respectively, the raw, salted and pickled state in each of the years 1985, 1986 and 1987 respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information that is available is given in the following table:

United Kingdom exports of cattle, sheep and lamb skins: 1985-1987

	1985		1986		1987	
	Weight (tonnes)	*Number (000)*	*Weight (tonnes)*	*Number (000)*	*Weight (tonnes)*	*Number (000)*
Hides of bovine cattle other than calves:						
Fresh or green salted	81,914	n.a.	78,852	n.a.	72,528	n.a.
Dried or dry salted	939	n.a.	952	n.a.	1,129	n.a.
Pickled or limed hides of bovine cattle	1,722	n.a.	1,762	n.a.	1,716	n.a.
Calf skins						
Fresh or green salted	6,275	n.a.	4,653	n.a.	5090	n.a.
Dried or dry salted	1,382	n.a.	1,229	n.a.	846	n.a.
Sheep and lamb skins with wool on (except astrakhan, caracul, Persian lamb, broadtail and similar skins)						
Fresh, salted or dried						
Of lambs	9,836	2,674	12,581	3,153	8,436	1,859
Other	765	279	1,194	285	1,726	372
Sheep and lamb skins without the wool						
Fresh, salted or dried						
Of lambs	6,224	1,907	5,705	1,518	8,201	1,989
Other	2,141	672	1,799	606	3,347	1,266
Pickled or limed						
Of lambs	3,457	3,492	4,260	4,592	3,920	4,048
Other	4,138	4,970	3,035	4,308	3,803	4,767
Raw furskins of Persian, Astrakhan, Caracul and similar lambs, or of Indian, Chinese, Mongolian and Tibetan lambs	439	1,922	367	1,559	263	1,251

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics, Group 211.
Note: 1987 figures are provisional.

HEALTH

Overseas Votes

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the total number of persons resident overseas registered to vote in the United Kingdom as at 1 April in each parliamentary constituency.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested from the 1988 register has now been placed in the Library.

The 1988 register is effective from 16 February 1988 to 15 February 1989 and is based on a qualifying date of 10 October 1987 (15 September in Northern Ireland). Numbers on the 1989 register will not be available centrally until April-May 1989.

The total number of persons resident overseas registered to vote on the United Kingdom 1988 electoral registers is 2,092.

Unrestricted Medical Services (Statistics)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the number of hospital consultants and general practitioners giving unrestricted medical services who are female, both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the total establishment.

Mr. Mellor: The information is given in the table:

	Women doctors	All doctors	Women as a percentage of all doctors
Hospital consultants (permanent paid and honorary) including staff in Special Hospitals (as at 30 September 1987)	1,970	14,514	14
Unrestricted principals in general practice (as at 1 October 1987)	5,204	24,922	21

Note: All figures are for England.

Cumberlow Lodge

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to continue the licensing and support of Cumberlow Lodge secure girls unit at Norwood, SE24.

Mrs. Currie: Approval of this unit was recently extended to 30 April 1989 following a routine inspection by the Department's social services inspectorate. The future of the unit is currently the subject of discussions between the London borough of Lambeth (which provides the unit) and the London boroughs children's regional planning committee.

Pensioners (Tameside)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the number of pensioners in Tameside who will be (i) obliged to pay for dental and optical tests and (ii) exempt.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Dental Services

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health why items of dental service which are given an item number are approved at a lower fee than when the same items have been accorded no number.

Mrs. Currie: All items in the National Health Service scale of fees for general dental services are numbered, and the vast majority have fixed fees. In the case of a small minority of items the level of fees is left to the discretion of the Dental Estimates Board.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what have been the numbers of estimate forms for occasional treatment only that have been dealt with in each year from 1975 to 1987.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is set out in the table. After 1985 information is available for financial years only.

Number of courses of occasional treatment (England)

Year	Number
1975	1,427,280
1976	1,224,320
1977	1,074,380
1978	901,190
1979	892,970
1980	895,570
1981	857,250
1982	858,480
1983	893,750
1984	877,700
1985	847,300
1986-87	594,630

District Health Authority Members (TUC Nomination)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, by regional health authority area, what proportion of district health authority members have been nominated by the Trades Union Congress or an affiliated organisation for each year from 1980 to 1987.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally. Members of district health authorities are appointed by the relevant regional health authority and local authorities. The hon. Member may therefore wish to seek the information from regional health authority chairmen.

Dental Examinations and Eye Tests

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what would be the estimated cost to public funds of extending exemptions from charges for *(a)* dental examinations and *(b)* eye tests beyond those envisaged on Third Reading of the Health and Medicines Bill in the House of Commons to exempt all persons of pensionable age.

Mrs. Currie: The estimated annual cost in England of extending free dental treatment to all persons over pensionable age would be £5 million and the extension of free sight tests would be £22 million.

Premature Babies

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many units specially caring for premature babies have been set up by regional health authorities in England and Wales; and what is the earliest age from which such babies have been known to survive in these units.

Mrs. Currie: All regional health authorities in England and Wales have units at regional, sub-regional or district level for the medical care of the newborn. These units receive premature babies together with others who require special or intensive care.

It has been reported that babies have survived in these units from the 23rd week of gestation.

St. Thomas's Hospital (Cyclotron)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish any expert advice received by him in respect of the St. Thomas cyclotron.

Mrs. Currie: No. Successive Governments have accepted that the advice of officials to Ministers is given in confidence.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the procedures specified in the Department of Health's option appraisal were followed in the purchase of medical equipment when making the decision on the St. Thomas cyclotron.

Mrs. Currie: No. These procedures apply to proposals from health authorities. The decision mentioned related to an application for a grant from a charitable trust.

Alcohol Consumption

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he proposes to take in the light of the industry forecasts report on trends in alcohol consumption, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mrs. Currie: We have not had time to study the report "Trends in Alcoholic Drink Consumption in the United Kingdom." Government action to combat alcohol misuse is being carried forward by the ministerial group on alcohol misuse under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Lord President. We will make copies of the report available to all members of the group in due course.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Palace of Westminster

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council what sections of the Palace of Westminster are reserved for Members and Officers of the House only; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: Access within the House of Commons is confined to right hon. and hon. Members, Officers of the House and staff on duty in the following areas:

Members and staff on duty
Members' Smoking Room
Members' Chess Room

Members, Officers and staff on duty
Members' Cloakroom
Members' Staircase
Members' Dining Room
Members' Tea Room
Library B, C and D Rooms
The Terrace, northern end

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council what sections of the Palace of Westminster are open to visitors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: This information is contained in the leaflet "Regulations for Visitors" which is issued by Black Rod and the Serjeant at Arms. I will arrange for my hon. Friend to receive a copy.

"Erskine May"

Mr. Amess: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he will arrange for the supply of sufficient extra copies of Erskine May's "Parliamentary Practice" for hon. Members to be entitled to claim one if they require a copy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: No. Copies of "Erskine May" are readily available for reference purposes in the Library, the Division Lobbies and in the Chamber. It is therefore not considered necessary to supply copies for individual Members.

WALES

Toxic Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department was informed about the cargo of 2,000 tonnes of Danish-origin toxic wastes refused at the port of Briton Ferry on 23 September, prior to the rejection by the port's authorities.

Mr. Grist: I am not aware of such a consignment's having been refused at the port of Briton Ferry. A consignment of waste from Denmark is currently being removed from the port for disposal to an appropriately licensed site.

River Loughor (Bridge)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of the final cost of the construction of the new bridge over the River Loughor is to be met by his Department; and what is his latest estimate of the sum involved.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Loughor bridge schemes including western approaches have been accepted for transport supplementary grant support since 1985-86 at the rate of 50 per cent. on estimated eligible expenditure: mainly land and works costs. Each year's grant settlement is based on the county's estimate of expenditure on all schemes accepted for grant support, with adjustment made for any net underspending in the previous two years. It is not therefore possible to attribute final grant receipts accurately to individual schemes, but on the present estimated cost of these schemes, TSG should not exceed £4·5 million.

SCOTLAND

Therapists (Special Needs Education)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board for each of the past five years the number of community physiotherapists, speech therapists and occupational therapists employed for special needs education.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not held centrally at the level of detail requested. The table shows the number of physiotherapists, speech therapists and occupational therapists working mainly in the community employed by health boards in Scotland. The table relates to whole-time equivalent numbers employed at 30 September in each of the last five years for which information is available.

Staff Group	*Scotland Total*	*Argyll and Clyde*	*Ayrshire and Arran*	*Borders*	*Dumfries and Galloway*	*Fife*	*Forth Valley*	*Grampian*	*Greater Glasgow*	*Highland*	*Lanark*	*Lothian*	*Orkney*	*Shetland*	*Tayside*	*Western Isles*
Physiotherapists																
1983	135·8	25·9	0·0	6·5	2·3	8·7	7·5	8·6	20·4	4·4	21·8	24·2	0·0	0·0	4·0	1·5
1984	139·9	24·6	0·0	6·4	4·3	9·2	7·5	6·4	20·8	4·4	24·2	25·1	0·0	0·0	5·5	1·5
1985	184·4	26·1	0·0	5·6	4·3	13·5	7·9	9·3	44·1	4·5	22·9	40·0	0·0	0·0	4·5	1·7
1986	185·5	26·9	0·0	6·2	5·0	13·0	7·9	11·3	41·1	4·6	23·2	39·6	0·0	0·0	6·7	0·0
1987	178·5	2·7	6·0	6·2	5·4	13·2	8·6	14·3	44·8	4·1	24·5	40·8	1·0	0·0	6·9	0·0

Staff Group	Scotland Total	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Borders	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Forth Valley	Grampian	Greater Glasgow	Highland	Lanark	Lothian	Orkney	Shetland	Tayside	Western Isles
Speech Therapist																
1983	227·5	24·1	17·1	9·8	15·5	18·4	14·2	26·5	28·0	12·9	17·8	30·2	1·0	0·0	9·7	2·3
1984	228·1	24·2	17·4	9·9	14·5	17·5	13·7	28·2	29·6	13·1	16·0	30·0	1·6	0·0	10·1	2·3
1985	231·2	22·3	17·9	10·2	14·6	18·7	13·8	23·6	32·1	12·8	18·8	33·4	2·0	0·0	8·7	2·3
1986	242·0	23·8	19·3	10·3	15·5	19·3	13·4	29·2	33·2	13·8	18·3	31·7	1·2	0·0	9·7	3·3
1987	243·8	21·9	20·6	11·2	14·9	21·0	16·3	25·0	30·8	13·9	18·2	34·7	2·0	0·0	10·0	3·3
Occupational Therapist																
1983	15·8	1·0	1·0	0·0	1·0	2·0	0·0	1·4	5·6	0·0	0·8	2·0	0·0	0·0	1·0	0·0
1984	16·1	0·0	1·0	0·0	1·0	1·5	0·0	0·4	6·4	0·0	2·8	1·0	0·0	0·0	2·0	0·0
1985	20·3	0·0	1·0	0·0	1·0	0·0	1·0	0·0	6·5	0·0	4·0	3·8	0·0	0·0	3·0	0·0
1986	26·2	0·0	3·0	0·0	1·0	1·0	1·8	1·0	5·6	0·0	5·0	3·0	0·0	0·0	4·8	0·0
1987	24·5	2·4	2·0	0·4	1·0	0·0	0·8	1·0	6·7	0·0	4·0	2·0	0·6	0·0	3·6	0·0

Pupils (Special Educational Needs)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of pupils with recorded special educational needs in primary and secondary schools by region and division, and by major area of need, as at the last available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of pupils with recorded special educational needs in education authority primary and secondary schools at September 1987 is given in the table. Information by major area of needs is not held centrally.

	Primary	*Secondary*
Borders	13	4
Central	25	8
Dumfries and Galloway	36	33
Fife	6	0
Grampian	63	23
Highland	39	53
Lothian	15	12
Strathclyde	257	98
Tayside	29	13
Orkney	7	0
Shetland	8	6
Western Isles	0	4
All Scotland	498	254
Argyll and Bute	16	2
Ayr	78	21
Dunbarton	25	8
Glasgow	54	16
Lanark	29	23
Renfrew	55	28

These figures do not include pupils in special schools.

Foreign Language Teaching

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total number of *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in which foreign language teaching is available showing, where possible, which languages are being taught.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Modern foreign languages were taught in 436 education authority secondary schools at September 1987. The number of languages taught and the languages involved are set out in the table below.

Number of Languages Taught

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*Total*
Schools	53	243	114	24	2	436
Languages						
French	53	243	114	24	2	436
German	0	210	100	24	2	336
Italian	0	7	38	15	2	62
Russian	0	0	21	9	2	32
Spanish	0	26	61	20	2	109
Other	0	0	8	4	0	12

The above figures are provisional. Information on primary schools is not available centrally.

SCOTVEC Awards

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total number of SCOTVEC awards in the last academic year made to pupils in Scottish schools in each region and division; and if he will show these as an average number of awards per pupil.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Figures for the academic session 1986-87 are shown in the table.

Number of SCOTVEC National Certificate modules in which school pupils achieved full success

Education Authority and Division of Strathclyde	*(1) Number*	*(2) [1] Per pupil*
Borders	1,140	1·4
Central	340	1·1
Dumfries and Galloway	2,520	1·2
Fife	1,530	1·3
Grampian	4,060	1·3
Highland	1,340	1·5
Lothian	5,470	1·1
Strathclyde	9,870	1·2
Tayside	1,200	1·0
Orkney	40	0·9
Shetland	150	1·1
Western Isles	50	0·7
SCOTLAND TOTAL	27,710	1·2
Strathclyde Division:		
Argyll and Bute	270	0·8
Ayr	2,340	1·3
Dunbarton	1,340	1·0
Glasgow	1,140	1·0
Lanark	3,030	1·2
Renfrew	1,750	1·2

[1] Column (1) expressed per pupil who enrolled for SCOTVEC National Certificate modules.

Scottish and Newcastle Breweries plc

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the meetings he has held with Elders IXL or its representatives in connection with its proposed takeover of Scottish and Newcastle plc; and if he will list by name the individuals who attended those meetings.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend met representatives of Elders IXL on 18 October in connection

with their bid for Scottish and Newcastle plc. The meeting was at the request of Elders IXL. As well as my right hon. and learned Friend and I, the following were also present:

Mr. John Elliott, Chairman, Elders IXL
Mr. Mike Foster, Chief Executive of Courage Holdings plc
Sir Alex Fletcher
Mr. Russell Hillhouse, Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Mr. Hugh Morison, Under-Secretary, Industry Department of Scotland
Mr. Alan Fraser, Assistant Secretary, Industry Department for Scotland
Mr. David Crawley, Principal Private Secretary to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what approaches he has received from individuals or companies seeking to arrange meetings in connection with the proposed takeover of Scottish and Newcastle plc by Elders IXL; and if he will list their names.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has to date received two approaches from individuals seeking a meeting to discuss the proposed takeover of Scottish and Newcastle plc. One was made by Sir Alex Fletcher on behalf of Elders IXL and the other was made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling).

EMPLOYMENT

Benefit Fraud

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list by jobcentre the number of people investigated for suspected fraud and the number who subsequently signed off in each year since 1984.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of claimants investigated by officers of his Department are found to be making fraudulent claims; and what estimates he has as to the total number of fraudulent claims which may be being made.

Mr. Nicholls: Based on figures for 1987-88, 20 per cent. of claimants investigated by officers from my Department withdrew their claims to benefit following investigation.

We do not know how many fraudulent claims to benefit are being made.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many lay members sit on industrial tribunals; how many such members are women; and how many are from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Nicholls: There are currently 1,802 lay members of industrial tribunals, of whom 397 are women. Thirty are believed to be from ethnic minorities.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many times since 1979 the method of calculating unemployment statistics has been altered; and if he will give the dates and the reasons which led to the recalculation in each case.

Mr. Nicholls: There have been only two changes to the method of calculating the monthly unemployment figures. The first was in October 1982 when there was a switch from counting registrants at jobcentres and careers offices to counting benefit claimants, following the introduction of voluntary registration at jobcentres. The old count would have become incomplete if continued.

A second change in calculation, which did not change the definition of unemployment, was the delay in the compilation of the unemployment figures by two weeks from March 1986. This removed mistaken over-recording caused by the late arrival of information about the status of claimants.

These changes have been taken into account in calculating the seasonally adjusted series which is based on the current definition, allowing for significant changes in coverage.

Single Union Deals

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the total number of single union deals concluded to this date in Scotland showing *(a)* the unions and *(b)* the location and plants involved.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department does not hold the information requested.

Women (National Insurance Threshold)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the number of women earning below the national insurance threshold.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information from the new earnings survey for April 1988 can only provide an indication of the maximum number of female employees whose gross weekly earnings, not affected by absence, were below the threshold. It is estimated that the number was less than 2 million at the time of the survey.

Factories (Decibels)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to seek to alter the current permitted levels of decibels in factories and other industrial sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: At the end of last year the Health and Safety Commission published draft proposals for regulations to implement European Community directive 86/188/EEC on the protection of workers from noise. It is now considering the comments made on those proposals. My right hon. Friend plans to introduce the necessary legislation on noise at work when he has received the Commission's final recommendations.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

London Dumping Convention

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting of the London dumping convention, held in London in October.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The 11th consultative meeting of contracting parties to the London dumping convention (LDC) was held in London from 3 to 7 October.

At this meeting it was agreed that detailed studies of scientific, legal, political, social and economic aspects of radioactive waste disposal at sea should continue to be carried out by an intergovernmental panel of experts at meetings in 1989 and 1990.

The meeting also adopted a resolution on the incineration of hazardous liquid waste at sea. This resolution provides for a re-evaluation of this practice to be undertaken in early 1992 with a view to proceeding towards the termination of marine incineration by the end of 1994. The re-evaluation is to take into account the scientific and technical aspects of incineration at sea and the practical availability of safer and environmentally more acceptable land-based alternatives.

It was agreed that guidelines and standards for the removal of offshore installations and structures prepared by the International Maritime Organisation were acceptable from the viewpoint of the LDC and that matters related to their disposal should be considered at the next meeting of the LDC's scientific group.

Other matters considered at this meeting were arrangements for the participation of non-governmental organisations in the LDC, various legal and scientific issues relating to the dumping of waste at sea and the interpretation of the convention, and co-operation and information exchange related to the work of the convention.

It was agreed that the 12th consultative meeting of contracting parties would be held in October 1989.

Cattle (Slaughter)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current cattle kill in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In 1987 the United Kingdom cattle kill (including calves) was 4,113,000 head.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Foods what is the current sheep and lamb kill in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In 1987 the United Kingdom sheep and lamb kill was as follows:

(1) Ewes and rams—1,535,000 head;
(2) Other sheep and lambs—14,228,000 head.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Soccer Matches (Police Presence)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as to how many police officers were on duty at the Brandywell soccer ground on each date in September when matches were being played.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I understand that during September there were 58 members of the RUC at the Brandywell soccer ground on each date when matches were played by Derry City FC.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as to how many police officers were on duty at Soccer matches in Northern Ireland on each of the following days—Saturday 3 September, Saturday 10 September, Saturday 17 September and Saturday 24 September; as to how typical these numbers are, and as to how many soccer grounds had a police presence on each of these days.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information is as follows:

1. 3 September 1988—33 officers at six soccer grounds.
2. 10 September 1988—165 officers at seven soccer grounds.
3. 17 September 1988—175 officers at seven soccer grounds.
4. 24 September 1988—170 officers at six soccer grounds.

It is not possible to define any soccer match as typical in terms of policing requirements because of the various different factors which are taken into account by the Chief Constable in making his operational decisions.

Catholic Education

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the reasons for the delay in presenting legislation to make statutory provision for the new upper tier of administration in the Catholic-maintained sector of education in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement regarding the respective responsibility of the Roman Catholic Council and the board of governors of each Roman Catholic maintained school for the employment of teachers at present.

Dr. Mawhinney: There has been no delay. The necessary legislation will be included in a proposal for a draft Order in Council which the Government intend to publish next spring and which will also incorporate the education reforms for Northern Ireland. Pending statutory provision for the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools an interim council has been established.

Teachers in Catholic maintained schools will continue to be employed by individual boards of governors until the statutory council has been established.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

ABM Treaty

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further representations he has received concerning the alleged breach of the 1972 ABM treaty by the modernisation of the Fylingdales BMEWS site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no recent representations concerning Soviet allegations that the modernisation of Fylingdales is in breach of US obligations under the ABM treaty.

Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Government of the USSR concerning the case of Raoul Wallenberg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer he received today from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Soviet Jews

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make further representations to the Government of the USSR concerning the right of Soviet Jews to leave the USSR; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We take every suitable opportunity to raise the problem of Jewish emigration with the Soviet authorities.

I intend to use my forthcoming visit to the Soviet Union to make further detailed representations about human rights questions including the plight of the refuseniks.

Palestine Liberation Organisation

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it remains the policy of Her Majesty's Government to refuse to recognise the Palestine Liberation Organisation so long as it retains its intent to destroy the state of Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We recognise only states: the question of recognition of the PLO does not arise.

"Jordan is Palestine" Group

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met officials from the "Jordan is Palestine" group; what was discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend has not met officials from the Jordan is Palestine committee.

"Zionism is Racism" Resolution

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received supporting the overturning of the United Nations General Assembly "Zionism is Racism" resolution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have not received any recent representations supporting the overturning of this resolution.

The United Kingdom (in common with most Western countries) voted against the United Nations General Assembly resolution 3379 in the General Assembly in November 1975. We have consistently opposed the resolution, but there is no specific provision for repealing United Nations resolutions.

Israel (40th Anniversary)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any officials from his Department were present at official celebrations in Israel to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the creation of the state of Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. Her Majesty's ambassador in Tel Aviv attended a number of functions to celebrate this anniversary.

Nuclear Safeguards Seminar (Vienna)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there was any departmental representation at the one-day seminar on the implementation of nuclear safeguards hosted by the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna on 18 September; and what information he has received regarding the outcome of the seminar.

Mr. Waldegrave: The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) held a meeting with journalists in Vienna on Sunday 18 September 1988 to explain the role and functions of the IAEA safeguards systems. There was no departmental representation at the meeting, but officials from the United Kingdom mission to the UN agencies in Vienna reported that it had taken place.

Missile Technology Control Regime

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the seven nations meeting held in Rome in September to review progress in the missile technology control regime.

Mr. Waldegrave: The seven members of the missile technology control regime (United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Japan, France, Italy, Federal Republic of Germany) met in Rome on 8-9 September to discuss the implementation of the regime and to consider future policy. The details of the discussions are confidential.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during discussions between Her Majesty's Government and the Japanese Government over the detailed arrangements of International Atomic Energy Authority and bilateral safeguards to be applied to plutonium returned to Japan from British Nuclear Fuels Ltd., Sellafield, details of the exact intended use of the plutonium were sought from the Japanese Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: Plutonium from spent fuel reprocessed in the United Kingdom is returned to its country of origin or to any other destination only on receipt of assurances covering peaceful use, application of International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, physical protection and controls on retransfer. No detailed arrangements have yet been made with the Japanese authorities for transfers of plutonium to Japan. These transfers are not envisaged to begin until the mid-1990s.

Prince Sihanouk

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met Prince Sihanouk; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend had talks with Prince Sihanouk on 26 October. They discussed the current situation in Cambodia and the prospects of a negotiated settlement.

Council of Ministers (Business)

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present 12 meetings of the Council are planned for November.

The Civil Protection Council meets on 4 November to discuss the exchange of data; glossary of technical terms; a common emergency telephone number; civil protection symbol; use of telecommunications; and a public information campaign.

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 7 November to consider the economic situation in the Community; the draft directive on the own funds of credit institutions; the Commission's proposal for financing major Community infrastructure projects; and regulation 2892/77 concerning the collection of VAT own resources. The agenda may also include the provision of assistance to the earthquake-stricken area of Kalamata, Greece.

The Energy Council will meet on 8 November and will consider progress on the Commission's paper on completing the internal market in energy. It will re-examine the Commission's review of member states' energy policies in the context of the Community's energy objectives agreed until 1995, and discuss again the recommendation on co-operation between major electricity utilities and private generators based on renewable energy sources, waste energy, and combined heat and power. The Council will also discuss for the first time a set of recommendations on the Community refining industry. A report on the application of Community rules for state aid to the coal industry in 1987 and an action programme for improving the efficiency of the use of electricity will complete the agenda.

The Agriculture Council meets on 14-15 November to discuss the agricultural negotiations in the GATT Uruguay round; income aids; amendment of milk quota rules for certain producers; reform of the sheep and beef regimes; and definition of spirit drinks. It may also discuss other proposals in the internal market programme.

The Research Council meets on 17 November. Discussions will include aeronautical research and development, a communication on space; a plan to allow access to large-scale scientific facilities by European scientists; and a number of research projects, namely ECLAIR (agro-industrial research); JOULE (non-nuclear energy and efficient use of energy); SPES (stimulation plan for economic science); and BRITE/EURAM (research in the manufacturing technology and advanced materials fields).

The Internal Market/Consumer Council on 18 November will discuss a number of measures relevant to the completion of the single market.

The Foreign Affairs Council meets on 21-22 November. There will be discussion of the 1989 generalised system of preferences; the GATT Uruguay round Mid-term meeting of 4-7 December; a Commission report on social and economic cohesion in the context of co-operation between the Community and EFTA; the renegotiation of annual bilateral steel import agreements; and a Commission report of the Community's textile industry; and preparation for the EC/Cyprus Association Council.

The Budget Council is due to meet on 22 November to discuss the European Parliament's amendments and modifications to the 1989 draft budget and possibly the Commission's proposed amending letter to the 1989 budget.

The Education Council of 23 November will resume discussion of the COMETT and ERASMUS programme (tertiary education); and consider the basis for co-operation at Community level in certain areas of primary and secondary school education.

The Development Council meets on 23 November to adopt conclusions on food security in sub-Saharan Africa; annual guidelines for the Asia and Latin America aid programme; progress in the renegotiation of the Lomé convention; and the relationship between project aid and fast disbursing aid in support of economic adjustment.

The Environment Council will meet on 24 November. Discussion will cover the protection of habitats for endangered species; a resolution to sustain developments in the environment; export of waste; municipal waste incineration; three draft directives in the field of biotechnology; titanium oxide waste; and emissions from small cars.

The Fisheries Council meets on 28 November to discuss guide prices for 1989; and relations with third countries.

European Movement (1992)

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the work the European Movement is doing in increasing public awareness of the economic benefits of 1992; and if he will issue a statement on financial support.

Mrs. Chalker: The European Movement has a valuable role to play in drawing public attention and that of business men and industry to the advantages of completion of the single market.

Given the constraints on public resources, and our policy of encouraging non-governmental organisations wherever possible to seek private funding, we told the European Movement in 1985 that official funding would be phased out over the following three years. This decision was confirmed to the chairman in person in May 1986, and the final payment was made as planned this August. I am pleased that the European Movement has succeeded in raising significant private sector funding.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Credit

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the number of families with children eligible for family credit and the number who are drawing it.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my replies to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 19 October at column *896* and to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 24 October.

Cohabitation

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will summarise the criteria used by his Department when deciding whether a man and a woman are living together as husband and wife.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The question whether a man and a woman are living together as husband and wife is decided by the independent adjudicating authorities. The Chief Adjudication Officer has published guidance on the factors which should be considered at paragraph 15021 et seq of the "Adjudication Officer's Guide", a copy of which is in the Library. The criteria are also summarised at pages 70-71 of leaflet SB20—"A Guide to Income Support"—a

copy of which is also in the Library, and which is available free to the public. These rules are common to all relevant social security benefits.

Benefits

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the total number of people in receipt of sickness benefit for each month during the past two years and also the number of people in receipt of sickness benefit at the end of 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The total number of sickness benefit claimants each month between April 1985 and March 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, is given in the following table:

Date	*Claimants (000's)*
2 April 1985	227
7 May 1985	209
4 June 1985	201
2 July 1985	203
6 August 1985	207
3 September 1985	210
1 October 1985	219
5 November 1985	219
3 December 1985	232
7 January 1986	241
4 February 1986	246
4 March 1986	239
1 April 1986	236
6 May 1986	207
3 June 1986	187
1 July 1986	177
5 August 1986	169
2 September 1986	166
7 October 1986	172
4 November 1986	178
2 December 1986	180
6 January 1987	184
3 February 1987	188
3 March 1987	184

The number of claimants and recipients of sickness benefit at the end of the statistical years 1983 to 1986 is as follows:

Date	*Claimants (000's)*	*Recipients (000's)*
2 April 1983	408	338
31 March 1984	247	190
30 March 1985	225	180
5 April 1986	237	179

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will specify the number of people disqualified from receiving benefit on grounds of non-availability for work for each of the following years: 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The numbers of adjudication officers' decisions disallowing unemployment benefit on grounds of non-availability for work are as follows:

Year	*Disqualified*
1983	57,237
1984	49,043
1985	53,680
1986	68,773
1987	101,774
1988	[1]48,290

[1] To 30 June 1988 only. Later information is not available.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he has any plans to seek to recoup the full amount of social security benefits paid to accident victims from any damages they recover by legal action; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to recoup the full amount of social security benefits paid to accident victims whether they seek to claim damages or not; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are currently considering a proposal to recover benefits paid to a person as the result of an injury for which he has also claimed and is paid damages. This follows recommendations made by the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee. No decision has yet been made about the proposal which would require primary legislation.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the savings of recouping the full amount of social security benefits paid to accident victims from any damages they recover by legal action; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Touche Ross management consultants have estimated that benefits totalling £57·5 million a year are paid to injured persons who receive damages for the same injury. A copy of their report is in the Library.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the impact on motor insurance premiums of seeking to recoup the full amount of social security benefits paid to accident victims from any damages they recover by legal action; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Touche Ross management consultants have estimated that motor insurance premiums would rise by an average of 0·7 per cent. A copy of their report is in the Library.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of increasing national insurance unemployment benefit for payment as long as a person was unemployed; and if he will present the data in gross and net terms, taking into account the savings on income support and housing benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The annual cost of unemployment benefit expenditure of removing the duration limit would be about £1,400 million. Savings on income support and housing benefit would be about £800 million. These costs and savings are calculated at 1988-89 benefit levels and assumed current levels of unemployment.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the numbers of unemployed claimants claiming unemployment benefit only, the numbers claiming unemployment benefit and income support/supplementary benefit, and the numbers claiming only income support/supplementary benefit for the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is in the following table:

Number of unemployed claimants as at 12 May 1988

Type of claim	*Number*
Unemployment benefit only	504,142
Unemployment benefit and income support	131,682
Income support only	1,254,417

Social Fund

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy towards allowing the purchase of equipment for his social fund officers to be paid for by moneys set aside for social fund grants and loans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The money allocated for the social fund is used exclusively for the provision of grants and loans. All administrative costs associated with the running of the social fund, including the purchase of equipment, are funded from the Department's administrative budget.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how quickly on average the Attendance Allowance Board deals with requests for a review of a refusal of attendance allowance; and what have been the comparable figures in past years.

Mr. Scott: The requested information is in the table.

Attendance Allowance: Average time taken to deal with requests for review of attendance allowance board decisions in the three months ended 30 September each year 1985-1988.

Year	*Time taken (weeks)*
1988	19
1987	18·5
1986	14
1985	13

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when Charles Eason of 12 Newport Close, Noctourn, Birkenhead, will receive a final decision from the Attendance Allowance Board on his claim (No. ZX 420791D) made in November 1987.

Mr. Scott: The Attendance Allowance Board has now reached a final decision on Mr. Eason's claim, and this will be notified to him within the next seven days. I regret that this decision took some time to finalise and I am writing to the hon. Member.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when John Fairclough of 1 Critchley Avenue, Birkenhead, will receive the final decision from the Attendance Allowance Board of his renewal claim (NP 042830C) made in February 1988.

Mr. Scott: The Attendance Allowance Board has now reached a final decision on Mr. Fairclough's claim, and this will be notified to him within the next seven days. I regret that this decision took some time to finalise and I am writing to the hon. Member.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when Mrs. Ann Norman will receive a final decision from the Attendance Allowance Board on the claim of her son, Paul, of 18 Naylor Road, Birkenhead, made in March 1987 (FY 571372A).

Mr. Scott: The Attendance Allowance Board is an independent adjudicating authority and I have no power to intervene in its decisions. However, I am writing to the hon. Member about Mrs. Norman's claim.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when Mr. Robin Cooper, of 697 New Chester Road, Birkenhead, will receive a final decision on his attendance allowance claim (WE 938515B) made in October 1987.

Mr. Scott: The Attendance Allowance Board is an independent adjudicating authority, and I have no power to intervene in its decisions. However, I am writing to the hon. Member about Mr. Cooper's claim.

"Law Relating" Books

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when publication of the Blue volumes will be complete.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The new social security "Law Relating" books—the Blue volumes—consist of 10 volumes. Volumes 1 to 8 were published by HMSO on 1 July 1988 and it is estimated that volumes 9 and 10 will be published early in 1989.

Personal Injuries Claims

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the number of claims under the Personal Injuries (Civilians) Scheme 1983 (S.I. 1983 No. 686), currently under consideration.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are currently 129 claims under consideration.

Maternity Grant

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the value of the maternity grant payable in 1969 at 1988 prices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The 1988 value of the £25 maternity grant payable in 1969 would be £153·50[1].

[1] Based on movements in the RPI between November 1969 and September 1988.

Cash Limits

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether there have been any changes in the cash limits or running costs of his Department in 1988-89.

Mr. Scott: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class XV, vote 6, (housing benefit administration) will be increased by £4 million from £127·635 million to £131·635 million. The revision takes account of local authorities' additional administrative costs due to the raising of the capital limit for entitlement to housing benefit from £6,000 to £8,000 (£2 million) and their preparation costs for taking on boarders (£1 million) and for implementing new rent officer procedures (£1 million). The increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class XV, vote 7, (administration and miscellaneous services) will be

increased by £7·395 million from £1,453·404 million to £1,460·799 million. The revision takes account of the additional administrative costs associated with the unit introduced to make transitional payments to certain housing benefit claimants, namely £11·965 million, the salary of an additional Minister (£35,000) and the cost of paying youth training scheme trainees (£183,000). These additional requirements are partially offset by an increase in receipts of £4·788 million to the vote. The balance of the increase will be charged to the reserve and will therefore not add to the planned total of public expenditure. As a result the running costs limit of the Departments of Social Security and of Health is increased by £6·609 million from £1,778·580 million to £1,785·189 million.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Clergymen

Mr. William Powell: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, how many incumbent clergymen are over 70 years old.

Mr. Alison: There are 87 clergy of full incumbent status over the age of 70.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 31 October 1988

PRIME MINISTER

Neutron and Proton Therapy

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her written answer to the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) of 20 October, *Official Report*, column *980*, if she will publish the text of Sir Raymond Hoffenberg's letter and her reply in the *Official Report*.

The Prime Minister: No. It is not my usual practice to publish exchanges of this kind.

Badgers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister how many representations she has received concerning the case for affording greater legal protection to badgers; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have received a small number of representations concerning the welfare of badgers, including some from hon. Members.

GCHQ Cheltenham

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) of 24 October, whether industrial action was taking place at Government Communications Headquarters during the weeks immediately preceding 26 December 1979 and on that date; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: A rolling strike involving the loss of 371 man days took place over the period 19 December 1979 to 13 February 1980. This strike hindered GCHQ's operations during the period of the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, although there was not a total stoppage.

Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Amess: To ask the Prime Minister if, when she next meets the President of the Soviet Union, she will raise the case of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Soviet authorities are already well aware of the interest shown by Her Majesty's Government and the British public in knowing what became of this brave man.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the occasions since May 1979 when she met members of the Wallenberg family to discuss the case of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have not met members of the Wallenberg family. I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 28 October to his question about Mr. Wallenberg.

Environment Policies

Mr. Wray: To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan of 24 October, *Official Report*, column *14*, she will list the specific action Her Majesty's Government are taking in order to *(a)* prevent acid rain, *(b)* reduce the use of ozone layer depleting chemicals and *(c)* protect the North sea from further pollution.

The Prime Minister: The Government have initiated the second largest programme in Europe to combat the polluting emissions which contribute to acid rain. This includes a £1 billion programme over 10 years. In addition, substantial further expenditure will be needed to meet our obligations under the large combustion plants directive, which we agreed in June this year. This will lead to a progressive reduction in the emission of sulphur dioxide from such plants of 60 per cent. by 2003 and of NOX of 30 per cent. by 1998. The Government are also committed to a package of measures on vehicle exhaust emissions which will substantially reduce the emission of NOX from motor vehicles.

In June 1987, the Government signed the Montreal protocol which aims to control global emissions of ozone-depleting substances. The aim is to reduce the consumption of chlorofluorocarbon by at least 50 per cent. by 2000. We are pressing for these planned cuts to be accelerated, and extended to at least 85 per cent.

On the North sea, we are implementing the major package of measures agreed by the second international conference, which was held last November under the chairmanship of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. These include a reduction in discharges of dangerous substances to rivers by 50 per cent. by 1995; an end to the dumping of hazardous industrial waste into the North sea by the end of 1989; and an end to marine incineration by the end of 1994.

EC (Structure Fund)

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Prime Minister which Minister has overall responsibility for negotiating entitlement in *(a)* the United Kingdom, and *(b)* England under the new structure fund of the EEC, under the heading "Objective 5(b)"; and what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards ensuring that the same criteria should apply in Devon as will apply in Scotland and Wales.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry is responsible for co-ordinating policy in this area, in consultation with other departmental Ministers including my right hon. Friend the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. On this issue, however, ministerial negotiations in the European Community take place in the Foreign Affairs Council where Her Majesty's Government are represented by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Minister of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker). The criteria for the selection of areas to benefit from assistance under objective 5(b) will be the same throughout the European Community.

Labour Government (Destabilisation Plot)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister if she will reopen the investigation into allegations of a plot to destabilise the Government of Lord Wilson in the light of further recently published allegations.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister if the inquiry disclosed by the Prime Minister on 6 May 1987 established on whose authority information about Lord Wilson was passed by the security services to members of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to my statement of 6 May 1987 about the inquiry into these matters.

Security (Information to Journalists)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister what instructions govern members of the security services in relation to the conveying of information to journalists; and on what dates authority was given to members of the security services to convey information to *(a)* Chapman Pincher, *(b)* William Massie, *(c)* Patrick Marnham, *(d)* David Leigh and *(e)* Raymond Jackson.

The Prime Minister: I do not propose to comment on the activities of the security services beyond saying that members of the services are well aware of their obligations under both the criminal and the civil law to make no unauthorised disclosures relating to their work.

Security Services

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the former officers of the security services who were interviewed in relation to the inquiry, the result of which she announced on 6 May 1987, *Official Report*, column 725.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister if she will set up an inquiry into the circulation by members of the security services of false and damaging information about *(a)* Lord Zuckerman, *(b)* Dame Judith Hart, *(c)* Mr. Niall MacDermot and *(d)* Mr. Jack Jones.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Peter Wright

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister if she will review reports on individuals submitted by Mr. Peter Wright during his period of Government service.

The Prime Minister: No.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

"The Wilson Plot"

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General if he will undertake inquiries to establish the identities of intelligence officers interviewed by Mr. David Leigh for his book "The Wilson Plot", with a view to establishing if there has been a breach of their life-long duty of confidentiality.

The Attorney-General: No.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

St. Botolph's Church, Aldgate

32. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, how much the Church Commissioners spent on clergy stipends in the last financial year in respect of clergy serving St. Botolph's church, Aldgate, in the City of London.

Mr. Alison: I regret that this information is not available. Clergy stipends are, for the most part, paid out of diocesan stipends funds. The commissioners contribute to those funds by way of an annual allocation. The stipends of individual clergy are determined by the diocese.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Emergency Aid

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the total amount of emergency aid given in each year since 1979.

Mr. Chris Patten: Following is the information:

Year	*Disaster relief* £ *thousand*	*Refugee relief* £ *thousand*	*Food aid*[1] £ *thousand*	*Total* £ *thousand*
1979	1,790	16,942	8,179	26,911
1980	2,466	15,681	9,080	27,227
1981	1,207	13,670	13,939	28,816
1982	1,925	10,561	11,765	24,251
1983	2,601	10,113	13,266	25,980
1984	8,517	17,789	14,822	41,128
1985	33,195	30,859	27,688	91,742
1986	18,559	24,375	7,557	50,491
1987	13,116	32,793	21,563	67,472
TOTAL	88,376	172,783	127,859	384,018

[1] Includes annual contributions to the regular programme of the World Food Programme.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Publicity

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information and publicity material has been produced relating to provision of the 1986 and 1988 Education Acts; on what subjects; in what numbers; and at what cost.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Publicity material produced relating to provision of the 1986 and 1988 Education Acts, together with subject detail, quantity and cost is as follows. This list excludes advice contained in Department of Education and Science circulars and circular letters.

Subject	*Quantity printed*	*Cost* £'000
1986 Education Act		
Leaflet entitled 'Shouldn't you become a School Governor'	4,000,000	64·2
Poster entitled 'Shouldn't you become a School Governor'	29,500	2·8
Pack entitled 'School Governors from the business community'	25,000	20·0

Subject	Quantity printed	Cost £'000
1988 Education Act		
Booklet entitled 'Education Reform'	500,000	50·0
Letters to governing bodies about the provisions of the Bill	26,150	2·7
Leaflet about City Technology Colleges entitled ' A New Choice of School'	44,500	39·7
Video about City Technology Colleges entitled 'A New Choice of School'	750	64·0
Leaflet for employers on ways of linking with schools	10,000	3·5
Report by Coopers and Lybrand entitled 'Local Management of Schools'	40,000	65·0
Leaflet for School Governors entitled ' A New Role'	790,000	36·4
Report by the Task Group on Assessment and Testing	10,000	30·1
Digest by the Task Group on Assessment and Testing	100,000	19·1
Three Supplementary Reports by the Task Group on Assessment and Testing	20,000	15·7
Proposals of the Secretary of State for Education and Science: 'Mathematics for ages 5 to 16'	100,000	105·8
Proposals of the Secretary of State for Education and Science: 'Science for ages 5 to 16'	100,000	102·1
Letter from the Secretary of State for Education and Science to the Chairmen of School Governing Bodies on Education Reform	25,500	21·1
Letter from the Secretary of State for Education and Science to School Governors on Education Reform	510,000	
Guide for County and Controlled School Governors entitled 'A Guide to the Law'	300,000	262·7
Booklet and letter for School Governors on 'How to become a Grant-Maintained School'	100,000	22·7
Bulletin for School Teachers and Governors about the Education Reform Act	750,000	24·5

Freedom of Speech

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to introduce further measures to impose obligations on universities and other higher education institutions to protect freedom of speech; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: As I indicated in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) on 26 April, at column *98*, we plan to evaluate the working of section 43 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, now that it has been in force for a year.

School Leavers

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many school leavers there were in each of the past 10 years in *(a)* Langbaurgh, *(b)* Middlesbrough and *(c)* Cleveland.

Mr. Butcher: The figures for the Cleveland local education authority are as follows. Corresponding information for the Langbaurgh and Middlesbrough areas is not available centrally.

Maintained schools

Thousands

Academic year ending	Total number of school leavers in Cleveland
1978	10·5
1979	10·5
1980	11·0
1981	10·1
1982	10·6
1983	10·2
1984	10·0
1985	10·2
1986	9·9
1987	9·5

Foreign Languages

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many passes were achieved in GCSE or A-levels last academic year in *(a)* Chinese, *(b)* Japanese, *(c)* Arabic and *(d)* Korean.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information in the table relates to all graded results at O-level/CSE and A-level in England in 1987. Korean is not identified separately in the data submitted to the Department. Comparable information for 1988 is not yet available centrally.

England—1987

	Chinese	Japanese	Arabic
Number of graded results[1] at O-level/CSE	350	10	120
Number of passes at A-level	350	80	nil

[1] O-level grades A-E, CSE grades 1-5.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many foreign language assistants are presently employed in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The number of foreign language assistants presently employed in England and Wales is 2,168.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met representatives from the Institute of Foreign Language Teachers to discuss the conditions of employment of foreign language assistants in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Neither I nor my right hon. Friend have met representatives of the Institute of Foreign Language Teachers. My Department however plans to undertake a review of the terms and conditions of foreign language assistant appointments, in consultation with the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges and the local authority associations.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase the recruitment of foreign language assistants in maintained schools in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Responsibility for the recruitment of foreign language assistants in maintained schools lies with local education authorities. The Government accord a

high priority to extending the study of modern languages in schools and attach value to the contribution such assistants can make. I hope that these appointments will be given their due priority by authorities.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current salary scale in force for foreign language assistants in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The allowance currently paid to foreign language assistants is £3,212. The level is set by my Department and is uprated annually in line with the increase in the level of mandatory students' awards.

Public Relations

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many courses in public relations are run by institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom; and what comparable information he has for each of the member states of the European Community.

Mr. Jackson: Courses in public relations are not offered by any higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. However, public relations is sometimes included as an optional course in higher national diploma, degree or postgraduate courses in related subjects such as business or communications studies. Information regarding other member states of the European Community is not available.

Examination Statistics

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how many students left secondary schools in the maintained sector last year with *(a)* no academic qualifications, *(b)* one CSE, *(c)* one to five CSEs, *(d)* one O-level, *(e)* one to five O-levels, and *(f)* five to 10 O-levels, in (i) England and Wales, and (ii) the Basildon area; and what were the comparable figures for each of the last six years.

Mr. Butcher: The figures are not readily available in the form requested. The table gives information for England. That for Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. As figures for the Basildon area are not available centrally, those for the Essex local education authority have been given instead.

School Leavers Examination attainments (000s)

Maintained schools

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
England						
no graded result at O-level or CSE	79·0	72·9	70·3	68·7	67·8	66·5
no higher grades,[1] but one or more other grades	265·2	270·8	267·0	260·8	254·4	253·3
1-4 higher grades[1]	199·6	209·3	201·7	197·0	191·3	193·4
5 or more higher grades[1]	162·4	168·1	168·4	163·6	158·7	155·9
Essex						
no graded result at O-level or CSE	2·3	2·2	1·8	1·9	1·8	2·0
no higher grades, but one or more other grades	8·6	9·1	8·1	8·1	7·9	7·6
1-4 higher grades[1]	6·8	7·5	6·7	6·6	6·7	6·9
5 or more higher grades[1]	5·8	5·8	6·1	5·7	5·8	5·1

[1] Higher grades include O-level grades A-C; and CSE grade 1
Source: School leavers survey. Estimates are subject to sampling error.

Secondary Schools

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many secondary schools were built in *(a)* the Basildon area, and *(b)* the United Kingdom in 1987, and in each of the previous five years.

Mr. Butcher: The Department does not hold this information in the form requested. However, in the period 1981-82 to 1986-87, the Department gave approval to major building projects for the provision of new or replacement maintained secondary schools as follows:

Number of approved major projects: Maintained secondary schools

Year	*Number of projects (England)*	*Number of projects (Basildon area)*
1981-82	1	—
1982-83	1	—
1983-84	6	—
1984-85	4	—
1985-86	5	—
1986-87	5	—
Total	22	—

Information for 1987-88 is not available. Schools in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are the concern of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for Northern Ireland respectively.

Student Union Membership

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many officials in his Department are engaged *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time in compiling, distribution and analysis of his Department's questionnaire on automatic student union membership; and what is the estimated cost of the exercise.

Mr. Jackson: The Department's current work on student unions is being undertaken by a team of five full-time officials, who include student affairs among their normal responsibilities. It is not possible to estimate the proportion of their time spent on, or the cost of, the particular activities referred to. Responses to the questionaire were requested by today and the task of analysis has not therefore begun.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science to which individuals, student unions or other

organisations the results of his Department's investigation on automatic student union membership will be distributed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I refer to the reply which my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) on 18 April, column *292*, in which he said that on the basis of information collected during the survey of a sample of institutions he would reach conclusions on the best action to take and would then consult all concerned about those conclusions. Those to be consulted will depend on the conclusions which are reached.

Natural Environment Research Council

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with the Natural Environment Research Council regarding staffing levels at the council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has had no discussions with the NERC on its staffing levels, which are for the council itself to determine. I am informed that the council has announced staff reductions involving 160 posts by April 1989, including some compulsory redundancies. I understand that only about 45 compulsory redundancies are now expected, half the number originally announced. These measures are part of the council's planning process to keep within its projected budget following a reduction in income from commissioned work.

Education Reform

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on how the implementation of the Education Reform Act 1988 is to be funded in Suffolk.

Mr. Butcher: The funding of education in Suffolk is for the local education authority to determine. However, the Goverment's spending plans for education in 1989-90 will give priority to those aspects of the service most affected by the Education Reform Act. Specific grants will also be available to support spending on activities relevant to the implementation of the Act: over £90 million of such expenditure will be supported through the education support grant programme and £65 million through the in-service teacher training grant scheme.

Pupil Insurance

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice his Department offers to local education authorities about insuring staff and pupils against death or injury arising from sport, cruises and other extra-mural activities.

Mr. Butcher: It is for each local education authority to decide whether to provide insurance cover for its staff or pupils taking part in sport or other out-of-school activities, but there is no general duty for it to do so. Some advice on insurance is given in the Department's safety booklet "Safety in Outdoor Pursuits" and other booklets in the safety series, obtainable from Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

High Energy Particle Physics

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's current attitude towards the high energy particle physics facilities at CERN in Switzerland; and whether Britain intends to maintain its annual subscription.

Mr. Jackson: The Government are studying the implications of the CERN council's decisions on the various recommendations made by the CERN review committee, chaired by Professor Abragam, and will make a statement before the end of this year.

Chemistry and Physics

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when it is proposed to publish a list of universities which do not subscribe to the criteria established by the University Grants Committee for chemistry and physics; and if he will give a date for compliance.

Mr. Jackson: I understand that the University Grants Committee reports on the general principles of rationalising university departments of physics and chemistry will shortly be published for consultation. Information about all university cost-centres is already published annually in the "Universities' Statistical Record."

Support Grants

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to encourage local education authorities to take up education support grants when they are required to take over full fundings of all education support grant initiatives.

Mrs. Rumbold: One of the main purposes of education support grants is to encourage local education authorities to undertake expenditure in areas which the Government consider to be of particular importance. In some cases, particularly, for example, those which involve supporting the purchase of specialised equipment, the objectives of the activity will be achieved during the lifetime of the project. In others the intention is that initiatives should be continued as part of mainstream funding after a few years of specific grant support. There seems to be little reluctance on the part of local education authorities to take up these grants: in 1988-89 bids totalling almost £84 million were received for a total of £50 million of new expenditure available.

Funding Councils

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress is being made towards the incorporation of the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council; and what initial guidance he intends to give to the two councils.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The UFC and PCFC are being incorporated tomorrow. They will be preparing to take up their main responsibility for funding institutions on 1 April next. I have today sent letters of guidance to the chairman of both councils, and am placing copies of both in the Library.

Member's Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth will receive a reply to his letters of 13 April and 5 September referring to correspondence he has received from Simon Carney, chairman of the association members' group committee, British Medical Association.

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend's letters did not reach me. I have now seen a copy of his constituent's representations and have replied to my hon. Friend today.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Vehicle Access

40. **Mr Jessel:** To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he has any proposals to improve hon. Members' vehicular access to the House.

Mr. Wakeham: I have no such proposals at present. However, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister informed my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) in a written reply on Wednesday 19 October 1988, the Government have committed some £186,000 to studies commissioned by Westminster city council into ways of improving the environment and traffic conditions in Parliament square. I am sure that the authorities of the House will draw the attention to the Commissioner of the Metropolitan police and Westminster city council to any particular points which my hon. Friend has in mind.

Scottish Business

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many minutes in each year, from Session 1980-81 to 1986-87, were spent on the Floor of the House on Scottish business.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested is as follows:

Session	*Minutes*
1980-81	5,135
1981-82	3,141
1982-83	1,813
1983-84	4,426
1984-85	2,458
1985-86	2,578
1986-87	2,614

Palace of Westminster (East Entrance)

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make representations to London Underground to have the east entrance to Westminster station reopened.

Mr. Wakeham: This is not a matter for me. However, I have asked the chairman of London Underground Ltd., to write to the hon. Gentleman about it.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Safer Cities Project (Nottingham)

Mr. Knowles: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in developing his Department's safer cities project in Nottingham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I visited Nottingham on 24 October and was pleased to note the progress which had been made since my right hon. Friend announced, on 9 July, that Nottingham had agreed to become a safer cities area. The first meeting of the local steering committee took place on 4 October, with representatives of the city and county councils, police, probation, chamber of commerce and industry, community relations council and council for voluntary service. The recruitment of a project co-ordinator, assistant co-ordinator and personal assistant is now under way. A crime profile of the area is being compiled to provide an objective base for decisions and will enable the local steering committee to agree priorities for local action to tackle these locally identified crime problems.

My hon. Friend will know that Home Office funding is available for the project staff, running costs and for some grant aid.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons charged with murder have subsequently pleaded guilty to section 2 manslaughter by reason of diminished responsibility in each of the past 20 years; and in how many of these cases the charges involved the killing of children.

Mr. John Patten: The numbers of persons indicted for murder and subsequently convicted of section 2 manslaughter by reason of diminished responsibility are published annually in table 4.7 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", copies of which are available in the Library. The number of such cases for the years 1982 to 1987 where one or more of the victims was less than 16 years of age are given in the following table. Corresponding figures for 1965 to 1981 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Persons indicted for murder and convicted of section 2 manslaughter[1] by year and type of incident
England and Wales *Number of Persons*

Year	*Indicted for murder*	*Convictions of Section 2 manslaughter*	
		All cases	*Cases in which 1 or more victim(s) aged less than 16*
1968	277	50	n/a
1969	266	58	n/a
1970	294	65	n/a
1971	336	72	n/a
1972	356	85	n/a
1973	342	77	n/a
1974	423	96	n/a

Year	Indicted for murder	Convictions of Section 2 manslaughter	
		All cases	Cases in which 1 or more victim(s) aged less than 16
1975	414	77	n/a
1976	429	92	n/a
1977	359	94	n/a
1978	439	90	n/a
1979	502	109	n/a
1980	429	88	n/a
1981	454	87	n/a
1982	441	102	22
1983	418	80	11
1984	465	78	14
1985	[2]495	73	9
1986	537	78	6
1987[3]	307	48	9

[1] As at 1 June 1988.
[2] Including two persons committed for trial on a voluntary bill of indictment.
[3] 1987 figures are not yet complete: there were 319 suspects for whom court proceedings were not completed by 1 June 1988.
n/a Not available.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were *(a)* charged with and *(b)* convicted of the killing of children in (i) England and Wales and (ii) the Basildon area for each year since 1965.

Mr. John Patten: The numbers of persons indicted and convicted for homicide offences are published annually in table 4.7 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", copies of which are available in the Library. The number of such cases where one or more victims was less than 16 years of age are given in the following table for the years 1982 to 1987. Information on homicides in the Basildon area is not available, but figures for the Essex police force area for the years 1982 to 1987 are included; corresponding figures for the years 1968 to 1981 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Persons indicted[1] for homicide where one or more of the victims was aged under 16 years of age, by outcome of proceedings

Number of persons

Year	Indicted for homicide	Convicted of homicide			
		Murder	Section 2 manslaughter	Other manslaughter	Infanticide
England and Wales					
1982	68	18	22	19	6
1983	72	16	11	28	10
1984	64	8	14	28	2
1985	74	22	9	22	8
1986	60	18	6	19	3
1987[2]	47	11	9	20	—
Essex Police Force Area					
1982	1	1	—	—	—
1983	2	—	1	1	—
1984	1	—	1	—	—
1985	2	1	—	1	—
1986	2	—	—	1	—
1987	1	—	1	—	—

[1] As at 1 June 1988.
[2] 1987 figures are not yet complete: there were 319 suspects for whom court proceedings were not completed by 1 June 1988.

Prison Officers (Attacks)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many attacks were perpetrated upon prison officers in England and Wales in each year since 1970; what was the punishment meted out to each offender in each case; and what was the compensation paid to the injured officer in each case.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The readily available information on proven offences of gross personal violence to or assault on a prison officer, and the punishment awarded, in the years 1982 to 1986 was published in the annual command paper "Prison Statistics England and Wales" (tables 9.7, 9.8 and 9.9 of the latest issue, for 1986, Cm. 210) copies of which are in the Library. Figures for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The Department does not award compensation to prison officers in connection with such incidents: this is a matter for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Seals

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to make an order under section 3 of the Conservation of Seals Act 1970 to prohibit all killing of seals.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: With the agreement of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will lay two orders under section 3 of the Conservation of Seals Act 1970.

The Conservation of Seals (Common Seals) Order 1988 will prohibit the killing, injuring or taking of common

seals (Phoca Vitalina) in Great Britain and its coastal waters. The Conservation of Seals (England and Wales) Order 1988 will give the same protection to grey seals (Hailchoerus Grypus) in England and Wales in their coastal waters.

Both orders will come into effect in December and will run for two years. They will be reviewed next summer to ensure that they remain necessary.

Charity Commission

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any changes will be made to the Charity Commission cash limit and running cost limit for 1988-89.

Mr. John Patten: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit on class XX, vote 4 will be increased by £910,000 from £6,895,000 to £7,805,000. As a consequence, the running costs limit will be increased by £782,000 from £6,743,000 to £7,525,000. This will enable the commissioners to carry forward those proposals arising from the efficiency scrutiny of the supervision of charities which do not require primary legislation.

The cash limit increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planning total of public expenditure.

Electronic Tags

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps will be taken to ensure that prisoners who have electronic tags fitted to them will be capable of being monitored at all times.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* We are planning pilot schemes to verify compliance by unconvicted defendants with certain conditions of bail. The precise methods of monitoring will be announced when the areas for the experiment have been selected and a detailed specification for the equipment has been prepared.

Children (Fruit Machines)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what estimates he has as to the number of children under 18 years who are addicted to playing fruit machines;

(2) what estimates he has as to the number of children under 16 years who are addicted to playing fruit machines.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* The information requested is not available. The research carried out in 1987 by the Home Office research and planning unit ("Amusement Machines: Dependency and Deliquency", Home Office Research Study No. 101) does not estimate the number of young people addicted to amusement-with-prizes (fruit) machines. The report estimates the extent to which young people under the ages of 17 may be at risk of becoming dependent upon the playing of these machines, using three indicators of risk. These are described and the results set out in full in chapter 4, showing that only a small minority of players appear to be at any risk of dependency.

Vigilante Groups

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue guidance to senior police officers concerning the implications for the maintenance of law and order of the establishment of vigilante groups in the United Kingdom and as to whether policemen will be encouraged to co-operate with them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* Chief officers of police are well aware of the need for the support of active citizens in preventing and detecting crime. They know that effective voluntary action against crime must have meticulous regard to the law and to the responsibilities of the police themselves. They know how important it is for such action to have genuine local support, and to unite not divide the community. Good examples of how members of the public can support the police are through membership of the special constabulary or active participation in neighbourhood watch schemes.

ENERGY

Electricity and Gas Consumption

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate the number of households consuming *(a)* electricity and *(b)* gas in the latest year for which statistics are available; what were the comparable figures (i) five and (ii) 10 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The figures requested are shown in the table.

Estimated number of household consumers in the United Kingdom

at 31 March	*Electricity (millions)*	*Gas (millions)*
1978	20·3	13·9
1983	21·2	15·2
1988	22·4	16·5

Electricity Generation

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give figures for the cost of generation of electricity from Central Electricity Generating Board coal-fired stations since 1978, both as an average national figure and for the 10 most efficient stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many households in *(a)* England, and *(b)* Wales he estimates will be affected by the recently announced increase in electricity prices.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The April revision of electricity prices included all households in England and Wales. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is responsible for the Scottish electricity industry.

Lead-free Petrol

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when lead-free petrol will be made available at current octane ratings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: All unleaded petrol on sale in the United Kingdom meets the minimum 95 octane rating specified for premium grade in British Standard 7070, which itself conforms to the agreed European standard. Unleaded petrol is now available at more than 2,200 petrol stations in the United Kingdom.

Drilling Rigs (Inspections)

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what was the precise nature of the fault which led to his Department instructing seven jack-up rigs to be taken to dry dock for inspection;

(2) which organisation is the certifying authority in respect of each of the seven jack-up rigs instructed by his Department to be taken to dry dock for inspection;

(3) if, in respect of each of the seven installations instructed by his Department to be taken to dry dock for inspection, he will specify the nature of any repairs which were necessary;

(4) whether, in respect of his Department's instructions that seven jack-up rigs be taken to dry dock for inspection, it is his intention to issue any guidance or directions to the industry in relation to any general matter or specific items of equipment utilised on these installations.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Following the discovery in June of unexplained cracking in the lower leg sections and load bearing supports for the bottom of the legs of several jack-up drilling installations my inspectors instructed owners to undertake a dry dock inspection of the seven CFEM 2005C and CFEM 2600 type installations.

Det Norske Veritas is the certifying authority for five of these installations and Offshore Certification Bureau for the other two.

Inspection of four of the seven installations has been completed; a further one is currently being inspected and arrangements have been made for the inspection of the remaining two. The precise nature of necessary repairs is a matter between the certifying authorities and the owners of the installations. However, two of the installations have been found to have severe cracking and two have minor cracks. The method for treating severe cracking is for the cracks to be ground out deeply, or gouged out using electric arc/air methods and then repaired by weld filling. Minor or shallow cracking is ground out to eliminate all signs of defect. Any repairs undertaken will be supported by non-destructive testing techniques and by heat treatment and must be completed to the satisfaction of the relevant certifying authority.

The Department has already published guidance to the industry on corrosion protection and hydrogen attack. Nevertheless, my officials intend to issue a safety notice impressing upon operators the need for vigilance in this area.

Corrosion Inhibitors

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to on which installations on the United Kingdom continental shelf the impressed current type of corrosion inhibitor is in use.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department does not maintain these records. For totally submerged steel, all offshore installations on the United Kingdom continental shelf have either the impressed current type of corrosion inhibitor complemented by the use of alternative cathodic protection systems such as sacrificial anodes, or have sacrificial anodes alone.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has concerning the impressed current type of corrosion inhibitor presently in use on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My inspectors are satisfied that the impressed current type of corrosion inhibitor is generally effective. It employs inert and non-galvanic anodes with an external source of direct current to impress a current on the steel to be protected. This is complemented by the use of alternative cathodic protection systems, such as sacrificial anodes, to ensure adequate polarisation of critical regions when the impressed current may have to be de-energised for operational reasons.

Research

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list the reasons for his decision to discontinue fusion research in the United Kingdom; and whether Her Majesty's Government will participate in any joint project on the continent after 1992 along the lines of Joint European Torus;

(2) on what technologies he proposes that research should be undertaken at Culham, Oxfordshire, apart from lasers.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) on 27 October 1988, at column *319*.

Fast Reactor Research (Scotland)

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are his reasons for phasing out the fast reactor research in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made in the House by my right hon. Friend on 21 July 1988, at column 1288.

Nuclear Scientists

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made as to the effect on the nuclear commitment in electricity privatisation of current redundancies among nuclear scientists in forward projects.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There is no reason to expect recently announced decisions on United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority research programmes to affect the nuclear requirements of the privatised distribution companies for the foreseeable future.

Solar Heating Research

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what Government expenditure has been on solar heating research, development and demonstration in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the United Kingdom in each of the last five years; and what is the planned expenditure in these areas in the next three years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Government expenditure on the solar energy programme in each of the last five years has been as follows:

	£ million
1983-84	0·9
1984-85	0·5
1985-86	0·7
1986-87	0·9
1987-88	1·1

In the current year it is expected to be around £1·4 million.

Energy paper 55, "Renewable Energy in the UK: The Way Forward", which was published in June this year and is available in the Library of the House, envisages a future programme lasting about 10 years at a total cost to Government of around £13 million. Precise figures for each of the next three years are not available.

The principal activities in the programme are field studies, which provide evidence of the costs and benefits of passive solar design from measurements in real buildings, and design studies, which provide an opportunity for design practices to explore passive solar techniques in a wide range of building types to produce a range of exemplar designs. Both activities cover the whole country including Scotland in order to allow for the full range of climatic variation. However, the research which relates to Scotland is not covered by separate contracts for which separate expenditure figures can be given.

British Coal Enterprise Ltd.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether further funding is to be made available to British Coal Enterprise Ltd. for its job creation activities in coalfield areas.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government intend to continue their support of BCE's valuable work in helping to provide new job opportunities for coalfield communities. I am satisfied that BCE has made effective use of the £40 million previously provided, which has now been fully committed. Accordingly, the Government have agreed to British Coal's request that a further £20 million be made available to the company.

Pipeline and Storage System

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what progress has been made concerning the transfer of the Government pipeline and storage system to the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and I have agreed, with the approval of the Prime Minister, that his Department will take over the Government pipeline and storage system from 1 April 1989. An Order in Council will be laid before the House as soon as possible.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Set-Aside Schemes

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the European Economic Community countries which *(a)* have and *(b)* have not introduced set-aside schemes; if he will state the major differences between the European Economic Community and United Kingdom schemes; and what steps have been taken to ensure that the United Kingdom farming industry is not disadvantaged.

Mr. Ryder: The United Kingdom, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands have already put national set-aside schemes into force. All other member states except Portugal have submitted draft schemes to the Commission, and I expect the details of these to be finalised shortly so as to allow implementation. Portugal has no obligation to introduce set-aside until 1994.

The United Kingdom scheme conforms to the framework of detailed rules laid down by Community legislation. It is the responsibility of the Commission to ensure that the schemes of other member states are within these uniform rules. The Government will be keeping a watch on developments in other member states.

Advisory Committee on Pesticides

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the names, qualifications and employment of the members of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides.

Mr. Ryder: I have arranged for a copy of the details requested to be placed in the Library of the House.

Cunliffe Report

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has reached a decision on the implementation of the Cunliffe report on the licensing of animal medicines.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I am very grateful to Mr. Peter Cunliffe for his extremely thorough examination of the use of resources for the control of animal medicines. I am glad to be able to say that I have accepted almost all Mr. Cunliffe's recommendations. In particular, a new veterinary medicines directorate will be set up on 1 April 1989 within the Ministry. This directorate will incorporate the three separate units currently involved in licensing work. The post of director will be advertised shortly.

Most of Mr. Cunliffe's recommendations on procedures and on personnel matters either have already been implemented or will shortly be implemented. On finance also, I have accepted most of Mr. Cunliffe's recommendations—in particular the need for fees to be increased to cover the cost of the licensing operations. I consider that the setting of the directorate's budget should remain a ministerial responsibility rather than being transferred, as Mr. Cunliffe suggested, to a committee including representatives of the pharmaceutical industry. However, I shall be arranging for consultation with the industry to take place each year before the budget is set.

The question of exemption for the directorate from gross running cost controls, which Mr. Cunliffe recommended, is under consideration.

THE ARTS

Children's Books and Comics

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to which books and children's

comics are banned from public libraries in London, Manchester and Liverpool on the grounds of racism or sexism.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 28 October 1988]*: No comprehensive information on this subject is maintained centrally. The choice of what material to stock is a matter for local library authorities who should take account of the needs and wishes of the local community. When I receive complaints about choice of material it is my normal practice to raise them directly with the library authorities concerned.

I am aware that some authorities are reported to have discouraged reading material which has given pleasure to generations of adults and children because of supposedly racist or sexist overtones and I deplore this.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Radiotherapy Staff

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Belfast, South on 28 July, *Official Report* column *293*, he will give in tabular form the number of physicists and technicians, giving the establishment, those actually working on site, in training on site and on maternity or prolonged sickness leave, in the radiotherapy physics division and in other sections of Belvoir Park hospital.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Physicists and technicians in the radiotherapy physics division and other sections of Belvoir park hospital at 25 October 1988

Grade	*Establishment*	*Number of staff in post*[1] *Working on site*	*Training on site*	*Long-term sick leave*	*Maternity leave*
Physicists	8	3	1	1	1
Technicians	14	12	—	—	—

[1] In addition to the numbers quoted, 2 physicists and 2 technicians have recently been appointed to fill vacant positions and will be in post within one month.

Social Fund

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide figures for the amount of social fund allocated to each local office for *(a)* grants, and *(b)* loans.

Mr. Needham: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question by the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) on 3 December 1987 at column *692*.

Development Grants

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many projects were grant aided in Newry through the urban development grant scheme; how much in total was paid to these projects in Newry; what was the name of each project; and how much was granted to each individual project;

(2) how many projects were grant aided in Armagh City through the urban development grant scheme; how much in total was paid to projects in Armagh City; what was the name of each project; and how much was granted to each individual project.

Mr. Needham: These are matters for the Board of the International Fund for Ireland. I have arranged to have the questions referred to the chairman.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Fiji

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government are making to the Fijian regime about procuring acceptance by the political parties and people of Fiji of the proposed constitution of 22 September; and whether such acceptance will be made a condition of continuing diplomatic relations.

Mr. Eggar: Future constitutional arrangements in Fiji are for the people of Fiji to resolve among themselves, free from external intervention. We have however made clear to the Government of Fiji on a number of occasions our earnest hope that a new constitution will be acceptable to all communities in Fiji. We will continue to offer advice and assistance in a spirit of friendship and without conditions.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what help and advice was provided by Her Majesty's Government in the drawing up of the new Fijian constitution of 22 September; and what representations Her Majesty's Government made to the Government of Fiji on the communalisation of Fiji proposed in that constitution.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister discussed with the Fiji Prime Minister when she met him on 29 March possible options open to Fiji in its search for new constitutional arrangements. My right hon. Friend also offered Fiji advice on the preparation of a new constitution.

The Government of Fiji have since asked for a legal draftsman to assist with framing a new constitution in proper legal language, but we understand that the Fiji Government are unlikely to require the services of the candidate we have offered before March 1989.

We have made no representations to the Government of Fiji on the contents of the draft constitution. We have however consistently expressed the hope that the new constitution will prove acceptable to all communities in Fiji.

Israel

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of the state of Israel concerning the effects of the Arab boycott on relations between the United Kingdom and Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Israeli Ministers have not raised this issue since 1986. It is a matter of record that we deplore the boycott.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Israeli ambassador; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend hosted a farewell lunch for the ambassador and his wife on 7 October. It was a friendly occasion and we now look forward to welcoming his successor.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last visited Israel; what matters were discussed at the official level; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State last visited Israel from 28-30 October 1984. There have of course been numerous high level bilateral contacts since then, most recently my right hon. and learned Friend meeting the Israeli Foreign Minister on 26 September.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend has no such plans at present.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department has on the number of British citizens who visited Israel in 1987; and in each of last six years.

Mr. Waldegrave: Israeli sources give the following approximate figures for United Kingdom tourists only:

	Numbers
1980	141,000
1981	150,000
1982	127,000
1983	122,500
1984	132,000
1985	162,000
1986	160,000
1987	185,580

Arab Boycott

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to those Arab states which operate the Arab boycott; what response was received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: None. It is a matter of record that we deplore the Arab boycott.

European Community (Decision-making)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on developing the contribution of the smaller member states of the European Community to Community decision making.

Mrs. Chalker: The treaties establishing the European Communities provide for all member states to contribute on an equitable basis to Community decision-making.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the role played by the smaller member states of the European Community in the major issues that affect the Community.

Mrs. Chalker: All member states, irrespective of their size, play an important role in the process of development of the Community.

India

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will use his good offices to seek to persuade the Indian Government to grant the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington an entry visa to enable him to visit the Punjab to make contact with relatives and friends of his constituents.

Mr. Eggar: The issuing of visas is entirely a matter for the Indian authorities.

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will receive a deputation from the Sikh community in Britain to discuss with them the alleged violation of human rights in India as reported recently by Amnesty International.

Mr. Eggar: No. We are concerned about human rights violations wherever they occur and we recognise the concern of Sikhs here about their relatives and friends. But India is a democratic country, and the problem posed by the activities of extremists in the Punjab is a challenge to her security and integrity.

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the evidence on which Her Majesty's Government base their view that the judicial system in India protects the rights of minority groups such as the Sikhs.

Mr. Eggar: No. India is a secular state and its constitution prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, requires equality for all before the law and protects the freedom to practise and propogate religion and to manage religious affairs. Individuals, or their families, who believe that they have been treated illegally may take advantage of the remedies available to them under India's independent legal system.

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent report by Amnesty International entitled "India —A Review of Human Rights Violations", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Eggar: No. The Indian Government are aware of our concern about human rights abuses wherever they occur.

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Indian Government regarding the alleged violation by that Government of basic human rights as reported recently by Amnesty International.

Mr. Eggar: None. We have noted the contents of Amnesty International's recent report. We regularly make clear in public and in private our views on the need for all governments to respect human rights.

EC (Technical Standards)

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the chairmanships and memberships of sub-committees on technical standards by nationality within the European Commission and within the Economic and Social Committee.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to him on 27 October.

HEALTH

Patient Treatment

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each district health authority the number of non-resident, non-emergency patients treated for each year since 1980.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that I cannot answer this question without incurring disproportionate costs.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made as to how many adults in the United Kingdom are addicted to tranquillisers; and how many of these are prescribed for them within the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: There are no precise figures to show the level or trend in benzodiazepine dependence, but it was estimated in a report published in the *Adverse Reaction Bulletin* of June 1986 that perhaps half a million people in the United Kingdom were dependent on benzodiazepines. A copy of the report is in the Library.

Information on how many of those dependent on benzodiazepines receive their prescriptions under the National Health Service is not available. However 25·5 million prescriptions for benzodiazepines were dispensed by community pharmacists in Great Britain in 1987.

Recent studies show that about 70 per cent. of hypnotic benzodiazepines (those to treat insomnia) are prescribed to women, and about 40 per cent. of these to women over 65.

Infant Mortality (Colchester)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make arrangements for a detailed study into the increased rates of infant mortality amongst children of soldiers based in the Colchester area; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: No. I understand that representatives of North East Essex health authority, together with Army medical personnel, are planning to meet on 9 November to consider what action is required locally to follow up a recent review of post perinatal mortality in the North East Essex health district. Other districts in England have higher rates of infant mortality than Colchester.

Dental Services

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dental reference services references in each year over the last five years have been for examination-only cases.

Mrs. Currie: Information is not available in the form requested, but the number of such examinations is extremely low.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what formal arrangements exist for the work of dental reference officers to come under professional review; and whether general dental practitioners have any input into this process.

Mrs. Currie: Dental reference officers are the subject of the usual yearly performance appraisal review system which applies throughout the Civil Service. The work of the dental reference service is the subject of professional review as part of an overall management accountability process. We do not consider that input to either of the above by general dental practitioners would be appropriate.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many disciplinary cases his Department brought against dental reference officers in each of the last five years; and with what outcome.

Mrs. Currie: None.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has about research undertaken at Southampton university implying a correlation between the incidence of Alzheimer's disease and aluminium in drinking water; and what conclusions he has drawn from it.

Mrs. Currie: We are aware that a report on this study by the Medical Research Council's environmental epidemiology unit at Southampton has now been prepared for publication. We have asked the expert Committee on the Medical Aspects of the Contamination of Air, Soil and Water to advise on the conclusions which should be drawn from the results.

Nursing Posts (Regrading)

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the manner in which district health authorities are conducting the regrading of nursing posts.

Mr. Mellor: Health authorities have been asked to implement the new grading structure consistently in accordance with the letter and spirit of the agreement reached by the nursing and midwifery staff negotiating council.

Hospital Support Staff

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to include hospital support service staff, including pharmacy, pathology laboratory and health physics staff in the pay review body.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give, for every December since 1970 and for each

regional health authority and England as a whole, the number of cases on *(a)* the urgent in-patient waiting lists, *(b)* the urgent lists, waiting over a month, *(c)* the non-urgent in-patient waiting lists, *(d)* the non-urgent lists, waiting over a year and *(e)* the total in-patient waiting lists.

Mrs. Currie: The available information is given in the table. However, the waiting list figures are generally at a seasonal peak at 31 December. The March and September figures give a better indication of annual trends in the demand for hospital in-patient treatment.

Numbers of patients on in-patient waiting list at 31 December

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Northern	27,209	26,021	25,856	26,501	29,178	35,903	34,514	34,058	39,983	39,566	36,118	34,804	51,608	42,833	39,386	37,042	37,767
Yorkshire	23,148	22,586	23,132	26,464	31,468	36,736	38,392	36,102	44,181	43,371	40,876	38,598	55,347	48,682	48,909	46,640	47,732
Trent	52,493	48,725	49,652	50,181	44,717	49,049	51,213	52,486	63,041	65,427	58,468	56,786	75,104	68,492	66,330	62,701	59,408
East Anglian	15,670	15,058	16,393	19,330	19,390	22,947	23,460	22,720	27,486	28,850	26,854	23,215	34,583	31,965	30,212	27,702	27,642
North West Thames	55,312	52,194	49,234	48,184	37,939	44,939	45,196	43,005	47,608	44,606	43,768	42,453	42,513	41,354	41,307	42,726	45,737
North East Thames	30,006	30,911	29,692	31,907	37,622	43,746	42,788	44,434	51,668	53,396	49,945	51,529	60,079	58,560	63,819	69,401	69,226
South East Thames	39,744	35,170	34,095	37,649	39,286	45,548	47,104	47,332	51,746	50,186	46,762	45,922	52,501	52,596	50,856	52,476	55,158
South West Thames	32,281	28,668	26,540	29,750	25,767	30,002	32,215	31,174	37,747	39,508	35,326	34,270	38,172	38,095	36,495	36,851	35,825
Wessex	21,531	18,193	20,826	25,054	29,148	31,938	33,557	33,173	37,665	39,140	39,582	41,147	46,546	46,183	45,627	42,397	44,226
Oxford	24,988	23,602	22,247	22,421	28,913	29,693	33,099	32,043	37,409	34,331	33,626	32,224	36,387	36,793	35,492	33,731	33,715
South Western	51,107	45,334	41,453	45,161	40,842	43,340	46,508	46,562	48,637	47,131	42,954	44,733	49,297	50,587	49,096	46,609	45,649
West Midlands	61,145	60,744	56,660	58,813	60,766	68,417	73,890	75,826	83,435	86,490	80,637	78,944	88,241	83,393	83,675	83,311	73,572
Mersey	22,489	21,424	20,157	21,457	24,813	30,271	29,656	29,526	38,110	38,013	33,801	32,939	38,957	34,014	32,303	32,239	29,464
North Western	68,803	65,101	63,262	65,745	60,236	68,503	67,930	65,639	66,069	70,192	62,997	59,752	68,767	60,745	59,031	56,927	61,803
Special Health Authority	—	—	—	—	7,339	7,451	7,619	8,011	7,659	7,479	8,396	7,831	7,984	8,682	9,277	9,491	9,551
England	525,926	493,731	479,199	508,617	517,424	588,483	607,141	602,091	682,444	687,686	640,110	625,147	746,086	702,974	691,815	680,244	676,475

Notes:

Figures prior to 1974 relate to Regional Hospital Boards and Boards of Governors.

Because of National Health Service restructuring in 1974 and 1982 the regional figures are not strictly comparable over the whole period.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give, for each ambulance authority, the percentage of emergency calls which meet response time standards, giving for each authority its ranking in England.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is available in the package of health service indicators produced by the Department. The latest information, for 1986-87, is in the Library.

Doctors

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give, for each district health authority, the number of senior doctors per 100,000 in-patient cases, giving for each district health authority its ranking in England.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is available for the specialties of general medicine, trauma and orthopaedics, gynaecology and obstetrics, general surgery and paediatrics and is in the package of health service indicators produced by the Department. The latest information, for 1986-87, is in the Library.

Nurses

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give, for each district health authority, the number of nurses per acute bed, giving for each its ranking in England.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is available in the package of health service indicators produced by the Department. The latest information, for 1986-87, is in the Library.

Dalkon Shield

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department will initiate a public information campaign to inform women of any rights they may have in regard to any injuries caused by the Dalkon shield contraceptive device.

Mrs. Currie: No. The Dalkon shield contraceptive device, which was manufactured in the United States, is currently the subject of compensation litigation in the United States courts. I understand that those courts directed the manufacturer to publicise the procedures and the court subsequently expressed satisfaction with the way the company complied.

Cook-chill Catering

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is his policy on the grant by regional health authorities of direct financial assistance to district health authorities introducing cook-chill systems of catering;

(2) why the Yorkshire regional health authority has made a grant of £350,000 to the Wakefield health authority for the introduction of a cook-chill system of catering.

Mrs. Currie: There is no central policy on such matters, nor do I see a need for one. Such decisions quite properly rest with the regional health authority concerned. The hon. Member may therefore wish to approach the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority for the information he is seeking.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the calculation of the figure of £200,000 per annum revenue savings as a result of the introduction of a cook-chill catering system in the Wakefield health authority, referred to by the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) on 25 October, *Official Report*, column 275, took into account *(a)* the additional electricity supplies required to run the system, *(b)* the servicing of equipment, and the maintenance of distribution transport and *(c)* the cost of microbiological monitoring and monitoring staff.

Mrs. Currie: The figure was taken from the report to the Wakefield health authority on 25 January 1988 and that was made clear in the debate. May I suggest that the hon. Member pursue his inquiry with the district general manager whose finance director wrote the report. The

report was accepted by the health authority. I am satisfied that savings can be made on the current catering system in Wakefield while maintaining patient services.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) why the Yorkshire regional health authority inquiry into the management of Wakefield health authority did not examine the circumstances leading up to the introduction of cook-chill catering in Wakefield's hospitals;

(2) why the Yorkshire regional health authority chose Mr. Brian Birchall, the district general manager of Wakefield health authority, to chair the regional health authority's catering sub-committee which recommended the introduction of cook-chill catering across the Yorkshire region;

(3) what is the total capital cost of the installation of the cook-chill catering system within the Wakefield health authority;

(4) why the Yorkshire regional health authority has not responded to representations concerning the cost of the implementation of cook-chill catering in Wakefield made to it by Wakefield health authority's former consultant microbiologist, Professor Richard Lacey.

Mrs. Currie: These are matters for the regional health authority. The hon. Member may therefore wish to approach the Yorkshire regional health authority chairman for the information.

Measles, Mumps and Rubella Vaccine

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures he has taken to ensure that there is sufficient measles, mumps and rubella vaccine available to meet the demands resulting from the recent Government publicity campaign.

Mrs. Currie: There are about 1·2 million children eligible for this vaccine in the course of a year (those aged 15 months and those called up for pre-school diphtheria, tetanus and polio boosters).

By the start of the campaign 300,000 doses of MMR had been distributed to health authorities. That number has now been increased to 500,000 and by Christmas we shall have made more than 1 million doses available. That is several times more vaccine than is needed to immunise the children expected to come forward in that time.

Wakefield Health Authority

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to be in a position to name the new chairperson of the Wakefield health authority.

Mr. Mellor: Soon.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the paper referred to by the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), on 25 October, *Official Report*, column 275, was presented to the Wakefield health authority.

Mrs. Currie: On 25 January 1988.

NHS Ancillary Staff

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has costed the financial implications of the reduction from 40 to 39 hours in the working week for National Health Service ancillary staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 28 October 1988]:* The reduction of one hour in the hours of the standard working week from 12 December was part of the settlement agreed for improvements in the pay and conditions of service of NHS ancillary staff for 1988-89. The agreement provides for hours actually worked by full-time staff to be reduced and for the change not to lead to increases in overtime working. There is a requirement for the reduction to be achieved at minimum cost and for agreements to be reached locally on the necessary changes in working arrangements. Precise costs will depend upon the outcome of these local agreements.

SOCIAL SECURITY

British Pensioners Overseas

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated cost of extending to all British pensioners living overseas the right to receive *(a)* United Kingdom pensions and *(b)* United Kingdom pension increases in full.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: United Kingdom retirement pensions and widows benefits are already payable to British pensioners living overseas. About 40 per cent. of these pensioners have their pensions uprated. The extra cost of fully uprating the pensions of the remaining 60 per cent. would be about £205 million a year at current rates.

Reciprocal Social Security Agreements

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has concluded negotiations with Barbados and the Philippines over reciprocal social security agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The United Kingdom has not yet concluded negotiations with Barbados and the Philippines on the subject of reciprocal social security agreements.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many designated equal opportunities officers carry out recruitment monitoring throughout his Department; how many of them are male, how many female and how many from ethnic minorities, respectively; and whether he has taken, or whether he proposes to take, any positive action by reason of the results of such monitoring.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Designated equal opportunities officers in each of the 10 personnel units provide a joint service for the Department of Health and Social Security, and recruitment monitoring is one of their responsibilities. Including designated deputies and the central unit, 15 are female and eight are male; one of these is from an ethnic minority. Several positive action initiatives, not depending on the results of ethnic monitoring, are under consideration, for example access training in the north eastern region.

Benefits

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to raise the level of disregards in respect of all state benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend provided details of the new disregards on 27 October, at columns *478-84*.

Family Credit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the monthly total of claimants of family credit *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in each standard region and *(c)* in each of his Department's office areas, for April and each succeeding month.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The total number of families in receipt of family credit at the end of each month was as follows:

	Number
April	194,000
May	215,000
June	236,000
July	243,000
August	255,000
September	[1]242,000

[1] Distorted by the effects of the postal dispute.

Family credit is dealt with centrally, and information is not available on a regional or office area basis.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of claimants estimated to qualify for family credit at the time of the April social security changes; what was the basis for that estimate; and what was the likely distribution of claimants in each standard region on the basis of the estimate.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It was estimated that 450,000 families would receive family credit. This was based on an assumption that take-up would be 60 per cent. Reliable estimates can be made only on a national basis.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the projected cost of family credit if all claimants estimated to be entitled claimed it; what was the actual expenditure projected for 1988-89; and what is present estimated outturn expenditure for family credit in the year 1988-89 on the basis of present numbers of claimants.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Estimates were made only on the basis of the number of families who were expected actually to receive family credit. The expenditure projected for 1988-89 was £409 million. The estimated outturn for 1988-89 will be given in the 1989 public expenditure White Paper.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many sufferers from myalgic encephalomyelitis received *(a)* mobility allowance, *(b)* attendance allowance, *(c)* statutory sick pay and *(d)* housing benefit yearly since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information is not available.

Housing Support

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing public expenditure in 1987-88 prices on *(a)* assistance with housing costs for supplementary benefit recipients between 1977-78 and 1982-83, *(b)* rent allowances and rebates between 1977-78 and 1982-83, *(c)* certificated housing benefit between 1982-83 and 1987-88, *(d)* housing benefit for income support recipients between 1988-89 and 1990-91 and *(e)* housing benefit for people not on income support between 1988-89 and 1990-91.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is in the table. The figures are consistent with those published in successive public expenditure White Papers between 1983 and 1988.

£ million, Great Britain

	Housing costs for people on supplementary benefit	*Rent rebate*	*Rent allowance*	*Certificated housing benefit*	*Housing benefit to people on income support*	*Housing benefit to people not on income support*
1977-78	1,000	470	90	—	—	—
1978-79	980	420	80	—	—	—
1979-80	900	420	70	—	—	—
1980-81	1,000	470	70	—	—	—
1981-82	1,350	670	90	—	—	—
1982-83	1,430	750	90	420	—	—
1983-84	—	—	—	1,990	—	—
1984-85	—	—	—	2,160	—	—
1985-86	—	—	—	2,290	—	—
1986-87	—	—	—	2,380	—	—
1987-88	—	—	—	2,420	—	—
1988-89	—	—	—	—	2,510	1,130
1989-90	—	—	—	—	2,580	1,100
1990-91	—	—	—	—	2,660	1,100

Child Benefit

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the numbers of *(a)* mothers and *(b)* children who are recipients of child benefit in (i) Great Britain, (ii) England, (iii) Scotland, (iv) Wales, (v) Northern Ireland, (vi) each Department of Social Security region and (vii) each constituency.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not available in the exact form requested. However, the numbers of families and children to whom and for whom child benefit was in payment at 31 December 1987 is as follows:

	(a) Families	*(b)* Children
(i) Great Britain	6,681,000	11,961,000
(ii) England	5,710,000	10,242,000
(iii) Scotland	623,000	1,099,000
(iv) Wales	348,000	620,000

Child benefit is normally paid to the mother. It is administered centrally and information is not collected for specific regions or constituencies. The Northern Ireland child benefit scheme is administered separately and is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

"Help with Hostel Charges"

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received concerning the consultation paper "Help with Hostel Charges"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) on 27 October at column *337*.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current value of the £10 pensioners Christmas bonus, as in 1972 prices; and what is the value in 1988 prices, had the bonus been uprated by *(a)* the rise in the retail prices index and *(b)* average earnings since its introduction.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not yet possible to determine the real value of the 1988 Christmas bonus as compared with the 1972 bonus. If it had been increased in line with prices since its introduction it would have been worth £45·93 at December 1987. If increased in line with average male manual earnings, the 1987 bonus would have been worth £52·78.

Single Payments

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the single payment expenditure for 1986-87.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my predecessor's reply to the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) on 4 May at column *504*.

Social Fund

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of applications received by social security offices from persons in the Stalybridge and Hyde area for a grant or loan from the social fund during the last six months; what is the proportion of these to whom a grant or loan was given; what is the total value of the grants and loans; and what was the total value of single payments made by the offices during the same period in 1987.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The local offices which deal with Stalybridge and Hyde area are Hyde and Ashton-under-Lyne. Information on numbers of applications for social fund loans and grants received, awards made and the total value of such grants and loans, listed by local office, is available in the Library.

For the period starting on 8 April 1987 and ending on 20 October 1987 the total value of single payments made by Hyde and Ashton-under-Lyne local offices was £270,916 and £191,424 respectively.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to what extent local social security offices are entitled to issue supplies of social fund claim forms to advice agencies and local authorities; and if he will encourage offices to make the forms available to bona fide agencies and authorities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Local social security offices are already authorised to issue representative samples of social fund claim forms and social fund application forms to advice agencies and local authorities. I am satisfied that the arrangement is operating effectively. This service has long been an important part of local liaison arrangements, and I do not consider that further encouragement is required at the present time.

To issue other than representative quantities of these forms to agencies would be counter productive as both the forms and the information contained within them are constantly under review.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all the social security offices in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Glasgow which have so far underspent their social fund budget.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The 1988-89 social fund budget allocations for each of the Department's local offices, together with records of expenditure to the end of September 1988 are in the Library. Details of the national profile of anticipated expenditure were given in my predecessor's reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 11 July 1988 at column *61*.

Budgets are allocated to local offices on a yearly basis and whilst managers profile expenditure for loans and for grants on a monthly basis there is no commitment to spend a specific amount in any given month.

For details of offices in the Strathclyde and Glasgow areas I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 24 October 1988 at column *56*.

By 30 September 1988 of the offices in the Strathclyde area Airdrie local office had spent its loans budget to the profiled level and in Glasgow expenditure at the offices at Provan and Springburn had reached the projected levels.

In the case of community care grants no office in these areas had achieved expenditure in line with the percentage profiled by 30 September 1988.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his reply of 24 October, *Official Report*, columns *61-62*, how many vouchers as payment in full or in part for social fund loans made out to a named retailer have been issued by offices of his Department; what has been the total sum involved; how the named retailers are chosen; what consultation takes place with recipients before a decision is taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Local offices liaise with and are aware of those local retailers who are prepared to accept

vouchers. The decision to issue a voucher to an applicant payable to a retailer is not made routinely. It is an option available to officers where there is good reason to believe that such a course will assist the applicant in the management of their personal finances. Where it is the intention to issue a voucher the reasons for this are discussed with the applicant, as is the choice of retailer.

I regret that the requested information on numbers of vouchers made out to named retailers either in full or in part payment for social fund loans by the offices of the Department could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the social fund expenditure of each local office in the midlands region for loans and grants, respectively, and the same figures expressed as percentages of monthly profiles, for July, on the same basis as the information for Northern Ireland offices for April to June given in the answer of 13 July to the hon. Member for Redcar (Mrs. Mowlam), *Official Report*, columns *249-52*.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 27 October 1988]:* The information available is given in the table. The figures for July take account of corrections from computer errors in earlier months, and therefore may not be representative.

Social Fund
Expenditure on loans and grants for July 1988:

Midlands region *Social security offices*	*Loans*		*Grants*	
	Expenditure	*As per cent. of Profile*	*Expenditure*	*As per cent. of Profile*
	£		£	
Birmingham Bradford St.	19,027·38	64·79	2,250·08	15·29
Birmingham Edgebaston	44,503·69	100·02	10,861·64	47·90
Birmingham Erdington	48,797·77	101·76	18,461·76	78·63
Birmingham Handsworth	81,671·87	110·24	9,220·50	26·61
Birmingham Ladywood	40,766·03	102·24	9,103·21	45·95
Birmingham Northfield	68,770·18	150·91	10,716·93	46·07
Birmingham Perry Barr	38,980·50	118·77	6,566·00	37·56
Birmingham Ravenhurst	21,729·12	86·37	5,967·94	56·91
Birmingham South Yardley	43,496·78	113·12	11,896·44	60·25
Birmingham Sparkhill	12,636·91	65·71	6,540·60	70·20
Birmingham Washwood Heath	49,593·91	116·44	4,951·70	23·26
Boston	5,367·13	52·71	1,952·91	39·69
Burton on Trent	11,406·63	119·33	3,702·92	49·03
Cannock	14,448·37	80·50	1,252·73	13·84
Chesterfield	35,264·46	112·28	5,157·61	31·96
Corby	15,587·29	97·71	2,109·88	26·57
Coventry East	68,041·44	92·22	5,569·79	17·08
Coventry West	32,184·82	81·19	1,014·83	4·83
Derby Becket St.	22,884·38	118·52	7,956·85	94·97
Derby Heritage Gate	12,438·74	105·88	726·04	12·28
Derby London Road	27,103·63	96·71	3,831·87	28·01
Dudley North	35,542·83	88·26	4,920·46	23·48
Dudley South	18,258·78	91·85	4,197·56	43·55
Grantham	10,018·03	94·36	707·30	12·82
Hereford	15,666·24	81·32	3,494·61	42·52
Ilkeston	16,824·21	93·57	3,957·32	45·80
Kidderminster	16,885·50	72·04	277·20	2·50
Leamington Spa	14,051·73	74·88	5,504·34	63·05
Leicester Burleys Way	26,277·18	129·40	4,551·31	44·50
Leicester Lower Hill Street	34,554·67	105·80	4,482·77	27·43
Leicester Norton Street	22,836·52	54·08	6,801·48	35·74
Leicester Yeoman Street	47,272·27	80·77	8,118·89	30·54
Lichfield	20,710·13	87·77	438·80	3·02
Lincoln Newlands	26,266·08	86·35	3,042·75	20·27
Lincoln Orchard Street	42,458·50	133·13	9,428·56	61·96
Loughborough	8,116·32	47·71	687·82	8·87
Mansfield	25,980·33	79·62	5,924·98	37·88
Newcastle	22,144·88	102·60	1,231·09	11·03
Northampton	22,554·21	67·44	5,327·22	33·61
Nottingham Castle Gate	17,483·51	78·35	7,670·95	53·09
Nottingham David Lane	38,331·78	114·43	7,166·55	43·33
Nottingham Shakespeare Street	50,640·71	137·46	9,489·50	48·45
Nottingham Station Street	37,085·17	113·48	6,543·45	41·62
Nuneaton	28,895·01	113·21	3,551·87	27·91
Redditch	12,372·31	76·43	1,354·10	16·91
Rugby	14,636·23	136·48	2,307·95	53·27
Shrewsbury	15,008·67	59·74	6,805·66	52·32
Skegness	5,517·90	68·89	1,856·52	48·68
Smethwick	36,631·09	77·93	2,122·00	9·35
Stafford	9,620·74	83·92	1,871·44	34·89
Stoke North	53,243·98	140·78	18,095·99	98·46
Stoke South	19,885·65	97·51	4,201·72	43·34
Sutton in Ashfield	15,953·87	101·23	5,356·88	68·20
Telford	40,554·84	96·89	8,136·55	41·91
Walsall East	35,465·64	128·42	4,089·95	27·30
Walsall West	41,005·01	97·57	5,875·20	30·06

Midlands region Social security offices	Loans Expenditure £	Loans As per cent. of Profile	Grants Expenditure £	Grants As per cent. of Profile
Wellingborough	23,093·08	68·44	5,006·42	43·48
West Bromwich	50,918·17	128·46	6,772·68	28·52
Wolverhampton North	83,483·61	142·16	7,370·80	23·60
Wolverhampton South	49,026·83	90·42	14,918·14	57·94
Worcester	16,331·12	62·87	5,084·38	44·76
Worksop	14,826·22	67·14	3,335·68	31·77

NATIONAL FINANCE

Vacancies (London)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what are the latest available figures for Her Majesty's Treasury in the London pay area of the number of vacancies by grade and the proportion this is of the grade complement in London;

(2) what are the latest available figures for the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency in the London pay area of the number of vacancies by grade and the proportion this is of the grade complement in London.

Mr. Brooke: The information is as follows:

Staff Vacancies in the London Pay Area

Grade level Equivalents	HM Treasury (inclusive of CCTA) No. of Vacancies Net[1]	HM Treasury (inclusive of CCTA) Net Vacancies as a percentage of Budgeted Complement	CCTA only No. of Vacancies Net[1]	CCTA only Net Vacancies as a percentage of Budgeted Complement
Grade 7	22	8	5	10
Senior Executive Officer	17	8	9	11
Higher Executive Officer	30	10	9	15
Administrative Officer	7	1	11	24
Administrative Assistant	44	12	6	32

[1] vacancies netted against surpluses within grade levels.

Family Incomes

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures setting out the net incomes, after payment of mortgage interest, of a married couple with two children in March 1988 and in October 1988, in each of the following circumstances *(a)* the father earns £200 and has a mortgage of £30,000, *(b)* the father earns £300 and has a mortgage of £45,000, *(c)* the father earns £500 and has a mortgage of £75,000, and *(d)* the father earns £500, the mother earns £200, and the mortgage is £100,000.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer, 27 October 1988]:* The information requested is shown in the table.

Net weekly income after payment of mortgage interest of a married couple with two children

	March 1988	October 1988
(a) Father earns £200 Mortgage=£30,000	£119·04	£111·02
(b) Father earns £300 Mortgage=£45,000	£153·92	140·24
(c) Father earns £500 Mortgage=£75,000	£237·71	£216·23
(d) Father earns £500 Mother earns £200 Mortgage=£100,000	£318·39	£291·52

The examples in the table, in which the mortgage is approximately three times the annual income, are not typical. Outstanding mortgages of three times annual income and above represent about 5 per cent. of mortgagors and 2 per cent. of taxpayers.

Private Hospitals (VAT)

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the implications for the liability of new private hospital buildings to value added tax of the recent court ruling.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* The European Court of Justice ruled on 21 June that the United Kingdom could not continue to zero-rate the construction of industrial and commercial buildings; this includes private hospital buildings. As I announced in my statement to the House that day, there is no right of appeal against this judgment and the Government are obliged to comply with it. No legislative changes to give effect to the judgment will take effect before 1 April 1989 and building contracts signed prior to 21 June 1988 will continue to be zero-rated, whenever the work is completed. No detailed estimates of the likely additional tax charge on private hospitals are available.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing his estimate of the number of cases in which higher rate relief will be given on mortgage interest payments in the current financial year together with *(a)* the gross amount of interest qualifying for relief, *(b)* the amount of higher rate relief, and *(c)* the number of recipients of working age and their distribution by personal tax category and by range of total income together with the average amount of relief given by the standard and higher rate of tax;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing by range of income and tax status an estimate of the saving to the Exchequer in a full year from abolishing, respectively, the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions and higher rate relief on mortgage interest.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[pursuant to his reply, 29 July 1988, c. 732-34]:* The removal of the upper earnings limit for employees' national insurance contributions is estimated to yield £1·45 billion in a full year at 1988-89 levels: I regret that the figure of £1·7 billion published in the *Official Report* was incorrect. Of the £1·45 billion, it is estimated that £0·2 billion would be from single persons, £0·65 billion from one-earner married couples and £0·6 billion from two-earner married couples. A more detailed breakdown of the yield is not available.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Automated Teller Machines

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has met representatives of the banks and financial institutions to discuss failures of automated teller machines; if he has any plans to shift the burden of proof from consumers towards the bank or building society concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: No. Questions of liability for the failure of automated teller machines and for the misuse of ATM cards are matters for the agreements under which consumers have access to those facilities. The European Commission is shortly to publish a recommendation on these matters and I shall be consulting the banks and building societies in due course. The review committee on banking services law may also address these questions, and it would be premature for me to comment until the Government have seen the committee's report, which is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

Israel

Mr. Ames: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has had with the United States Administration about the application of United States laws to subsidiaries in the United Kingdom of United States corporations, in particular in relation to the countering of the Arab trade boycott of Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: None. But the Government recently made a formal protest to the United States Administration in response to a fine imposed on a United Kingdom subsidiary of a United States corporation of alleged violations of the anti-boycott provisions of the United States Export Administration Act. The Government reject the extraterritorial assertion of United States jurisdiction over companies in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ames: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has had with the Government of the state of Israel concerning the effects of the Arab boycott on trade with Israel on trade between the United Kingdom and Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: At the June 1988 meeting of the United Kingdom-Israel Joint Commission, the Israeli delegation drew attention to the deleterious effects of the Arab boycott of Israel on bilateral trade. The United Kingdom delegation restated Her Majesty's Government's opposition to the boycott and explained the action they take to counter misapprehension about its effects, when approached by relevant bodies. The boycott has not figured in recent bilateral exchanges between Ministers.

Mr. Ames: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the Israeli ambassador; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I met the ambassador in June in company with the Israeli Minister for Energy and Infrastructure. We discussed bilateral trade relations and co-operation.

Mr. Ames: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last visited the state of Israel; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Neither I nor my departmental colleagues have visited Israel.

Mr. Ames: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what guidance his Department issues to companies in respect of the Arab boycott of trade with Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department issues written guidance on the Arab boycott of Israel to British companies on request; I am placing a copy in the Library of the House.

North East Shipbuilders Ltd.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to include in his guidance to the British Shipbuilders disposals committee for the assessment of bids for North East Shipbuilders Limited closure costs arising from *(a)* redundancies in companies dependent on business with North East Shipbuilders Limited, *(b)* unemployment benefit and social security benefits paid to redundant (i) North East Shipbuilders Limited employees and (ii) employees of other companies dependent on North East Shipbuilders Limited, *(c)* the loss of taxation from (i) North East Shipbuilders Limited employees and (ii) employees of other companies dependent on North East Shipbuilders Limited, *(d)* the effect on local authority finances and *(e)* the cost of any measures taken by the Government to replace jobs lost by the closure of North East Shipbuilders Limited.

Mr. Newton: I have invited the chairman of British Shipbuilders to advise me on financial and commercial matters relevant to the assessment of bids for the British Shipbuilders facilities. Wider considerations are a matter for the Government.

European Space Agency

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the United Kingdom will increase its contribution to expenditure by the European Space Agency.

Mr. Forth: The United Kingdom's contribution to expenditure by the European Space Agency was £79·6

million in 1987-88 compared with the latest estimate of £87·3 million in the current financial year. We are reviewing our contributions to the agency's science programme, Horizon 2000.

SCOTLAND

Joint Police and Fire Services

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is yet able to announce conclusions reached on recommendations made by the Montgomery report to base the contribution towards the costs of financing joint police and fire services on actual costs incurred, rather than the existing system of standard penny rate product.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. The existing system is based not on a standard penny rate product but on population. I am still awaiting a response to the invitation which my right hon. Friend, the then Secretary of State for Scotland, issued to the Northern joint police committee and the Highlands and Islands joint fire board in 1985 to provide further information so that informed decisions could be taken on this matter.

Haddington Sheriff Court

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will establish an inquiry into the percentage of criminal cases reported by the police which are brought to trial and the average period between pleading diet and trial at Haddington sheriff court; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Steps have already been taken to provide an additional courtroom at Haddington sheriff court and it is anticipated that after this new facility comes into operation at the beginning of January 1989 the average period between pleading diet and trial will be progressively reduced.

Criminal Cases (Statistics)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will produce a table showing *(a)* the percentage of criminal cases reported by the police which are brought to court and *(b)* the average period between pleading diet and trial for each sheriff court in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Figures relating to the number of cases reported by the police resulting in proceedings in the sheriff court are not centrally held. The figures in the table, supplied by Crown Office, show the percentage of cases reported by the police and other agencies in respect of which proceedings were taken in each fiscal area for the period April 1987 to April 1988. They do not include cases which were diverted from the court system and dealt with by other means than prosecution such as conditional offers of a fixed penalty in terms of the Transport Act 1982 or section 56 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1987, warning letters and other alternative methods of diversion from prosecution.

Information on the maximum period between pleading diet and trial for summary criminal cases is also given in the table for each sheriff court. Statistics on average periods are not held centrally.

Maximum Period (in weeks) Between Pleading Diet and Trial for Summary Criminal Cases

Sheriff Court	*30 June 1988*
Aberdeen	17
Airdrie	14
Alloa	17
Arbroath	14
Ayr	18
Banff	13
Campbeltown	16
Cupar	11
Dingwall	12
Dornoch	9
Dumbarton	31
Dumfries	20
Dundee	8
Dunfermline	15
Duncon	13
Duns	4
Edinburgh	16
Elgin	10
Falkirk	11
Forfar	10
Fort William	20
Glasgow	18
Greenock	21
Haddington	45
Hamilton	16
Inverness	10
Jedburgh	4
Kilmarnock	17
Kirkcaldy	8
Kirkcudbright	12
Kirkwall	12
Lanark	8
Lerwick	14
Linlithgow	14
Lochmaddy	12
Oban	10
Paisley	19
Peebles	10
Perth	14
Peterhead	14
Portree	12
Rothesay	9
Selkirk	11
Stirling	14
Stonehaven	12
Stornoway	14
Stranraer	12
Tain	8
Wick	9

Percentage of cases reported in respect of which proceedings were taken

Fiscal area	*April 1987 to April 1988 per cent.*
Aberdeen	57
Airdrie	61
Alloa	63
Arbroath	68
Ayr	58
Banff	61
Campbeltown	82
Cupar	58
Dingwall	64
Dornoch	72
Dumbarton	66
Dumfries	81
Dundee	74
Dunfermline	54
Duncon	74
Duns	37
Edinburgh	54
Elgin	51
Falkirk	56

Fiscal area	April 1987 to April 1988 per cent.
Forfar	56
Fort William	66
Glasgow	50
Greenock	59
Haddington	55
Hamilton	65
Inverness	63
Jedburgh	54
Kilmarnock	67
Kirkcaldy	56
Kirkcudbright	50
Kirkwall	86
Lanark	48
Larwick	66
Linlithgow	69
Lochmaddy	91
Oban	78
Paisley	62
Peebles	58
Perth	58
Peterhead	60
Portree	64
Rothesay	79
Selkirk	44
Stirling	63
Stonehaven	55
Stornoway	79
Stranraer	63
Tain	63
Wick	75
Scotland	59

Property Modernisation (Glasgow)

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many dwellings were modernised by Glasgow district council; and what was the average cost per dwelling to the council of modernisation in each year since 1978-79.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested for 1979-80 onwards is set out in the table. Details for 1978-79 are not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Dwellings Modernised by Glasgow District Council 1979-80 to 1987-88

Year	Dwellings	Average cost per dwelling
1979-80	3,338	7,750
1980-81	3,135	7,999
1981-82	1,857	6,933
1982-83	2,600	4,812
1983-84	3,919	4,959
1984-85	5,281	1,390
1985-86	24,289	2,814
1986-87	28,147	2,767
1987-88	19,971	2,947

Source: Returns by Glasgow District Council to SDD.

Housing Statistics

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of police sector houses *(a)* within the area covered by Glasgow district council and *(b)* for Scotland as a whole which suffer from dampness and require extensive remedial work.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Returns submitted by local authorities indicate that at 31 March 1987, a total of 38,131 local authority dwellings in Scotland required some form of treatment for dampness. Of this total, 16,700 dwellings are located in the area covered by Glasgow district council.

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many elderly people are living in the private rented sector in Scotland; and how many of these are living in properties which fall below the tolerable standard.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest available information is from the 1981 census which indicates that approximately 57,800 people of pensionable age were living in private rented furnished and unfurnished accommodation. It is not possible to identify from the returns how many of the dwellings in which they lived were below the tolerable standard.

Rents

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the level of average unrebated rent in Scotland in 1987-88 prices for each year between 1967-68 and the latest date available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not available. The data on rent levels collected by the Scottish Development Department are limited to rents in the public sector and to those rents in the private sector which have been registered. The lack of information on unregistered rents in the private sector would make it difficult to assess accurately the average rent in Scotland. Furthermore, changes in such an average over time, particularly over periods of more than several years, would not only reflect changes in the level of rents, but would reflect changes in the pattern of housing tenure.

Rates

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the level of average domestic rates in Scotland in 1987-88 prices for each year between 1967-68 and the latest date available.

Mr. Lang: The figures requested for 1975-76 to 1988-89 are shown in the table. Figures for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Average Domestic Rate Bills at 1987-88 Prices

Year	£
1975-76	316
1976-77	318
1977-78	317
1978-79	268
1979-80	262
1980-81	295
1981-82	347
1982-83	389
1983-84	372
1984-85	378
1985-86	426
1986-87	438
1987-88	474
1988-89	474

Health Boards (Cleaning and Catering Contracts)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has concerning the means by which health boards will maintain cleaning and catering contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Contracts contain various provisions for the supervision of contractors' performance. These arrangements have been drawn up by boards to reflect their individual requirements and to enable them to ensure that adequate levels of service are maintained.

Pupils (Special Education)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total number of Scottish school pupils at the latest available date who are registered in schools providing special education; and if he will express this as a percentage of total school rolls.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In September 1987 there were 10,700 pupils in education authority, grant-aided and independent special schools in Scotland; this is 1·3 per cent. of all school pupils. Of the 10,700 pupils 9,020 were in education authority schools, 180 in grant-aided schools and 1,510 in independent schools.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total number of Scottish school pupils at the latest available date who are registered in schools providing special education by *(a)* region, *(b)* division and *(c)* main area of impairment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information as at September 1987 on pupils in local authority special schools in Scotland is set out in the table.

	Pupils	*Significant impairments*					*Other*	*Total*
		Visual	*Hearing*	*Other physical*	*Social and emotional*	*General learning difficulties*		
Borders	180	—	—	20	20	120	30	180
Central	380	20	20	50	20	80	10	200
Dumfries and Galloway	160	20	10	40	60	80	10	210
Fife	630	50	40	120	250	460	60	980
Grampian	1,000	30	70	130	190	530	130	1,080
Highland	400	10	10	30	100	320	10	480
Lothian	1,550	90	50	330	440	940	150	1,990
Strathclyde	4,200	290	260	820	850	1,980	310	4,520
Tayside	480	20	40	80	110	310	30	600
Orkney	10	—	—	—	—	10	—	20
Shetland	10	—	—	—	—	10	10	20
Western Isles	30	—	—	10	—	30	—	40
Scotland	9,020	540	500	1,620	2,040	4,860	760	10,330
Argyll and Bute	90	10	—	20	20	80	30	160
Ayr	490	40	30	110	70	280	60	590
Dunbarton	450	20	20	80	110	230	20	480
Glasgow (City)	1,790	170	130	390	360	740	70	1,860
Lanark	840	50	70	160	180	520	130	1,100
Renfrew	550	—	20	70	100	140	10	340

An impairment is considered significant where it is a major factor in determining the educational approach to the pupil. Thus a pupil may have no, one or several such impairments.

Barley

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimates he has of the reduction in quality malting barley production which will result from set-aside schemes; whether he expects that set-aside schemes will reduce the amount of barley available to the malting industry from Scottish sources; and what effect set-aside will have on barley imports.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Until applications from farmers wishing to join the set-aside scheme from 1988-89 have been processed and data on applicants' 1988 cropping patterns and future cropping proposals have been analysed, it will not be possible to estimate the extent of any reduction in future levels of malting barley production in Scotland, or of any consequential impact on malting barley supplies or imports. Any reduction would, however, be minimal, since the total area so far proposed for withdrawal from production (which also includes land previously used for oilseed rape and cereals other than barley) is equivalent to less than 4 per cent. of the area used for barley production in Scotland in 1988.

Set-aside Schemes

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the number of hectares and the number of farms involved in set-aside schemes stating the number of farms for which 100 per cent. set-aside has been requested.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Provisional returns indicate that over 400 farmers in Scotland have applied to enter the set-aside scheme in 1988-89 and that the total area of eligible land proposed for set-aside is about 14,800 hectares.

About 140 applicants have proposed to set aside all the eligible land on their holdings: in total some 5,000 hectares representing an average of about 44 per cent. of the total area of their holdings; the average set-aside area per applicant is about 36 hectares.

Stepps—Haggs (M80)

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has yet determined the line of the M80 motorway between Stepps and Haggs; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Following a draft feasibility report by consulting engineers in April 1987 further investigative work was commissioned, including ground and aerial surveys and an update of the traffic study. A report of the findings is due in summer 1989 and it is anticipated that a decision on a preferred route will be made shortly thereafter.

Industrial Rates

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he proposes to make to the briefing paper from the Chemical Industries Association and the United Kingdom Petroleum Industry Association entitled "Scottish Industrial Rates, The Need for Change", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to the Chemical Industries Association and the United Kingdom Petroleum Industry Association for the work they have put into the briefing paper. It is our clear objective to see harmonisation between the Scottish and English valuation systems and I will consider the recommendations in the paper with this in mind. I look forward to discussing the paper with representatives of the associations in due course.

Sewage

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department has made any financial contribution or is currently contributing to research that would determine the fate of viruses discharged to the sea in sewage.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Not directly; in addition to its own research programmes the Scottish Office participates with other Government Departments in appropriate programmes of United Kingdom research. In particular the Scottish Development Department is involved in the Department of the Environment's research programme on water, promoted on behalf of all environment departments. New studies on the health effects of sea bathing are being considered for this programme in 1989-90 and may touch on the specific issue raised.

Cash Limits

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to make any further changes to the cash limits within his responsibility for 1988-89.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. I intend to make changes to five of the cash limits within my responsibility. As already announced on 21 July 1988—*Official Report* columns *725-28*—the cash limits for Class XVI, Vote 14 (Prisons, hospitals and community health services, etc, Scotland) and Class XVI, Vote 15 (Education, Arts, Libraries and Social Work, Scotland) were increased by £7,253,000 and £73,000 respectively to reflect the carry forward of capital underspends in 1987-88 allowed under the end-year flexibility scheme.

Subject to parliamentary approval the necessary Supplementary Estimate for the following increase will also be made. There will be a further increase of £12,700,000 in the cash limit for Class XVI, Vote 14 (Prisons, hospitals and community health services, etc, Scotland) from £1,877,006,000 to £1,889,706,000 for the nurses' and midwives' pay.

The cash limit for Class XVI, Vote 10 (Privatisation of the Electricity Supply Industry, Scotland) will be increased by £3 million to £4 million. This reflects a higher than expected level of fees and the involvement of additional advisers, in preparation for the privatisation of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board. The increase will be partly met from a reduction in the cash limit for Class XVI, Vote 3 (Regional and general industrial support, Scotland) of £2,000,000 from £136,954,000 to £134,954,000.

The cash limit for Class XVI, Vote 6 (Roads, transport and environmental services) will be increased by £380,000 from £170,897,000 to £171,277,000 to take account of grant in aid to the Housing Corporation. This increase, together with an increase on the non-cash-limited Class XVI, Vote 8 (Housing) will be partly offset by a net reduction of £1,803,000 on the non-voted cash limit SO/LA2, which covers mainly housing capital expenditure by public sector agencies in Scotland. The cash limit will therefore be reduced from £525,553,000 to £523,750,000.

These changes will be met from the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has happened to the Keep Britain Tidy Group national community programme agency under employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: On 20 May 1988 the chief executive of the Keep Britain Tidy Group informed the Training Commission that the company's board of directors had taken the decision not to participate in employment training.

In order to assist with the orderly wind down of their community programme activities it was agreed that their CP contract which was due to end on 4 September 1988, could be extended until 28 October 1988.

The company made every effort to transfer both its CP projects and participants to other providers who were moving forward into employment training.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken to encourage the adoption of the recommendations of the Commission for Racial Equality and Equal Opportunities Commission's codes of practice including those relating to monitoring and positive action, in 1987 and so far in 1988, respectively.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State takes every opportunity to commend the codes of practice issued by the Commission for Racial Equality and Equal Opportunities Commission and to encourage adoption of their recommendations. My Department's

race relations employment advisory service continues to give specific advice and encouragement to employers on the adoption of the recommendations of the Commission for Racial Equality's code of practice including those relating to monitoring and positive action. Advisers also give general advice on the recommendations of the Equal Opportunities Commission's code of practice when asked to do so.

The service is currently giving particular emphasis to the positive action provisions within the Race Relations Act and is encouraging their greater use whenever appropriate. In the year ended 31 March 1988 advisers made 1,082 visits to employers. In the period from 1 April-30 September 1988, 529 visits have been made.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether his Department's race relations advisory service reviewed the results of the ethnic monitoring exercises introduced by the 79 major private sector employers visited by it between April 1985 and December 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department's race relations employment advisory service is essentially an advisory service and has no regulatory function. It would therefore be inappropriate for the service to undertake a review of this nature. However the research project to investigate the benefits that accrue from the introduction of ethnic monitoring systems by employers which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned in a previous reply to the hon. and learned Member on Thursday 31 March at column *526*, will begin on 1 January 1989.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what he estimates are the resource implications involved in seeking detailed information on the full extent of race and sex monitoring in the work place.

Mr. Nicholls: A comprehensive exercise to seek and evaluate the full extent of race and sex monitoring in the work place would be prohibitively costly.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what he estimates to be the likely burdens on employers involved in any inquiry to seek detailed information on the full extent of race and sex monitoring in the work place, in the case of employers who already carry out monitoring in accordance with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and of the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively; and what he estimates to be the likely additional burdens on employers who do not already carry out the recommendations in those codes.

Mr. Nicholls: Given the variations in size of organisations and their differing approaches to monitoring data, it is not possible to provide such estimates.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether his Department's race relations advisory service is planning any further visits to private sector employers which will include inquiries into the introduction of ethnic monitoring.

Mr. Nicholls: It continues to be normal practice for my Department's race relations employment advisory service to discuss the subject of ethnic monitoring in all their contacts with employers in either the public or the private sector.

Water Companies

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many visits were made by health and safety executives to *(a)* water authority and *(b)* statutory water company premises during the last 12 months; how many notices were issued as a result; how many prosecutions were made under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974; and for what reasons.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive's records do not distinguish between water authority and statutory water company premises.

Between 1 April 1987 and 31 March 1988 inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive's factory and agricultural inspectorates made 498 visits to activities in the water supply industry. Information about other Health and Safety Executive visits cannot be obtained without incurring disproportionate costs.

During this period one improvement notice was issued and two prosecutions taken. A contractor was prosecuted for the unsafe removal of asbestos at a water supply premises and a water authority was prosecuted for failing to prevent access to disused plant containing water.

Training Schemes

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment training schemes are operated in conjunction with the Ministry of Defence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not held by the Training Agency and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will investigate the speed of delivery of employment training literature from his Moorfoot, Sheffield office, particularly to provincial training centres including Salisbury.

Mr. Nicholls: The normal delivery time for bulk supplies of leaflets (which are held centrally by distribution companies) is three to five days depending on the weight and size of the consignment. Individual or small quantities of leaflets are normally sent by first class post. Urgent requests can be delivered within 24 hours if there is stock of the material available.

Deliveries to individual training managers and training agents are normally made by the local training agency area office and not directly from the Moorfoot office in Sheffield.

The area office covering the Salisbury area is located at Gloucester, and most literature would come from there or the out-station at Swindon.

Health and Safety

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the cost to the Health and Safety Commission under paragraph (e) of the agreement between them and the Department of Energy in respect of the exercise of the Commission's functions under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 for each year since the agreement came into operation.

Mr. Nicholls: The sums paid each year by the Health and Safety Commission to the Department of Energy under paragraph (e) of the agreement are as follows:

	£(000)
[1]1977-78	111
1978-79	214
1979-80	282
1980-81	421
1981-82	503
1982-83	461
1983-84	466
1984-85	505
1985-86	557
1986-87	606
1987-88	553

[1] September 1977 to 31 March 1978.

In addition—following extension of the Department's responsibilities under the agreement to include advising on policy, particularly the development of regulations, approved codes and other material under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act—a PES transfer of £0·1 million was made from the Commission to the Department in 1981.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the parliamentary constituencies on which the number of people out of work and claiming benefit declined by *(a)* less than 10 per cent. and *(b)* between 10 and 20 per cent. between August 1984 and August 1988, including in the data for each constituency the total for (i) August 1984, (ii) August 1988 and (iii) the percentage reduction.

Mr. Nicholls: The following information is in the Library. Table A shows the parliamentary constituencies in Great Britain where the number of unemployed claimants has fallen by less than 10 per cent. between August 1984 and August 1988 together with the number of unemployed in each constituency at the requested dates. Table B gives the corresponding figures for the constituencies where unemployment has fallen between 10 and 20 per cent. The figures are affected by the change in compilation of the count in March 1986 to reduce over-recording.

Table A
Parliamentary Constituencies with a fall in unemployment of less than 10 per cent. between August 1984 and August 1988

Parliamentary Constituencies	*Unemployed claimants* *August 1984*	*August 1988*	*Change*	*Percent change %*
Kincardine and Deeside	1,680	1,963	283	16·9
Western Isles	1,879	2,115	236	12·6
Gordon	1,907	2,063	156	8·2
Aberdeen South	2,821	2,976	155	5·5
Kirkcaldy	4,179	4,338	159	3·8
Orkney and Shetland	1,304	1,352	48	3·7
Wansbeck	4,272	4,393	121	2·8
Aberdeen North	3,393	3,466	73	2·2
Mansfield	4,680	4,747	67	1·4
Barnsley West and Penistone	4,547	4,567	20	·4
Sherwood	4,004	4,005	1	·0
Edinburgh Central	4,737	4,714	−23	−·5
Dunfermline East	4,134	4,073	−61	−1·5
Moray	3,256	3,164	−92	−2·8
Hemsworth	4,628	4,488	−140	−3·0
Barnsley Central	5,187	4,960	−227	−4·4
Bassetlaw	4,715	4,498	−217	−4·6
Liverpool Mossley Hill	6,668	6,361	−307	−4·6
Central Fife	5,093	4,836	−257	−5·1
Greenock and Port Glasgow	7,598	7,181	−417	−5·5
Argyll and Bute	2,947	2,782	−165	−5·6
Glasgow Hillhead	5,465	5,157	−308	−5·6
Inverness Nairn and Lochabaer	4,874	4,591	−283	−5·8
Edinburgh Leith	6,088	5,695	−393	−6·5
North East Derbyshire	4,847	4,530	−317	−6·5
Morecambe and Lunesdale	3,468	3,240	−228	−6·6
Banff and Buchan	2,922	2,728	−194	−6·6
Berwick-upon-Tweed	2,869	2,678	−191	−6·7
Carmarthen	3,540	3,301	−239	−6·8
East Lothian	3,722	3,469	−253	−6·8
Liverpool Broadgreen	7,734	7,202	−532	−6·9
Barnsley East	4,832	4,494	−338	−7·0
Glasgow Central	7,079	6,571	−508	−7·2
Glasgow Maryhill	7,529	6,965	−564	−7·5
Southwark and Bermondsey	6,566	6,051	−515	−7·8
Ceredigion and Pembroke North	3,469	3,183	−286	−8·2
Rother Valley	5,151	4,725	−426	−8·3
Ashfield	4,680	4,288	−392	−8·4
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	3,390	3,098	−292	−8·6
Bethnal Green and Stepney	7,365	6,707	−658	−8·9
Selby	2,914	2,651	−263	−9·0

Table B

Parliamentary Constituencies with a fall in unemployment of 10 to 20 per cent. between August 1984 and August 1988

Parliamentary Constituencies	Unemployed Claimants August 1984	August 1988	Change	Per cent. Change Per cent.
Wentworth	5,820	5,236	−584	−10·0
Chesterfield	5,336	4,794	−542	−10·2
Bolsover	4,734	4,253	−481	−10·2
Angus East	3,733	3,353	−380	−10·2
Glasgow Shettleston	6,495	5,831	−664	−10·2
Lewisham Deptford	7,213	6,468	−745	−10·3
Caithness and Sutherland	2,170	1,941	−229	−10·6
Pontefract and Castleford	5,283	4,722	−561	−10·6
North East Fife	2,355	2,103	−252	−10·7
Barrow and Furness	3,775	3,362	−413	−10·9
Don Valley	6,271	5,583	−688	−11·0
Clwyd North West	4,189	3,721	−468	−11·2
Liverpool Walton	9,994	8,866	−1,128	−11·3
Sheffield Heeley	6,294	5,574	−720	−11·4
Carrick Cumnock and Doon Valley	6,023	5,326	−697	−11·6
Great Yarmouth	4,374	3,864	−510	−11·7
Tottenham	8,891	7,837	−1,054	−11·9
Plymouth Drake	5,586	4,923	−663	−11·9
Brent East	6,203	5,449	−754	−12·2
Sheffield Attercliffe	5,376	4,719	−657	−12·2
Manchester Gorton	6,836	5,992	−844	−12·4
Renfrew West and Inverclyde	3,522	3,087	−435	−12·4
Plymouth Sutton	3,605	3,155	−450	−12·5
Plymouth Devonport	4,790	4,189	−601	−12·6
Edinburgh South	4,176	3,637	−539	−12·9
North Tayside	2,519	2,193	−326	−12·9
Doncaster Central	7,100	6,179	−921	−13·0
Cynon Valley	4,266	3,693	−573	−13·4
Eastwood	3,290	2,841	−449	−13·7
Dunfermline West	3,362	2,903	−459	−13·7
Perth and Kinross	3,416	2,946	−470	−13·8
Midlothian	4,110	3,542	−568	−13·8
Doncaster North	7,177	6,178	−999	−13·9
York	5,208	4,481	−727	−14·0
Glasgow Govan	6,131	5,246	−885	−14·4
Hackney South and Shoreditch	9,884	8,457	−1,427	−14·4
Amber Valley	3,701	3,157	−544	−14·7
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	3,647	3,107	−540	−14·8
Manchester Blackley	6,231	5,307	−924	−14·8
Sheffield Hallam	4,710	4,005	−705	−15·0
Nottingham North	6,528	5,549	−979	−15
Sheffield Hillsborough	5,261	4,470	−791	−15·0
Glasgow Cathcart	4,364	3,704	−660	−15·1
Blyth Valley	4,484	3,803	−681	−15·2
Wigan	6,523	5,529	−994	−15·2
Lincoln	6,173	5,231	−942	−15·3
Wakefield	4,858	4,116	−742	−15·3
Woolwich	5,555	4,701	−854	−15·4
West Derbyshire	2,538	2,140	−398	−15·7
Islington South and Finsbury	6,894	5,807	−1,087	−15·8
Clydebank and Milngavie	4,730	3,984	−746	−15·8
Sheffield Central	9,748	8,209	−1,539	−15·8
Glasgow Springburn	8,490	7,147	−1,343	−15·8
Sheffield Brightside	7,353	6,176	−1,177	−16·0
Leyton	5,038	4,229	−809	−16·1
Manchester Withington	6,993	5,859	−1,134	−16·2
Bridlington	3,982	3,336	−646	−16·2
Paisley North	5,410	4,532	−878	−16·2
Normanton	3,511	2,939	−572	−16·3
East Lindsey	4,102	3,433	−669	−16·3
Pembroke	5,730	4,782	−948	−16·5
Hackney North and Stoke Newington	9,255	7,717	−1,538	−16·6
Nottingham East	9,267	7,714	−1,553	−16·8
Leigh	5,662	4,713	−949	−16·8
Clydesdale	4,626	3,850	−776	−16·8
Tyne Bridge	9,358	7,779	−1,579	−16·9
Rotherham	6,480	5,379	−1,101	−17·0
Nottingham South	6,136	5,090	−1,046	−17·1
Great Grimsby	6,719	5,554	−1,165	−17·3
Gedling	3,581	2,955	−626	−17·5
Ynys Môn	4,422	3,647	−775	−17·5
Cunninghame North	5,109	4,211	−898	−17·6

Parliamentary Constituencies	Unemployed Claimants August 1984	August 1988	Change	Per cent. Change Per cent.
Kingston-upon-Hull West	6,794	5,59886	−1,196	−17·6
South Shields	6,906	5,686	−1,220	−17·7
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	4,330	3,563	−767	−17·7
St. Ives	4,675	3,843	−832	−17·8
Tweeddale Ettrick and Lauderdale	1,562	1,284	−278	−17·8
Caernarfon	3,130	2,571	−559	−17·9
Leeds Central	7,157	5,876	−1,281	−17·9
Kingston-upon-Hull North	7,899	6,483	−1,416	−17·9
Conwy	3,428	2,812	−616	−18·0
Truro	3,883	3,185	−698	−18·0
Glasgow Pollock	7,523	6,165	−1,358	−18·1
Stirling	3,705	3,036	−669	−18·1
Vauxhall	9,884	8,048	−1,836	−18·6
East Kilbride	4,831	3,926	−905	−18·7
Newcastle-upon-Tyne East	7,010	5,690	−1,320	−18·8
Scarborough	4,029	3,267	−762	−18·9
Peckham	8,478	6,872	−1,606	−18·9
Glasgow Garscadden	6,272	5,078	−1,194	−19·0
Lewisham West	4,899	3,965	−934	−19·1
Hammersmith	6,148	4,966	−1,182	−19·2
City of Durham	4,403	3,555	−848	−19·3
Edinburgh Pentlands	3,651	2,945	−706	−19·3
Wolverhampton South West	6,426	5,174	−1,252	−19·5
Newham North East	5,385	4,331	−1,054	−19·6
Clackmannan	4,445	3,570	−875	−19·7
Wallasey	7,204	5,774	−1,430	−19·9
Hornsey and Wood Green	7,157	5,734	−1,423	−19·9
Edmonton	3,818	3,057	−761	−19·9

Opencast Mining (Health)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether, since the west Glamorgan medical survey linking opencast mining to high levels of serious illness, he has come across any similar evidence for the County Durham area; what action he intends to take to protect public health; and whether he will consider conducting such a survey in the Durham area.

Mr. Nicholls: I am not aware of any authoritative medical survey linking opencast mining to illness. There is no evidence to suggest that a study in Durham would be worthwhile or likely to find any such connection.

Business Burdens

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further proposals he has to ease burdens on business referring to his departmental responsibilities.

Mr. Nicholls: As soon as parliamentary time permits, we intend to implement the proposal put forward for public consultation earlier this year. This would give chairmen of industrial tribunals the power, either on their own initiative or at the request of one of the parties, to make an order for a deposit of up to £150 as a condition of proceeding to a full hearing before the tribunal where the case appears to have no reasonable prospect of success, or where it seems to be frivolous, vexatious or otherwise unreasonable. We also intend to take steps to enable tribunal awards of compensation to carry interest.

In addition, we intend to implement proposals to extend from six months to two years the qualifying period of employment after which employees become entitled to a written statement of the reasons for their dismissal; to exempt firms with fewer than 20 employees from the requirement to provide an additional note on disciplinary and grievance procedures with the written statement of the main terms and conditions of employment; and to limit the range of industrial relations duties for which trade union officials have a statutory entitlement to paid time off to the scope of union recognition by the employer.

Redundancy and Insolvency Payments

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans the Government have relating to redundancy and insolvency payments.

Mr. Nicholls: As soon as parliamentary time permits it is proposed to abolish the rebate payable on statutory redundancy payments made by employers with less than 10 employees. It is also proposed to facilitate the direct payment by the Department of certain debts to employees whose employers have become insolvent and to clarify the Department's debt recovery rights in such cases.

Cash Limits

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether any changes will be made to Department's cash limits or running costs limits for 1988-89.

Mr. Fowler: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary winter Supplementary Estimates, the following changes will be made. There is a token £1,000 increase in the employment programmes cash limit (Class VII, Vote 1) where a reduction of £19,000,000 on community programme has been transferred to Vote 7 for employment training, and provision of £600,000 for local enterprise agency project schemes is offset by a reduction in small firms loan guarantee scheme expenditure.

The cash limit on Class VII, Vote 2 remains unchanged at £265,170,000.

The cash limit on Class VII, Vote 5 (Training Commission) will be reduced by £2,558,000 from £1,938,737,000 to £1,936,179,000. This is the net effect of the following: a token increase of £1,000 to effect the transfer of funds from the Training Commission to the Department of Employment so that it may carry out the training functions formerly carried out by the Training Commission; a reduction of £2 million due to revised costings on employment training, and a reduction of £559,000 for capital expenditure under the end-year flexibility scheme which has been transferred to a new Vote 7.

There is also a token £1,000 increase in the cash limit on Class VII, Vote 6, sale of professional and executive recruitment, to enable the final costs of the sale to be reflected.

There is a new net £559,000 cash limit on Class VII, Vote 7. This is in respect of the transfer of the previously announced and agreed additional capital expenditure under the end year flexibility scheme from Class VII, Vote 5. The net cash limit takes account of the training functions (and its related expenditure) transferred from Vote 5.

There are also token increases of £1,000 on Class XVI, Vote 4, Industry Department for Scotland and Class XVII, Vote 4, Welsh Office to enable payments to be made to the Department of Employment for training programmes instead of to the Training Commission.

The Class VII, Vote 2: Department of Employment's administration running costs limit has been reduced by £4,454,000 from £611,296,000 to £606,842,000. This is the net outcome of the following changes: final adjustments between the Department and the Training Commission in respect of the transfer of employment services in October 1987; transfer of some functions from the Training Commission; transfer of some staff to the Training Agency; and increased running costs from the delay in the anticipated date of sale of PER.

The Class VII, Vote 5: Training Commission's running costs limit has been reduced by £77,904,000 from £223,658,000 to £145,754,000 whilst the Class VII, Vote 7: Department of Employment—training programme's new running costs limit has been set at £74,265,000. These changes result from the transfer of training functions from Training Commission to the Department.

There is an overall reduction in the DE group's running costs limit of £8,093,000 from £944,525,000 to £936,432,000. This is the net effect of £8,480,000 surplus superannuation provision in respect of former Training Commission staff being surrendered to the Consolidated Fund (Class VII, Vote 7) and an increase of £387,000 for PER (Class VII, Vote 2).

DEFENCE

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the closest distance to ground zero experience by *(a)* scientific, *(b)* military, *(c)* non-scientific British civilian and *(d)* indigenous civilian personnel (i) wearing and (ii) not wearing protective clothing with and without film badges during British nuclear tests in the Pacific in the 1950s;

(2) what was the closest distance to ground zero experienced by *(a)* scientific, *(b)* military, *(c)* non-scientific British civilian and *(d)* indigenous civilian personnel (i) wearing and (ii) not wearing protective clothing, with and without personal dosimeters during British nuclear tests in the Pacific in the 1950s.

Mr. Sainsbury: The same type of personal film badge dosimeter was used throughout the test programme in the Pacific for all personnel to whom it was issued. Protective clothing was supplied and worn by personnel whose duties required or might have required them to enter areas in which loose radioactive material was or might be present. For the megaton tests at Christmas Island the closest distance any test personnel were located from the detonation point in the open was 28km. The numbers at this location amounted to only a handful of radar operators. Some, mostly scientists with some service personnel, were located in protective shelters at a closer distance of 24km. The vast majority of test personnel and all of the indigenous population for all tests were located at a distance of 43km or more. For the tests at Malden Island, all of which were megaton, test personnel were at a distance of 44km or more. Malden Island had no indigenous population. For the kiloton range of tests at Christmas Island, the closest distance at which test personnel were located was 13km or more. All these locations were such that fall out from the detonations could not have affected personnel situated there.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at which British nuclear tests in the Pacific during the 1950s radiation levels were not monitored *(a)* before, *(b)* during or *(c)* after the test.

Mr. Sainsbury: The levels of ionising radiation to which personnel were exposed were monitored by issuing radiation monitoring devices—personal film badge dosimeters—to those who were liable to be exposed before, during and after every United Kingdom atmospheric nuclear test in the Pacific. Throughout the Pacific test series film badges were not issued to personnel whose duties were such that they were extremely unlikely to experience exposure to levels of radiation, other than naturally occurring background radiation. Some of those to whom film badges were issued also did not experience exposure to levels of radiation, other than naturally occurring background.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what type of weapon tests were undertaken on Christmas Island, between 25 March 1958 and 18 March 1959; what nuclear materials were involved; and at what height these explosions occurred;

(2) if he will release information on the megatonnage of nuclear test devices tested between 25 March 1958 and 18 March 1959;

(3) if he will release information on the megatonnage of all British nuclear devices tested in the 1950s and the 1960s;

(4) if he will release information on the type of nuclear test and height of explosion for all British nuclear tests in the Pacific in the 1950s and 1960s.

Mr. Sainsbury: The table describes the type of each test undertaken at or near Christmas Island and in Australia, the height at which the explosions took place and information concerning the yields. For security reasons, I am not able to provide detailed information on the nuclear materials involved in individual tests, but can say that the fissile materials used include plutonium 239 and uranium 235.

Table 1 United Kingdom overseas atmospheric nuclear weapons tests 1952-58

Table 1(A) United Kingdom atmospheric nuclear weapons tests in Australia, October 1952-October 1957

Operation and location	*Date and time (GMT-Z)*	*Site*	*Type*	*Height (metres)*	*Approximate yield (kilotons-kT)*
Hurricane—Monte Bello Islands, Western Australia	3 October 1952 0000Z	Lagoon of 12 m depth	CSB in HMS Plym	2·7	25
Totem—Emu Field, South Australia	14 October 1953 2130Z	T1	NSB MS Tower	31	10
	26 October 1953 2130Z	T2	NSB MS Tower	31	8
Mosaic—Monte Bello Islands, Western Australia	16 May 1956 0350Z	G1 Trimouille Island	NSB Al Tower	31	15
	19 June 1956 0214Z	G2 Alpha Island	NSB Al Tower	31	60
Buffalo—Maralinga Range, South Australia	27 September 1956 0730Z	One Tree	NSB Al Tower	31	15
	4 October 1956 0700Z	Marcoo	CSB Al ground surface	0·2	1·5
	11 October 1956 0557Z	Kite	Airburst Freefall	150	3
	21 October 1956 1435Z	Breakaway	NSB Al Tower	31	10
Antler—Maralinga Range, South Australia	14 September 1957 0505Z	Tadje	NSB Al Tower	31	1
	25 September 1957 0030Z	Biak	NSB Al Tower	31	6
	9 October 1957 0645Z	Taranaki	Airburst Balloon —System Borne	300	25

Notes:
NSB—Near Surface Burst.
CSB—Contact Surface Burst.
MS—Mild Steel.
Al—Aluminium Alloy.

Table 1(B) United Kingdom atmospheric nuclear weapons tests in the South Pacific, May 1957-September 1958

Operation and location	*Date and time (GMT-Z)*	*Site*	*Type*	*Height (metres)*	*Yield range*
Grapple—Malden Island	15 May 1957 1937Z	Off-shore, South. Approximately 1·7 kilometres from land	Airburst Freefall	2,400	Megaton
	31 May 1957 1941Z	Off-shore, South. Approximately 1·7 kilometres from land	Airburst Freefall	2,300	Megaton
	19 June 1957 1940Z	Off-shore, South. Approximately 1·7 kilometres from land	Airburst Freefall	2,300	Megaton
Grapple X—Christmas Island	8 November 1957 1747Z	Off-shore South East Point. Approximately 2·5 kilometres from land	Airburst Freefall	2,250	Megaton
Grapple Y—Christmas Island	28 April 1958 1905Z	Off-shore South East Point. Approximately 2·5 kilometres from land	Airburst Freefall	2,350	Megaton
Grapple Z—Christmas Island	22 August 1958 1800Z	Balloon site, South East Corner	Airburst Balloon —System Borne	450	Kiloton
	2 September 1958 1724Z	Off-shore South East Point. Approximately 2·5 kilometres from land	Airburst Freefall	2,850	Megaton

Operation and location	Date and time (GMT-Z)	Site	Type	Height (metres)	Yield range
	11 September 1958 1749Z	Off-shore South East Point. Approximately 2·5 kilometres from land	Airburst Freefall	2,650	Megaton
	23 September 1958 1800Z	Balloon site, South East Corner	Airburst Balloon —System Borne	450	Kiloton

Notes:
NSB—Near surface burst.
CSB—Contact surface burst.
Kiloton range—Between 1 and 1,000 kilotons.
Megaton range—Between a few hundred kilotons and several megatons.
The table is reproduced by kind permission of the compiler, Mr. W. N. Saxby and of the Director of the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what action he has taken to investigate the links between differing sorts of nuclear tests, such as fission and fusion, and the incidence of cancer amongst nuclear test veterans;

(2) what action he has taken to investigate the links between differing nuclear test megatonnages and cancer incidence amongst nuclear test veterans;

(3) if he has investigated the incidence of cancer afflicting British nuclear test veterans, relative to the length of time spent in the test areas;

(4) if he will investigate the incidence of cancers afflicting British nuclear test veterans, relative to the length of service of such veterans in test areas; and if he will provide such information, together with details of the types of cancers involved, to the House.

Mr. Sainsbury: The NRPB report examined whether associations between mortality or cancer incidence rates and various categories of participation could be identified using statistical analyses. The results are described fully in their report. They did not distinguish between fission and fusion tests or investigate whether length of service or length of time spent in a test area was significant or relate the data to the yields of individual tests. In examining these associations, what they did discover was that the principal concentration of leukaemia (excluding chronic lymphatic) and multiple myeloma was amongst men not present for a major trial nor known to have been involved with the programme of minor trials at Maralinga.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the personnel who served during British nuclear tests were identified for the purposes of the National Radiological Protection Board report; and what action is being taken to bring this figure up to 100 per cent. accuracy.

Mr. Sainsbury: Table 5.5 of the NRPB report shows that the best estimate of the proportion of personnel identified as participants was 83 per cent. overall, with the missing participants mainly confined to the Army (84 per cent. coverage) and the RAF (69 per cent.). Consideration is being given by the NRPB to improving coverage in both these groups during the follow-up study.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the average length of service visits to nuclear test areas by military personnel during British nuclear tests in the Pacific.

Mr. Sainsbury: The records of the lengths of visits to nuclear test areas do not allow an accurate estimate to be made of the average. Service personnel posted to Christmas Island generally served there, or in the vicinity for about a year. Many service men, particularly RAF flying crews, paid only short visits depending on their duties.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the level of accuracy of detection and reporting of cancer incidence amongst British nuclear test veterans; and if he will take steps to improve and update this information.

Mr. Sainsbury: The methods by which the NRPB obtained data on mortality and incidence of cancer from the United Kingdom centralised record sources for the participants in the study are regarded as well established and reliable. The NRPB is continuing to receive data on those who have been identified as participants. I have no plans to seek improvements.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will release figures for cancer incidence amongst British nuclear test veterans, from 1983 to the last year for which figures are available;

(2) if he will make an annual report on cancer detection, incidence and cancer types involved, with regard to the continuing investigations of British nuclear test veterans' mortality and morbidity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: When the NRPB report was published, the NRPB recommended, and the Ministry of Defence agreed, that it would be appropriate to conduct a further follow-up study when data on mortality and cancer incidence among participants had been accumulated for a further 10 years from December 1983. The NRPB is continuing to receive data and will examine the position next year and from time to time thereafter, and will advise whether the major effort of a full-scale statistical exercise would be justified. I am not prepared to release the data until the NRPB has completed its validation and conducted its statistical analysis.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide the figures for the number of British military personnel present on Christmas Island in the years 1962 to 1967 inclusive, giving a total for each individual year.

Mr. Sainsbury: Apart from the small numbers of United Kingdom service personnel present during the United States Brigadoon series in 1962, shown as 344 in the NRPB report, only very small numbers of United Kingdom military personnel were present in subsequent years up to 1964 when the need for United Kingdom personnel to be present ceased.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a scrap value for military vehicles and other metallic objects, presently dumped on Christmas Island.

Mr. Sainsbury: There is no significant value of scrap material arising from the United Kingdom test programme now present at Christmas Island.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide a figure for the number of British vehicles buried on Christmas Island; and what is their cumulative tonnage.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am not aware that any British vehicles were buried on Christmas Island.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the residual radiation levels detected at Maralinga for the years 1960, 1970 and 1980 or for the years nearest to these dates, whichever are available.

Mr. Sainsbury: The residual radiation levels at Maralinga for the years stated are:

	milliGrays per hour
1960	0·1
1970	0·03
1980	0·015
1988	0·01

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the level of competence and accuracy of devices used to detect radiation levels among British personnel serving in the Pacific during the 1950s; and how the effectiveness of such detection methods varied with regard to gamma, beta and alpha radiation particles.

Mr. Sainsbury: The personal film badge dosimeters used during the test programme to measure the levels of radiation to which personnel were exposed were virtually identical to those in use widely throughout the nuclear industry today. The results generally were given in terms of gamma exposure and in some cases of surface exposure with beta aggregated. The minimum recordable level generally varied from 0·2 to 0·5 mSv. Film badges were not used to record alpha particles. Numerous other radiation detectors were used to check radiation levels in order to exercise control of exposure to personnel in areas in which radioactive material might have been present. The competence and accuracy of these methods were fully in accord with contemporary standards.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the number of sea birds on Christmas Island since British nuclear tests.

Mr. Sainsbury: I understand that the survey conducted by the New Zealand Department of Health national radiological laboratory, Christchurch in 1981 did not make any reference to the sea bird population. I must therefore assume that it was neither unexpectedly low nor high. I have no other information on the subject.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what level of monitoring took place to safeguard against the contamination of freshwater supplies on Christmas Island, what levels of radiation were detected and what level of contamination was considered safe during British nuclear tests in the Pacific.

Mr. Sainsbury: The fresh water drinking supplies which were monitored, were drawn from treated surface water and no radioactivity associated with the tests was detected.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions British nuclear test veterans were entered into the documentary evidence of radiation contamination for each individual twice or more than twice; and what effect this has on the accuracy of these records.

Mr. Sainsbury: The original documentary evidence of exposure records was thoroughly examined by the NRPB during the course of its recently published study. Out of a total of 1,804 individuals thought to have been exposed, the NRPB checked the original material for the 349 whose total recorded doses exceeded 10mSv. They found discrepancies of more than 0·5mSv in a total of 19 cases. The effect of correcting these errors was to reduce their collective dose by 5 per cent. These errors may have been as a result of multiple entries, transcription faults or other inadvertent mistakes.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the original purpose of the documentary evidence of radiation contamination for each individual; and whether individual nuclear test veterans will be permitted to have access to their own records within it.

Mr. Sainsbury: The requirement to record the radiation exposure of individuals arose from legislation, currently incorporated in the Ionising Radiation Regulations 1985, governing the use of radioactive materials and work involving ionising radiation. Individuals are entitled under suitable privacy arrangements to receive information on their dose records.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on compensation payments made to United States nuclear test veterans due to their medical conditions arising from contamination by radioactive materials during American nuclear tests in the 1950s.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am aware of the United States legislation—Radiation Exposed Veterans Compensation Act of 1988, which came into force on 1 May 1988—regarding compensation to veterans. I have no information as to payments made under this legislation.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the current condition and contamination levels of Monte Bello and Emu.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. Member on 26 July at column *232*.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how film badges were used to monitor radiation levels; whether badges were coded to individual service personnel; what proportion of the film badges went missing, for whatever reason; and what quantity of film badges were issued to military personnel during British nuclear tests in the Pacific.

Mr. Sainsbury: Each personal film badge dosimeter issued to an individual was coded so that the exposure measured could be entered in his record. Although the proportion of badges which went missing was very small

indeed, standard techniques for assessing exposure, such as using exposures measured for accompanying personnel, were applied to ensure that the record of exposure for all exposed individuals was as complete as possible. The precise total number of badges issued during the operation cannot be ascertained, but it is known that during the whole test series in the Pacific, at least 500 personnel were subject to their issue. Since many of these would have received two badges, the total issued was probably in excess of 1,000.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent his Department is able to ascertain where any named individual was placed at the time of a particular detonation during the 1958 to 1959 Christmas Island tests; what is his policy on responding to correspondence from nuclear test veterans seeking assurances as to their exposure to residual radiation; and if he will make a statement on his Department's correspondence with Mr. A. Dickson on this matter.

Mr. Sainsbury: The test records of the locations of personnel at the time of each detonation do not extend to a comprehensive list of the names of all individuals at each location. It may be possible to establish where some individuals were located from these records, or by inference establish the location of members of particular groups where the record shows where that group was located. However, the locations were all recorded and their distance from "ground zone" is known.

Individuals are entitled to the information contained in their own personal radiation dose record if one exists. If no dose was recorded, their duties were unlikely to have exposed them to radiation other than natural background.

Mr. A. Dickson has conducted an exchange of correspondence with this Department. It has included information about his exposure to radiation, and his probable location during the tests which he witnessed.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the annual level of mortality among British military personnel serving in the Pacific in each year since 1958; and what were the causes of those mortalities.

Mr. Sainsbury: The mortality rates for all test participants were examined by the NRPB in its recent study. Since the report does not itemise annual levels since 1958 and the analysis of the reported causes was not done on a year-to-year basis, I cannot supply the information which the hon. Member seeks.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many post-mortems were carried out annually among British military personnel serving in the Pacific in each year since 1958.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information about the number of post-mortems carried out annually since 1958 is not available.

Porton Down

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what quantities of simulant and analogous CBW agent has been delivered to universities undertaking research on behalf of CDE Porton Down.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been the policy of successive Governments not to give precise details on such matters. I can say however, that very small samples of such agents have on occasion been provided to nominated specialists at United Kingdom universities to meet the requirements of MOD-sponsored research.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what quantities of CS gas were manufactured at CDE Porton Down over the last 10 years.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been the policy of successive Governments not to give exact details, but I can say that CS has been produced by the chemical defence establishment (CDE) Porton Down from time to time over the last 10 years.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what guidelines are adopted for the standards and practices applied to the transport of chemical weapon agents from the decontamination site to CDE Porton Down.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my answer of 18 July 1988 at column *503*. In addition, the guidelines for the movement of these finds of old CW material are set out in MOD(PE) explosive regulations and similar service regulations.

Defence Secrets (Unauthorised Computer Access)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to protect defence secrets from unauthorised computer access; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A range of measures is taken to protect secret MOD information from unauthorised computer access, but for security reasons I am not prepared to disclose details.

Bureau West, Devizes

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for how long his Department's Bureau West at Devizes was left unattended overnight in respect of remote operation of VME; what were the implications for the operation of the system and security of information; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The VME computers at Bureau West are routinely left unattended overnight so that information can be processed outside normal working hours and in order to maximise the life and reliability of the systems. The appropriate security precautions are taken.

Defence Statistics Organisation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on proposals to privatise his Department's defence statistics organisation.

Mr. Sainsbury: As part of the on-going commitment to expose MOD activities to competitive tendering wherever possible, a report was commissioned earlier this year to examine the potential for using the private sector in the work of the defence statistical organisation (DSO). It concluded that some segments of the DSO could in principle be suitable candidates. Subsequently a follow-up study has been examining the availability and capability of the private sector to discharge such work cost-effectively. No decisions have yet been reached.

Advertising Budget

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much is the advertising budget for the current campaign for the Territorial Army and the Volunteer Reserves.

Mr. Freeman: The cost of the campaign is expected to be some £10 million spread evenly over five years. This comprises direct mailing, television, newspaper and poster advertising.

Woolwich Arsenal

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to be able to define the boundaries of the riverside area at the Woolwich Arsenal west site which he proposes to release for redevelopment.

Mr. Freeman: The riverside area, including the grand store, New Laboratory square, riverside guardroom and mallets mortar, will be released for development whatever decision is taken regarding the future location of the directorate general of defence quality assurance. The precise boundaries have not yet been fully defined and I will write to the hon. Gentleman shortly with a map.

Woolwich (Houses)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* houses and *(b)* flats his Department owns in the Woolwich area; how many of these were unoccupied at the most recent convenient date; how many he plans to sell in the open market; and what is the estimated income expected from such sales.

Mr. Freeman: The Ministry of Defence owns 460 houses and 319 flats in the Woolwich area. As at 21 October 1988, a total of 115 properties were vacant and it is expected that 91 properties will be offered for sale on the open market over the next 18 months. It would not be appropriate to give an estimate of the expected income prior to tender action being taken.

Meteorological Office

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what military purposes his Department uses the services of the Meteorological Office; if he is considering any proposals to remove the Meteorological Office from the direct control or management of his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Accurate meteorological information is vital to the operation of all the armed services, and particularly for flying activity. The Meteorological Office meets these defence requirements by the production of specialised forecasts to cover particular locations and ranges of operation and, when necessary, by the provision of staff at local military units. As has already been announced, the Meteorological Office is under consideration for establishment as an executive agency as part of the "next steps" initiative. The precise nature of such an agency is still under investigation. It is however clear that meteorology is a discrete executive function which would benefit from a greater degree of local responsibility within a centrally set broad framework.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Authorities (Sale)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement in respect of his timetable for selling the water authorities.

Mr. Moynihan: Subject to the passage of the necessary legislation, my right hon. Friend intends that there should be simultaneous flotation of all 10 water authorities towards the end of 1989.

Water Authority Expenditure

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the capital spending plans of the 10 water authorities for the next five years.

Mr. Moynihan: The capital spending plans of the 10 water authorities in England and Wales were set out at table 10.30 of the White Paper "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1988-89 to 1990-91 Volume II" Cmn. 288-II, published in January 1988. It is not normal practice to publish plans for years beyond the end of the public expenditure survey period.

Housing Action Trust Areas

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the statement in the Minister for Housing and Planning's personal letter to tenants in housing action trust areas promising a rent freeze before improvements means that, in cases where houses are already improved, those rents will go up.

Mr. Trippier: Under clause 64 of the Housing Bill, a housing action trust will be required to prepare a statement setting out its proposals for its area and to consult the local authority and local residents about them. Until this has been done, and the trust reaches a view on what improvements are necessary, the timing of rent movements for individual properties cannot be forecast.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will explain his Department's definition of the term "approved social landlord", referred to in the Minister for Housing and Planning's personal letter to tenants in housing action trust areas.

Mr. Trippier: Clause 79 of the Housing Bill requires that landlords other than local housing authorities to whom housing action trust tenants transfer must be approved by the Housing Corporation. The corporation will require them to demonstrate stability, viability and a commitment to the long-term provision of rents accommodation. The corporation issued a consultation document on the criteria for approval in August and is now considering responses.

United Kingdom Nirex

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to what action United Kingdom Nirex proposes to take about the unauthorised disclosure to the Lincolnshire Anti-Nuclear Waste Campaign of a map entitled, "Nirex 1st. Option Class 2 Waste"; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have no information about an unauthorised disclosure of any material to the Lincolnshire Anti-Nuclear Waste Campaign. I understand that Nirex considers this to have been a hoax.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether community charge officers will trace individuals by asking for information concerning an individual's name and address from British Telecom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 24 October, *Official Report*, column 89.

Water Privatisation

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now proposes to introduce legislation to privatise the water authorities.

Mr. Moynihan: Subject to the Gracious Speech, early in the coming Session.

Lead-free Petrol

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in view of new evidence of health risks to young children, he will now announce a date for the introduction of mandatory lead-free petrol.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government are firmly committed to the changeover to unleaded petrol. It would not, however, be practicable to make the new fuel mandatory because some current cars cannot use it.

Hospital Sites (Redevelopment)

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to revise his Department's policy on the redevelopment of redundant hospital sites in green belt areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: We have no plans to revise the guidelines for the reuse of redundant hospital sites in the green belt set out in DOE circular 12/87 and repeated in planning policy guidance note 2.

Radiation

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the collective radiation dose to people in the United Kingdom from (i) nuclear generation of electricity and (ii) generation of electricity by fossil fuels.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The National Radiological Protection Board reviews radiation doses to people in the United Kingdom. Its best estimate is that annual collective radiation doses to people in the United Kingdom from (i) nuclear generation of electricity and (ii) generation of electricity by fossil fuels are as follows:—

	Workers	*Public*
(i) Nuclear	100 man.SV	50 man.SV
(ii) Coal	95 man.SV	5 man.SV

Housing (Newham)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the criteria he applied to the total indicative cost limit for housing association schemes in the London borough of Newham for each of the years commencing 1 October 1987 and 1 October 1988, respectively, and the appropriate percentage of dwellings planned which will exceed the Housing Corporation maximum permitted limits.

Mr. Trippier: Total indicative costs (TICs) are guidelines, not cost limits, and housing association schemes may be approved with costs above the TIC figures provided they represent value for money. The TIC levels derive from professional judgments of representative costs of providing housing to published standards in each local authority area. The Housing Corporation has discretion to approve new build schemes up to 30 per cent., and rehabilitation schemes up to 40 per cent., above the relevant TIC. No schemes in the London borough of Newham with costs above these discretionary levels have been referred to the Department for approval since 1 October 1987.

Beaches

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his Department's plans to clean up beaches in England.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government's policy is that all significant coastal bathing waters should meet the standards laid down in the EEC bathing waters directive. We have identified almost 400 such waters in the United Kingdom covering all the main seaside resorts. Responsibility for cleaning up the 360 identified waters in England and Wales rests with water authorities. All those authorities with coastal bathing waters have in recent years developed capital programmes designed to achieve the directive's standards. Typically, schemes involve some resewering and the construction of long sea outfalls to replace existing unsatisfactory discharges. We are currently discussing with authorities the implications of bringing all their remaining waters up to EEC standards by 1995.

Council House Sales

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to monitor the performance of the London borough of Greenwich on right-to-buy sales and to reduce the current delays in providing valuations to intending purchasers.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend has recently reviewed the right-to-buy performance of all London boroughs. He considers that while there is room for improvement by Greenwich, the borough's performance does not warrant the imposition of formal monitoring; and that the measures included in the Housing Bill will be sufficient to reduce the current delays. My Department will continue to take up individual complaints with the council.

London Boroughs (Boundary Changes)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when any he expects to receive recommendations from the Local Government Boundary Commissioner on changes to London borough boundaries; and when such changes will be brought into force.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Subject to an overall requirement to complete reviews of London borough boundaries by 31 March 1992, it is for the Local Government Boundary Commission to set its own timetable. I understand that it expects to report on the first of these reviews in 1989-90. Proposals approved by the Secretary of State are normally implemented within the same or the following financial year.

Dogs

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what restrictions are applied to the presence of dogs in Greenwich park; and how these are enforced;

(2) how many complaints have been made about the extent of dogs' excrement in the grassed areas of Greenwich park in each of the past five years; and what action has been taken to reduce the problem.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of formal complaints about dog excrement in Greenwich park in each of the past five years is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1984	0
1985	1
1986	4
1987	5
1988	3 to date

The Royal and Other Parks and Gardens Regulations make it an offence to permit an animal to foul a pathway or mown lawn. Notices in all the royal parks, including Greenwich, exclude dogs from children's playgrounds and oblige any person in charge of a dog to keep it on a lead in the area of flowerbeds and fine grass. The regulations are enforced by the Royal Parks Constabulary who have cautioned 275 people for dog nuisance in Greenwich park over the past five years.

We recognise and share public concern about the unpleasantness and health risks and will, therefore, be considering more effective ways to tackle the problem. These include a new regulation requiring a person in charge of a dog to remove any excrement deposited on specific areas of a royal park, improved enforcement of the regulations, the provision of special waste bins and improved publicity to remind all those in charge of dogs of the regulations and of their responsibilities.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he proposes to take to reduce the nuisance and danger caused by stray dogs in urban areas.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Provisions, which came into force on 24 May, were included in the Local Government Act 1988 giving duly authorised officers of local authorities in England and Wales the same powers as the police to deal with stray dogs.

Genetically Engineered Micro-organisms

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions his Department has had with research departments in United Kingdom universities on the productions of genetically engineered micro-organisms and on their release into the environment; if he will identify those universities; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has had contacts with a variety of universities on such matters. The Department's research programme includes research contracts with the universities of Bristol, Kent, Newcastle, Liverpool, Oxford and York for work related to the release of genetically engineered organisms into the environment.

Unrebated Rent

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the level of average unrebated rent in 1987-88 prices for each year between 1967-68 and the latest date available.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on 27 June, *Official Report*, at column *160*.

Chelsea Football Ground

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the report of the inspector and to announce his decision on the planning application for the Chelsea football ground at Stamford bridge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The report of the inspector is expected shortly. The decision will be issued as quickly as possible thereafter.

Water

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the model appointment for water services plcs.

Mr. Moynihan: Early in the new Session of Parliament.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there will be any reduction in local authority rents for council tenants participating in the compulsory water-metering trials.

Mr. Moynihan: No. However, in those trial areas where the local authority acts as the water undertaker's billing agent and collects water charges with rents, tenants will pay their measured water charges direct to the water undertaker.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of listed buildings owned by the water authorities in England and Wales and their locations.

Mr. Moynihan: I regret that this information is not held by the Department.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the advisers retained by his

Department to date in preparation for the privatisation of the water industry and the reasons for which each is retained.

Mr. Moynihan: I give in the table below a list of the advisers the Department has appointed to advise on the privatisation of the water industry, together with their responsibilities.

J Henry Schroder Wagg & Co. Ltd., Merchant Bankers
Touche Ross & Co., Chartered Accountants
Clifford Chance, Solicitors
Rowe & Pitman Ltd., Stockbrokers
Deloitte, Haskins & Sells, Financial assessment advisers
Binnie & Partners, Consulting engineers
Professor Michael Beesley, Economic consultant
National Westminster Bank PLC, For advice on the receiving bank function

We have also appointed, jointly with the Water Authorities Association, Dewe Rogerson Ltd. as marketing advisers.

In addition to advisers, the Department has appointed, jointly with the appropriate water authority, the following firms to act as reporting accountants:—

Price Waterhouse (for North West, Yorkshire, Anglian, Severn, Trent and South West water authorities).

Coopers and Lybrand (for Thames, Northumbrian and Wessex water authorities).

Deloitte Haskins and Sells (for Southern water authority), whom my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has appointed jointly with Welsh water authority, as reporting accountants for Welsh Water.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what response he has had from *(a)* the 10 water authorities and *(b)* the Water Authorities Association to his letter requesting them to take action with regard to the John Lawrence report on the incident at Lowermoor water treatment works of the South West water authority;

(2) whether he has any plans to commission an independent inquiry into the incident at Lowermoor treatment works of the South West water authority on 6 July.

Mr. Moynihan: A thorough and impartial inquiry into the causes and effects of the incident at the Lowermoor treatment works including health and safety aspects has already been carried out by Dr. John Lawrence, director and head of the ICI group environmental laboratory at Brixham and a non-executive member of the board of South West Water. We have no plans for a further inquiry. South West Water has accepted the findings in Dr. Lawrence's report and is now in the process of implementing the recommendations. In the light of the Camelford incident, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, has asked water undertakers to carry out a thorough review of their management and operating procedures at water treatment works (particularly unmanned installations) and to report to him by the end of the year. Reports have so far been received from two water undertakers.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to commission a market valuation of the assets of the water industry prior to its proposed privatisation.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department is in discussion with representatives of the water authorities about how best to ensure that the prospectuses of the successor companies properly reflect the value of their land assets. No decision has been taken on the extent to which new valuations should be undertaken.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what form of national and regional negotiating machinery he intends to establish for water industry staff transferred to the shadow National Rivers Authority and those retained within the remaining structure.

Mr. Moynihan: Until the NRA and the water utilities are established on vesting day, existing water authority staff remain as employees of the water authorities, and will be covered by the authorities' existing negotiating machinery.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the advisers retained so far by each of the 10 water authorities in preparing for the privatisation of the water industry and the reasons for which they are retained.

Mr. Moynihan: The appointment of advisers for each water authority is a matter for that authority.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the advisers retained so far by the Water Authorities Association in preparing for the privatisation of the water industry and the reasons for which each is retained.

Mr. Moynihan: The appointment of advisers to the Water Authority Association is a matter for the association.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to merge the South West water authority and Wessex water authority; and if he will state the date of the merger.

Mr. Howard: I have made no such plans.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to write off the capital debts of *(a)* the 10 water authorities and *(b)* 28 statutory water companies prior to the proposed privatisation of the water industry.

Mr. Moynihan: No decisions have yet been taken on the capital structures of the companies which, subject to the necessary legislation, will succeed the 10 regional water authorities. The statutory water companies are already in the private sector. They are not indebted to the Exchequer and the question of the Government's writing off their debts does not arise.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has made any estimate of the risks to groundwater of *(a)* accidental spillages of solvents and petrochemicals and *(b)* motorway drainage soakaways.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department has not made any quantitive estimate of these risks to groundwater. We will however be examining these particular problems amongst others in the context of the Halcrow report on groundwater quality, which will be published shortly.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what urgent measures are being taken to reduce levels of the cancer-causing substance polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon in London drinking water.

Mr. Moynihan: Investigatory work commissioned by the Department and published by the Water Research

Centre (WRc) has shown that public drinking water supplies can very occasionally contain concentrations of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) above the standard of 0·2 microgram per litre set by the EC directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption (80/778/EEC). Medical experts advise that there is unlikely to be any significant health risk from drinking water which occasionally exceeds the standard. Nevertheless, in view of the WRc findings, the Department is writing to all water undertakers asking them to carry out surveys for PAH in drinking water beyond present monitoring requirements, and providing guidance on how to conduct the surveys. The information provided by these surveys should enable water undertakers to develop remedial programmes should these prove necessary.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what specific measures designed for the protection of the health and well-being of domestic consumers of drinking water he will introduce in his proposals for water privatisation regarding unacceptable levels of dieldrin, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and nitrates.

Mr. Moynihan: The proposed legislation to privatise water authorities will establish drinking water quality standards in regulations, incorporating the requirements of the EC drinking water directive and will cover dieldrin, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and nitrate. All water utilities will be required to adhere to the standards, and to fulfil programmes of improvement agreed with the Department wherever any are not met. Local authorities will retain their existing duties to check the quality of drinking water and will also have a duty to check that there is no general deterioration in quality. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will appoint technical assessors who will ensure that the water utilities are monitoring water quality properly and are complying with the standards.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the growth of water table levels under London, as reported on by the Construction Industry Association; and what proposals he has for remedial action.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department has been aware for some time that water levels in the deep aquifer beneath London are rising and has contributed to a study of the engineering implications by the Construction Industry Research and Information Association. The final report is not yet available though I understand that, on present trends, the study predicts that damage to some buildings and tunnels could be sustained in 20 to 40 years if no preventive action is taken. We shall consider the final report carefully with a view to deciding whether further research and monitoring is needed to ensure that appropriate and timely action can be taken to prevent such damage.

Mersey Basin

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to produce a review of work undertaken as part of the Mersey basin campaign, subsidised by his Department.

Mr. Moynihan: The 25-year, £4 billion campaign to clean up the whole of the Mersey basin is one of the Secretary of State for the Environment's most important initiatives. He supports it in a variety of ways, but does not subsidise it within the normal meaning of that word. He keeps the campaign under constant review and makes announcements about its progress from time to time. In August 1987, for instance, a review report was issued which highlighted the achievements of the campaign to date—with a total investment of £425 million over its first three years. I am sending the hon. Gentleman a copy of that report.

Planning Inquiry (Gunton)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the results of the planning inquiry held in March into development proposals at Gunton, Lowestoft, reference APP/T/3535/A/87/75702, to be made available.

Mr. Chope: The decision on this planning appeal was issued on 27 October. A copy of the letter has been sent to my hon. Friend.

Air Pollution (London)

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many times carbon monoxide levels in London's air have exceeded World Health Organisation guidelines in the last 12 months; what steps he is taking to ensure that guideline breaches will not increase in the next 12 months; and what actions are in process to ensure that London's air does not exceed World Health Organisation guidelines for carbon monoxide or nitrogen dioxide levels during the next four years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The air quality monitoring data for London are being analysed to answer the hon. Member's specific question. I will provide a substantive answer when this analysis is completed.

Local Government Staff (Political Activities)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has for each Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development country as to whether they place, by law or by contract, any restrictions on the political activities that may be undertaken by any local government staff; and if he will show, where appropriate, (i) the nature of the restrictions imposed, (ii) the level or grade of staff affected and (iii) the number of staff affected.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information has not been systematically collected, since the patterns of organisation and political traditions of local government differ so widely between countries.

Local Authorities

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he proposes in relation to a general economic development power for local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I am at present considering further the precise form of the proposals and I shall make a statement in due course.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to publish a summary of responses received to his Department's consultation paper, "Local Authorities' Interests in Companies".

Mr. Ridley: I shall do so in due course.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish those responses to his Department's consultation paper, "Local Authorities' Interests in Companies", published on 13 June, which respondents indicated they would wish to be made available.

Mr. Ridley: I shall do so in due course.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing public expenditure on general subsidies to local authorities, new towns and housing associations between 1977-78 and 1990-91 in 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Trippier: The table shows certain subsidies on housing made by the Department between 1977-78 and 1990-91. These are all revenue subsidies towards housing provision (broadly equating to section A of the housing, England Vote). They have been described as "general subsidies" in the past, although this terminology is now no longer used.

Public expenditure on general subsidies to local authorities, new towns and housing associations (pounds, million 1987-88 prices[1]

	General subsidies to		
	Local authorities[2]	*New towns*[3]	*Housing associations*[4]
1977-78	1,929	177	36
1978-79	2,060	179	39
1979-80	2,237	177	42
1980-81	2,106	169	40
1981-82	1,224	158	49
1982-83	674	147	57
1983-84	336	143	30
1984-85	394	137	23
1985-86	444	98	27
1986-87	561	89	30
1987-88	473	83	36
1988-89[5]	422	76	38
1989-90[5]	432	74	41
1990-91[5]	441	72	43

[1]Using GDP deflator.

[2]Primarily Main Housing subsidy, which is paid to local authorities in support of provision, repair and maintenance of their rented stock. does not include rate fund contributions.

[3]Similar to [2], but paid in support of new town housing.

[4]Revenue grants and subsidies to housing associations: revenue deficit grant; hostel deficit grant; and grant affording relief from income tax, profits tax and corporation tax. Does not include capital grants to housing associations (HAG).

[5]Provision figures taken from the 1988 Public Expenditure White Paper.

Mill Hill School (Planning Permission)

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, under article 4 directions, he will call in for determination the application by Mill Hill school for planning permission to build a management training centre in the green belt area of Mill Hill village; and if he will take steps to ensure that no irrevocable decision will be taken by the borough of Barnet until he has considered all aspects of the wider green belt policy implications.

Mr. Chope: My Department has issued a direction to the London borough of Barnet directing it not to grant permission on the application without special authorisation by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State will consider the matter further when he receives relevant documents requested from the council.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against the decisions of local planning authorities were made to him in respect of land within green belts, conservation areas and agricultural areas in each of the years 1979 to 1988, inclusive; and how many of these he upheld in each of those years.

Mr. Chope: The information is not available in the form requested. The annual reports of the chief planning inspector identify numbers of appeals received and allowed by development type. Copies of the reports for the period 1981 to 1986-87 are in the Library.

Residuary Bodies

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to lay before Parliament the 1987-88 annual reports and accounts of the London and metropolitan residuary bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The 1987-88 annual reports and statements of accounts of the London and metropolitan residuary bodies were laid before Parliament today. A copy of the Secretary of State's direction under section 78(2) of the Local Government Act 1985 as to the content and structure of the accounts has been placed in the Library of the House.

All the residuary bodies' reports demonstrate the impressive progress which has been made in discharging the functions inherited from the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils. Particularly valuable contributions have been made in the disposal of surplus property. Over £219 million in capital receipts were realised from sales of surplus property in 1987-88 alone.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the first residuary body will complete its work and be wound up; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Tyne and Wear residuary body was formally wound up today by an order made under section 67 of the Local Government Act 1985. The order transferred the remainder of the RB's property, functions, rights and liabilities to successor authorities, the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and the metropolitan districts of Gateshead, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland, on 11 October 1988. Its final report is being laid before Parliament today.

The Tyne and Wear residuary body is the first of the seven residuary bodies to wind up. Much credit goes to the chairman, board members and staff for their work in winding up the affairs of the former Tyne and Wear metropolitan county council in such a relatively short period of time with the full co-operation of the district councils. The residuary body has achieved a great deal in a short time. During the two and a half years since abolition it has sold, or transferred to successor district

authorities, some 10,000 former county council property interests, generated and distributed £10·3 million of capital receipts, with a further £2·8 million still to be received by successors from sales which have not yet reached completion. This is in addition to the distribution of some £11 million in revenue balances and £2·5 million of capital receipts previously held by the former county council.

The other five metropolitan residuary bodies and the London residuary body are all on target to complete their work well within the statutory time scales.

Cash Limits

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any changes to announce to his Departments cash limits for 1988-89.

Mr. Nicholas Ridley: Yes, I propose the following changes, subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates.

The cash limit for Class X, Vote 2 (Central environmental services, etc) will be increased by £5·571 million from £244·612 million to £250·183 million, primarily to enable an endowment to be made to the Zoological Society of London. This endowment has in part been financed by offsetting savings within the Vote.

The cash limit for Class X, Vote 5 (Department of the Environment: administration) will be increased by £5·9 million from £123·437 million to £129·337 million to cover additional administrative expenditure, in relation to the privatisation of the regional water authorities. The Department's running costs limit will be increased by £4·8 million from £155·062 million to £159·862 million.

The cash limit for Class X, Vote 9 (Sale of shares in the water services public limited companies, etc) will be increased by £2·7 million from £2·44 million to £5·14 million to cover increased costs of advisors.

The non-voted cash limit for urban aid (DOE/UAI) will be increased by £20 million from £526·496 million to £546·496 million to provide for an increase in the external finance limit of the London Docklands development corporation of £38 million. This increase has been met in part from within the present cash limit.

These increases, together with other increases in non-cash limited public expenditure (primarily in relation to housing subsidies paid to local authorities), have been offset by reductions, and will not therefore add to the total of planned public expenditure. The non-voted cash limit for the new towns (DOE/NTI) has been reduced by £100 million from minus £289·743 million to minus £389·743 million to take account of disposals of property which are higher than forecast. The cash limit for Class IX, Vote 2 (Miscellaneous housing administration and grants) has been reduced £1·709 million from £73·075 million to £71·366 million, primarily to take account of lower than expected expenditure by housing action trusts.

Water Authorities (Discharges)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of consents given to each water authority by each water authority to permit otherwise unlawful discharges into the water courses for which they are responsible during 1987-88.

Mr. Moynihan: *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* During the period 1 April 1987 to 31 March 1988, my Department has issued the following consents to water authorities in England under the Control of Pollution Act 1974: Anglian 374; Northumbrian 33; North West 78; Severn Trent 178; Southern 29; South West 31; Thames 15; Wessex 52; Yorkshire 63.

Most of the consents issued, other than to Anglian and South West, were for new or previously unconsented storm and emergency overflows. Those issued to Anglian and South West Water were mainly a backlog of applications from the review of consents agreed in 1985 for implementing the Control of Pollution Act 1974. A number of the consents issued for sewage treatment contained less stringent conditions based on current performance, but generally only where there was no appreciable effect on the receiving waters. In a few cases, relaxed consents conditions have been issued pending planned capital investment. These consents are subject to early review.

New Council Houses (London)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the average build cost, excluding land of *(a)* two bedrooms and *(b)* three bedrooms council houses in Greater London for each of the past six years.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* The estimated average construction costs, excluding land, site works and ancillary buildings and fees, of four bed-space and five bed-space local authority houses in the Greater London area are as follows:

Average construction costs

£

Year	*4 bed-space houses*	*5 bed-space houses*
1983	24,700	25,600
1984	20,800	24,700
1985	25,300	34,100
1986	29,000	31,200
[1]1987	30,600	36,800
[1]1988	35,000	45,600

[1] Data for 1987 refers to the second half of that year while data for 1988 only includes schemes up to the present date.

The estimates are not directly comparable from year to year because of the variation in the average floor area per dwelling.

Water Pollution

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what percentage of total public expenditure has been spent on water pollution research for each year since 1978 in *(a)* Belgium, *(b)* Canada, *(c)* Denmark, *(d)* the Federal Republic of Germany, *(e)* France, *(f)* the Netherlands, *(g)* Norway, *(h)* Sweden and *(i)* the United Kingdom;

(2) what is the total amount of public funds spent on water pollution research, in 1988 funds, for each year since 1978 in *(a)* Belgium, *(b)* Canada, *(c)* Denmark, *(d)* the Federal Republic of Germany, *(e)* France, *(f)* the Netherlands, *(g)* Norway, *(h)* Sweden and *(i)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* The information is not readily available.

Storm Damage

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's latest estimate of the cost of the trees that were damaged in the October 1987 hurricane; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 27 October 1988]:* Such estimates have not been made.

Ozone Layer

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received a report, or will ask the United Kingdom ambassador in Washington to obtain details, on the international conference held in Washington DC on 12 October, concerning the greenhouse effect and prospective international solutions; and whether any departmental officials were invited to attend this conference.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 27 October 1988]:* A report has been received from the British embassy in Washington concerning an international meeting held in Washington DC from the 10 to 12 October 1988. The meeting was arranged for non-governmental environmental groups to discuss the greenhouse effect. No invitation was received by Government officials.

Toxic Waste (Briton Ferry)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment under what regulations 2,000 tonnes of the toxic waste from Denmark were ordered to be shipped out of the port of Briton Ferry, West Glamorgan, on 23 September; when and in what way Her Majesty's pollution inspectorate was informed of the nature of the waste rejected at Briton Ferry; and on how many occasions since 1 September consignments of imported wastes, once having docked at ports in England and Wales have subsequently been rejected.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 28 October 1988]:* I understand that the port of Briton Ferry is licensed under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 by Neath borough council as a transfer station. The waste referred to was considered by the council, on analysis, to be outside the terms of the licence. It ordered the removal of the waste, which is being sent to a facility licensed to deal with it. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution was kept informed.

I am not aware of any occasion since 1 September 1988 when a shipment of waste, having docked, has been rejected.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the nature of the powers which he proposes to allocate to the National Rivers Authority in relation to water purity, testing and monitoring.

Mr. Moynihan: The National Rivers Authority will have a duty to monitor and test the quality of all surface, underground, and coastal waters. It will also have powers to take samples of effluent or other matter discharged into these waters, in pursuance of its general regulatory responsibilities.

Sewage

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has made any financial contribution or is currently contributing to research that would determine the fate of viruses discharged to the sea in sewage.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department has let a contract to the Water Research Centre at a cost of £93,000 to determine the fate of rotavirus in sewage discharges. The contract is due for completion next year and we are considering what further research should be commissioned.

WALES

Health Authorities

1. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new proposals he has to improve the work of Welsh area health authorities.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend is carrying out a thorough review of the NHS in Wales, the results of which will build on our achievement of record levels of activity.

Labour Statistics

10. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unadjusted figures for unemployment in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales; and if he will give the equivalent figures for 1979 on the most nearly comparable basis.

Mr. Peter Walker: On 8 September 1988 the number of unemployed claimants in Newport district, Gwent and Wales were 6,815, 20,394 and 125,825 respectively. Unadjusted figures for 1979 are not available on a basis that enables a valid comparison to be made.

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of people unemployed in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Neath and *(c)* west Glamorgan in each of the quarters in 1988.

Mr. Peter Walker: On 10 March 1988 there were 141,403 unemployed claimants in Wales; 3,331 in Neath district; and 18,944 in west Glamorgan. On 9 June 1988 the respective figures were 127,116; 2,964 and 17,428; and on 8 September 1988, 125,825; 2,864; and 17,360. Figures for the last quarter of 1988 will be published on 19 January 1989.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of people living in *(a)* Dyfed, *(b)* Clwyd, *(c)* Powys, *(d)* Gwynedd, *(e)* mid Glamorgan, *(f)* south Glamorgan, *(g)* west Glamorgan and *(h)* Gwent who have never worked since leaving school; and how many people under the age of 18 years in this situation are in each area.

Mr. Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 28 October 1988]:* The following table shows, for each Welsh county the number of unemployed claimants who had not entered employment since leaving full-time education, along with those aged under 18 in this group on 8 September 1988. These figures include some temporary over-recording.

Unemployed school leavers, 8 September 1988

	Total	Aged under 18
Clwyd	1,165	221
Dyfed	1,144	191
Gwent	1,574	262
Gwynedd	842	175
Mid Glamorgan	1,895	414
Powys	227	42
South Glamorgan	1,674	258
West Glamorgan	1,528	190

Source: Department of Employment.

Water Industry

13. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of the water industry in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Government's policy was set out in the White Paper of February 1986 and the policy paper on the National Rivers Authority published in December 1987. The Government have made clear their intentions to privatise the industry towards the end of 1989.

Asset Sales

17. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what have been the total assets realised in Wales in terms of *(a)* privatisation and *(b)* the sale of Government land and buildings since 1979; and by how much he expects this figure to increase in the next five years.

Mr. Peter Walker: Between April 1979 and April 1988 sales of land and buildings by the Welsh Office and its agencies, and by health authorities, realised £200 million. I expect sales over the next five years to yield at least a further £130 million. Figures for privatisation proceeds are not available.

West Wales (Employment)

21. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action is being taken by his Department to bring new employment to west Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: A full range of measures is being deployed, aimed at sustaining and increasing economic activity and jobs throughout Wales. Since 1986 regional aid has brought forward capital investment of some £60 million in Dyfed which is estimated to create or safeguard nearly 4,000 jobs. In addition there is the substantial support from the Welsh Development Agency and Mid Wales Development, and, as appropriate, through the urban programme. Over the past two years unemployment in the county has fallen by 4,500.

Lakes and Rivers

22. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what meetings he has had with voluntary organisations concerned with the use of lakes and rivers in Wales *(a)* in general and *(b)* in respect of fishing interests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have had no such meetings since the Government's policy paper on the National Rivers Authority was published in December 1987.

Prices

23. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the level of house prices in each district in Wales during the first half of 1988; and what was the level in each of the last five years.

Mr. Grist: Information about house prices at district level is not held centrally.

Industrialists (Discussions)

24. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had during the summer adjournment with representatives of Welsh industry.

Mr. Peter Walker: During the adjournment I visited 12 companies and had 14 meetings with representatives of industry. In addition I met members of the CBI in Wales and opened the North Wales business club enterprise exhibition.

Northop and Mold Bypasses

25. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on when he expects the Northop bypass to be completed and the Mold bypass to be started.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The contract completion date for the Northop bypass is late summer 1989. Work is currently ahead of programme and earlier completion may be achieved. Scheme preparation for the Mold bypass continues in accordance with the roads in Wales programme for start of works by the end of 1990.

Transport Links

26. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the need for improved road and rail transport links between Wales and England and with the continent in order to provide an adequate communications system for the economy of south Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There are already good road links between south Wales and England. These will be enhanced by the second Severn crossing.

Rating Reform

27. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any proposals to introduce a system of identity cards in connection with the collection of the community charge.

Mr. Grist: No.

29. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the average poll tax per household in *(a)* the Rhondda and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Grist: The community charge is a personal charge and not a charge on households.

CEGB

28. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am in regular touch with the chairman of the CEGB on matters which affect the Principality.

Water Standards

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many derogations from the European Economic Community directives for drinking water and bathing water have been granted to the Welsh water authority.

Mr. Grist: Derogations concerning mainly the iron and manganese parameters for 14 sources have been notified to the European Commission in respect of drinking water. In addition, derogations in respect of a further 17 sources serving small populations (which do not have to be notified to the Commission) have been approved by the Department. No derogations have been applied for in respect of bathing waters.

European Regional Development Fund Grants (Gwynedd)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much in the form of grants Gwynedd county council will receive under the eighth allocations of grants from the European regional development fund.

Mr. Peter Walker: None. Future funding from the European regional development fund for Gwynedd county council will be awarded through the recently approved national programme of community interest for Dyfed, Gwynedd and Powys.

Crossville Wales Motor Company

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the value of the Crossville Wales Motor Company when privatised in 1987.

Mr. Peter Walker: This information is confidential to the parties involved.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the value of the conditional offer for Crossville Wales by National Express; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: This is a matter for the two companies. I have no information.

A487 (Bypasses)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received during the past six months *(a)* from local authorities, *(b)* from individual councillors and *(c)* from members of the general public concerning the need for a bypass for the villages of Llanllyfni, Penygroes and Groeslon on the A487 trunk road in Gwynedd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There have been representations from Gwynedd county and Arfon borough councils and approaches from three councillors. Following discussions with Gwynedd county council, the county surveyor has been asked to review and report on the trunk roads in the area, updating earlier work in the light of current highway standards.

Sewage Disposal

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department has made any financial contribution, or is currently contributing, to research that would determine the fate of viruses discharged to the sea in sewage.

Mr. Grist: The Department is co-operating in the establishment of research work into the seawaters contaminated by sewage. The project should start soon and the Department will be making a financial contribution.

Bypasses

Sir Raymond Gower: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which new bypass schemes will be commenced during the next five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Government's plans for new bypass schemes in Wales are set out in "Roads in Wales 1985". The latest position on bypasses will be announced in the next edition of "Roads in Wales".

Young People (Rented Accommodation)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy concerning the provision of rented accommodation for young people living in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 28 October 1988]:* I am concerned to ensure that there is an adequate supply of rented accommodation for young people in Wales. In addition to housing provided by local authorities I have asked the housing corporation to treat single people as a priority group. Deregulation provided for in the Housing Bill will increase the supply of accommodation in the traditional private rented sector and I am working with local authorities to improve the standards and safety of existing houses in multiple occupation. Vulnerable single young people are entitled under the Housing Act 1985 to help from their local authority to secure accommodation.

YTS

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were on YTS in each of the constituencies of Wales at the most recent convenient date.

Mr. Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 28 October 1988]:* Figures for YTS trainees are not available on a constituency basis. The training agency in Wales provides statistics on an area office basis only which refer to the area in which training takes place, rather than that in which the trainee lives.

At the end of September 1988 the numbers in training in Wales were 25,791. In South and Mid Glamorgan 7,863, in Gwent 4,395, in West Glamorgan and Dyfed 6,928 and in Gwynedd, Clwyd and Powys 6,605.

Adult Education

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to ensure sufficient funding to maintain the facilities offered to mature students returning to education as adults at Coleg Harlech.

Mr. Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 28 October 1988]:* The warden was informed in February 1988 that the Welsh

Office would be undertaking a review of Coleg Harlech's functions. A similar review is being carried out of the long term residential colleges in England. These reviews have not yet been completed, but I will discuss the matter with the hon. Gentleman before reaching any conciusions.

Physical Handicap

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received during the past six months on the case for an all-Wales strategy for physical handicap; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 28 October 1988]:* I have received several representations in the past six months calling for an all-Wales strategy for physically handicapped people. One of these has been in the form of a discussion document submitted by the Wales Council for the Disabled and the Spastics Society in Wales which Welsh Office officials are currently considering.

Special Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many special schools he has visited since becoming Secretary of State for Wales;

(2) if he will visit Ysgol Belmont special school, Buckley, to meet the headmaster, his staff, senior students and parents to discuss difficulties relating to the school's work experience scheme; if he will seek sponsors to fund the Belmont school work experience scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 27 October 1988]:* Until a fortnight ago I had not received any invitations from education authorities to visit a special school. I have now received an invitation to visit Ysgol Belmont special school from a member of Clwyd county council, which I am considering. It is for the local education authority and the school to consider future plans should the North-East Wales Institute decide not to accommodate the current work experience project within the new employment training scheme.

TRANSPORT

Light Rail/Train Systems

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department has as to the location of proposed *(a)* light rail/train systems and *(b)* trolleybus systems in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Portillo: We have received information from the promoters of the following:

(a) Light rail/metro systems in:
- London Docklands and Croydon
- Greater Manchester
- South Yorkshire (Sheffield)
- West Midlands
- West Yorkshire (Leeds)
- Avon
- Southampton
- Tyne and Wear (Metro extension)

(b) Trolleybus systems in:
- West Yorkshire
- South Yorkshire

Buses (Deregulation)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the effect of the deregulation of local bus services in England and Wales on *(a)* the number of buses in service since October 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Information is not available on the number of routes or the overall number of buses of all types used on local services. It is, however, known that the number of bus miles operated on local services in England and Wales was 917·6 million in 1985-86 and 1,070·6 million by May 1988—an increase of 16·5 per cent. Research by the Polytechnic of Central London has also shown that over the country as a whole the number of minibuses on local services has increased from 400 operating in 40 places before deregulation to 5,600 in over 400 places.

New Carriageways

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department's preparations of traffic flow predictions on new carriageways include an estimate for extra traffic generated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes, where appropriate.

The Department's appraisals of inter-urban road improvements do not normally include an allowance for any traffic generated by the improvement itself. They do allow for the reassignment, or diversion, of traffic from unimproved roads to the improved one, for traffic growth, and for the effect on traffic of known or expected local developments. Experience suggests that traffic generation from any one inter-urban improvement is likely to be small.

In urban areas where the demand for road space exceeds the supply for much of the time, or where travel conditions are especially difficult, as with crossing major estuaries, then road improvements can be expected to generate traffic, and current appraisal techniques can allow for such generation.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the average extra traffic generated by a new carriageway, if he has any plans for changing the method of preparing traffic flow predictions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Where road improvements generate traffic, the extent of the generation differs significantly with the circumstances. No average can be given.

The Department monitors the effects of improvements on traffic, and is sponsoring research into the best way of modelling traffic in congested urban areas, with a view to improving its methods where that can be justified.

City Traffic

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will review methods of restructuring traffic within Britain's major cities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what measures he proposes to take to improve traffic movement within the central areas of cities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Local highway authorities have wide-ranging powers to introduce appropriate traffic management measures in city centres. Computer

technology is increasingly available for advanced traffic control systems. These can help to reduce congestion, as can the careful use of parking controls.

London (On-street Parking)

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to seek to reduce on-street parking in the central area of London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: London boroughs are encouraged to develop coherent policies on parking, waiting and loading which have regard to the needs of the area and which limit parking provision on the strategic road network. It is up to the boroughs, as local highway authorities, to decide on the extent of on-street parking provision.

Investment Tests

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he takes to ensure that the investment tests applied to road and rail projects are clear and consistent; whether cost-benefit analysis is applied to both types of projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Value for money is the main criterion in the assessment of road and rail investment projects. Improvements in both road and rail are appraised in terms of what people would be willing to pay, but with rail projects the fare box provides the means for realising these user benefits.

User benefits from road schemes are assessed by applying COBA or other similar cost-benefit techniques of evaluation. External effects such as the benefits of a rail project on road congestion can be taken into account when there is evidence that these are significant.

Airports

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list, for each year since 1976, all the airports in the United Kingdom which have received funds from central Government in order to improve their road and rail links, with an indication of the money allocated to each of them in 1988 prices.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No airport has received Government funds for this purpose.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many fully operational airports serve at present the routes to Europe.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Scheduled air services to one or more points in Europe were operated from 30 United Kingdom airports during the 1988 summer season.

Light Dues

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money has been collected by way of light dues in each of the past three years, specifying the amounts paid by the different types of vessels.

Mr. Portillo: Light dues receipts to the general lighthouse fund in respect of the last three financial years were as follows:

	£
1985-86	42,496,896
1986-87	48,804,040
1987-88	55,109,657

An analysis by different types of vessel is available only for 1985-86 and is as follows:

	£
Tankers (Oil)	13,308,897
Tankers (Other)	1,585,544
General Cargo	8,449,257
Bulk Carriers	4,733,613
Container Ships	10,529,134
Passenger (inc. cruise)	549,922
Ferries	461,715
Towed	12,052
Pleasure (over 20 NRT)	2,421
Yachts (over 20 NRT)	12,153
Tugs	9,299
Other	2,842,889

Buses

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what organisations representing passengers are regularly consulted by him on matters of bus transport *(a)* in general and *(b)* particularly about the quality of services and fare prices after deregulation.

Mr. Portillo: We have consulted the following bodies representing passenger interests from time to time about specific proposals affecting the bus industry:

National Association of Public Transport Users
National Federation of Bus Users
Transport 2000
London Regional Passengers Committee
Buswatch

Quality of services and fares were not a major subject of these consultations since they are essentially a matter for the operators.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has available as to changes in the level of use of buses since deregulation in *(a)* Engand, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales.

Mr. Portillo: Between 1985-86 and 1986-87 long established downward trend in bus usage continued with the number of passengers carried on local bus services falling by 8 per cent. in England, 4 per cent. in Scotland and 9 per cent. in Wales.

Bedford Bypass

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to commence work on the bypass to the town of Bedford; and what is the reason for continued delays in outlining a route.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The preferred route was announced on 10 March 1987. Since then the Department has been looking very carefully at suggested alternatives. We plan to make our views known shortly.

Draft orders will be published early next year.

If all the statutory procedures are completed satisfactorily and funds are available, construction could start towards the end of 1990.

Clapham and Milton Ernest Bypass

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to commence the bypass of the villages of Clapham and Milton Ernest, Bedfordshire, both on the A6; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Construction of the Clapham bypass is scheduled to start in the spring of 1991, subject to the satisfactory outcome of statutory procedures and the availability of funds. We have no plan for a bypass of Milton Ernest.

Cruise Ships

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if any steps are taken by his Department to discourage the use of cruise ships which were built many years previously.

Mr. Portillo: None. However, all United Kingdom ships are subject to the same inspection procedures.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many cruise ships are registered under United Kingdom regulations; and if he will give a breakdown of the use of such ships.

Mr. Portillo: There are eight cruise ships on the United Kingdom register. The use of these ships is a matter for their owners and operators.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what facilities exist for cruise ships to be inspected at regular intervals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: All cruise ships registered in countries which have ratified the international safety conventions must undergo a thorough survey of their hull, machinery and equipment each year. In additional all cruise ships are subject to random inspection under port state control procedures. Foreign cruise ships operating from the United Kingdom undergo an inspection to determine passenger capacity if no reciprocal agreement exists with the flag state.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the most recent findings of the International Maritime Organisation on the safety of older cruise ships.

Mr. Portillo: The International Maritime Organisation considers reports of casualties to ships, but I am not aware of any recent findings by the organisation on the safety of older cruise ships.

Buswatch

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what response he proposes to make to the report of the consumer group Buswatch, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Portillo: The findings recorded in the Buswatch report are based on incomplete and impressionistic responses. A survey of public opinion in the shire counties, carried out recently by the transport and road research laboratory and to be published in the near future, indicates that people are generally satisfied with their bus services. Buses are now running more frequently and few complaints were recorded about the availability of information.

London Underground (Feet on Seats)

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will introduce legislation to make it a punishable offence for passengers on London Underground trains to place their feet on the seats.

Mr. Portillo: No. This is a matter on which the LRT board might make byelaws if it thought this desirable.

Buses (Manchester)

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in view of the decision by the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority to discontinue the bus services from Saddleworth serving the Hulme grammar school, he will review arrangements for the oversight of bus services in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Portillo: Decisions on the provision of subsidised local bus services are entirely a matter for local authorities, in this case the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority.

I understand that its policy is to discriminate against children at independent schools.

However, I am told that a private operator has now introduced services which should meet the need.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 1 November 1988

WALES

Hospital Services (Privatisation)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of all new contracts awarded by 30 September, by each district health authority or special health authority, by hospital, for *(a)* portering, *(b)* catering, *(c)* laundry, *(d)* cleaning and *(e)* other ancillary work; and if he will give the estimated annual saving for each contract awarded.

Mr. Grist: The information requested in respect of new contracts awarded by district health authorities in Wales from 1 November 1987 to 30 September 1988 for catering, laundry and cleaning services is given in the following table. Details of contracts relating to portering and other ancillary work are not held centrally.

District health authority and details of contract	*Estimated annual savings* £
Clwyd	
Domestic Preswylfa in-house 2 years from January 1989	Not known
East Dyfed	
Domestic: Carmarthen in-house 3 years from 1 July 1988	41,000
Domestic: Ceredigion in-house 3 years from 1 August 1988	37,000
Domestic: Bryntirion in-house 3 years from 1 December 1988	29,100
Catering: Llanelli Unit in-house 3 years from 17 November 1987	Nil
Catering: Carmarthen in-house 3 years from 1 December 1988	400
Laundry: District Laundry in-house 3 years from 1 December 1988	46,500
Gwent	
Domestic: HQ in-house 3 years from 5 April 1988	Nil
Domestic: Community clinics North Gwent in-house 3 years from 1 August 1988	45,500
Domestic: County Hospital in-house 3 years from 7 November 1988	77,700
Domestic: Community Clinics South Gwent in-house 3 years from 1 January 1989	10,400
Gwynedd	
Domestic: Bryn-Y-Neuadd Hospital in-house 3 years from 14 February 1988	21,000
Domestic: St. Davids/Caernarfon Hospital in-house 3 years from January 1989	63,000
Domestic: Ysbyty Gwynedd in-house 3 years from January 1989	204,000
Mid Glamorgan	
Domestic: St. Tydfils/Mardy Hospital in-house 3 years from January 1989	61,500
Domestic: Bridgend General/Maesgwyn Hospital in-house 3 years from January 1989	4,800
Domestic: Prince Charles Hospital in-house 3 years from January 1989	100,700
Domestic: Dewi Sant, Pontypridd and District and Rhiwfelin Hospital in-house 3 years from December 1988	51,800
Domestic: Community Domestic Services in-house 5 years from May 1988	146,000
Catering: Prince Charles Hospital in-house 3 years from January 1989	73,500
Catering: East Glamorgan/Tonteg Hospital in-house 3 years from January 1989	37,700
Catering: Princess of Wales Hospital in-house 3 years from January 1989	30,500
Catering: Hensol and Talygarn Hospital in-house 3 years from January 1989	30,700
Catering: Bridgend General and Maesgwyn Hospital in-house 3 years from January 1989	47,000
Catering: Caerphilly Miners and Energlyn Hospitals in-house 3 years from January 1989	25,000
Laundry: District Wide in-house 5 years from March 1988	151,500
Pembrokeshire	
Laundry: Withybush Tenby and South Pembrokeshire Health Tex 5 years from 3 June 1988	10,000
Powys	
Laundry: Mid Wales and Llys Maldwyn in-house 3 years from 1 April 1988	Nil
South Glamorgan	
Laundry: District in-house 3 years from 1 January 1989	20,000
West Glamorgan	
Domestic: Parts of Cefn Coed Hospital in-house 5 years from 8 January 1989	88,700
Domestic: Parts Neath General Hospital in-house 5 years from 15 January 1989	20,200
Catering: West Unit and Cymla in-house 5 years from 1 July 1988	88,100
Catering: Cefn Coed, Garngoch and Llwyneryr Hospitals in-house 5 years from 3 October 1988	69,800
Catering: Neath General in-house 5 years from 21 November 1988	8,300

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the latest figures, as a percentage of services put out to tender by each district health authority, for *(a)* catering, *(b)* domestic services and *(c)* laundry; and if he will give the estimated annual savings.

Mr. Grist: The information is as follows:

DHA	*Percentage by value of service for which tenders invited* Per cent.	[1]*Estimated annual savings* £
Clwyd		
Domestic	0·5	Not analogous with previous costs
Catering	Nil	Nil
Laundry	Nil	Nil
East Dyfed		
Domestic	61	107,100
Catering	52	Nil
Laundry	100	46,500
Gwent		
Domestic	37	133,600
Catering	Nil	Nil
Laundry	Nil	Nil

DHA	Percentage by value of service for which tenders invited Per cent.	[1] Estimated annual savings £
Gwynedd		
Domestic	88	365,000
Catering	100	Not yet known
Laundry	100	Not yet known
Mid Glamorgan		
Domestic	75	355,200
Catering	80	244,400
Laundry	100	151,500
Pembrokeshire		
Domestic	100	247,200
Catering	100	112,200
Laundry	100	10,000
Powys		
Domestic	100	68,000
Catering	100	175,000
Laundry	100	Nil
South Glamorgan		
Domestic	100	Not yet known
Catering	100	Not yet known
Laundry	100	20,000
West Glamorgan		
Domestic	82	227,000
Catering	84	166,200
Laundry	100	199,600
WHCSA		
Domestic	100	18,000

[1] These figures do not include anticipated savings from contracts not yet let.

Welsh Water Authority

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how much land in acres is owned by the Welsh water authority in England and Wales.

(2) what types of land, urban, rural and mountain, are in Welsh water authority ownership in Wales and England;

(3) what estimate he has of the value of land in Welsh water authority ownership;

(4) how much land is in Welsh water authority ownership *(a)* with outline planning permission, *(b)* with planning permission or *(c)* currently submitted to local authorities for planning permission.

Mr. Grist: These are matters for the Welsh water authority. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Gentleman.

TRANSPORT

A2 (Bexleyheath-Dartford)

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the carriageway restrictions on the A2 between Bexleyheath and Dartford to end; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Weather permitting, work is expected to be completed by the end of January.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning delays on the A2 between Bexleyheath and Dartford.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: One representation has been received about delays resulting from the contract on the A2 between Bexley and Dartford.

Rail Electrification (Lichfield-Redditch)

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has yet received British Rail's submission for the electrification of the cross-city line from Lichfield to Redditch via Birmingham New Street.

Mr. Portillo: I have not.

M1

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will reconsider the policy stated in the answer of 12 November 1987, *Official Report*, column *252*, and authorise the use as an additional lane of the stretch of disused offside lane hard shoulder on the north-bound carriageway of the M1 from the junction with the M25 to its most northerly point.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. This extra lane is not long enough to be useful and safe.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in the light of the answer of 12 November 1987 to the hon. Member for Derby, North, *Official Report*, column *252*, concerning the non-construction of a stretch of additional vehicle carriageway on the north-bound side of the M1, he will explain the criteria used for deciding to construct a shorter length of carriageway on the south-bound side of the same motorway between junctions 4 and 5.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The new southbound crawler lane between junctions 4 and 5 was constructed because slow-moving heavy goods vehicles on this incline were causing delays to traffic, particularly during the morning peak period.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the length of fourth lane carriageway on the south-bound side of the M1 motorway between junctions 4 and 5.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The crawler lane is 1·4 km long.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the length of disused offside lane hard shoulder on the north-bound carriageway of the M1 north of the junction with the M25.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Approximately 2½ miles. It has less than two miles as a continuous length.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many motor vehicle accidents have been reported on the stretch of fourth lane carriageway on the south-bound side of the M1 between junctions 4 and 5 since this south lane was constructed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There have been no personal injury accidents recorded since the crawler lane was opened to traffic on 14 August 1988.

Rear Brake Lights

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what alterations are planned or are being considered with regard to the regulations affecting the provision of rear brake lights on motor vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Better vehicle conspicuity can reduce accidents and save lives. New draft vehicle lighting regulations on which we are currently consulting propose improved lighting on heavy lorries and a requirement that brake lights fitted in car rear windows should be only half as bright as normal brake lights. This would overcome the problem of eye-level glare.

We are also discussing internationally with a view to agreeing new European standards, other ways of making brake lights more effective, for instance by separating them from other rear lights.

Cherished Registration Numbers

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether it is yet possible to reduce the five-year delay before the cherished registration number from a stolen car can be re-issued.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: From today, the last registered keeper of a stolen and unrecovered vehicle with a cherished number can have that number reinstated on another vehicle only one year after the date of theft. Those motorists known to be able to benefit from the change are being informed individually by the driver and vehicle licensing centre.

Railway Inspectorate

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why, pursuant to his answer of 27 October, his Department's review of the railway inspectorate of April 1987 states in paragraph 6-22 that as a matter of policy the inspectorate has deliberately refrained from making any preventative checks on railway maintenance, whether of operating equipment or permanent way; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Paragraph 6.22 of the review report went on to recommend that inspections under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act should include

"checks as to whether track and equipment have been maintained adequately as a matter of routine".

This is receiving careful consideration, along with the other recommendations in the report.

Shipping (Reflagging)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many foreign reflaggings to the ensign have occurred since the strengthening of the Armilla patrol in late 1986.

Mr. Portillo: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Unlicensed Vehicles

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide a breakdown by London boroughs of reported unlicensed vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The figures are not available.

Egremont Bypass

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will explain the circumstances leading to the cancellation of the public inquiry into the proposed Egremont bypass; when he proposes that the inquiry should resume; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The public inquiry was abandoned because of a procedural flaw in the arrangements for the inquiry. We forgot to publish the official notice of the inquiry. I apologise. Arrangements for a fresh inquiry will be made as quickly as possible.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 November.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 November.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 November.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 November.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 1 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Correspondence (Leaks)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the progress of the inquiry into the leak of a letter from the Secretary of State for Social Security to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury; what inquiries are being undertaken to establish the circumstances in which a copy of the letter was destroyed; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The normal procedures are being followed. It is not the usual practice to comment further on matters of this kind.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Action Trust Areas

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the statement in the Minister for Housing and Planning's personal letter to tenants in housing action trust areas that councils will have the resources to enable them to buy back the houses from the trust means that there will be a separate and additional provision in that local authority's housing investment programme.

Mr. Trippier: As well as writing to prospective tenants, I wrote to the leaders of the local authorities being considered for housing action trusts. In those letters I said that authorities which wish to repurchase HAT property when the trust has completed its improvement work would be given the necessary approvals to enable them to raise sufficient funds for acquisition. Under the present system, there would be an in-year addition to the council's housing investment programme allocation. Under the proposed new financial system, set out in the consultation paper, "Capital Expenditure and Finance", a supplementary credit approval would be issued.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether the reference in the Minister for Housing and Planning's personal letter to tenants in housing action trust areas to rents moving in line with council rents takes account of the proposed charges to the housing revenue accounting system as set out in the consultation document published by his Department;

(2) if he will clarify whether the statement in the Minister for Housing and Planning's personal letter to tenants in housing action trust areas means rents will move in line with council rents or with market rents.

Mr. Trippier: Rents payable by tenants of housing action trusts will move in line with council rents. My letter to prospective tenants takes into account the proposals in the Government's consultation paper "A New Financial Regime for Local Authority Housing in England and Wales." One of the objectives of the proposed new system is that council rents generally should not exceed levels within the reach of people in low-paid employment.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how a social landlord, as referred to in the Minister for Housing and Planning's personal letter to tenants in housing action trust areas, is to be registered.

Mr. Trippier: Clause 79 of the Housing Bill requires the Housing Corporation to maintain a register of approved landlords which shall be open to inspection.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the legally binding guarantee about rent and long-term security referred to in the Minister for Housing and Planning's personal letter to tenants in housing action trust areas, is an assured tenancy as set out in the Housing Bill.

Mr. Trippier: Housing action trust tenants transferring to landlords approved by the Housing Corporation will be offered assured tenancies subject to the terms of part I of the Housing Bill and the tenants' guarantee or its equivalent. The Housing Corporation has issued a draft of the tenants' guarantee, "Guidance for Registered Housing Associations on Housing Management Practice." Such assured tenancies will provide long-term security of tenure. The draft guarantee also states that rents should be at levels within the reach of those in low-paid employment. The initial rent levels will be set out in the tenancy agreement which should also state the procedure and framework for altering rents.

Palace of Westminster (Terrace)

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if there are any plans to return to its original level the Terrace of the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Chope: There are no proposals to restore the Terrace to its original level. The work involved would be substantial and for the foreseeable future there are more pressing priorities to be met from the parliamentary works vote.

Planning Applications

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning applications called in and subject to public inquiry have been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused in each of the past eight years.

Mr. Chope: The number of called-in planning applications granted and refused is as follows:

	Granted	*Refused*
1980	33	24
1981	36	17
1982	23	25
1983	33	30
1984	32	35
1985	27	17
1986	25	24
1987	27	26

The importance of most called-in development proposals means that most of these cases will have been subject to a public local inquiry, but the Department has no record of the number.

Childhood Cancer

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution to publish its report into the incidence of childhood cancer in north Humberside.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution is completing its investigation of the radioactive discharges from the Capper Pass factory on north Humberside and related issues including possible health effects. We expect its report will be submitted to Ministers in November.

Right-to-Buy Legislation

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of properties sold under the right-to-buy legislation since 1980 by each local authority in England and the percentage of each authority's housing stock these figures represent.

Mr. Trippier: A table giving the information requested on sales up to March 1988 as reported by each local authority in England was placed in the Library on 13 September in response to an earlier question by my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on 29 July at column *819*. An updated version of this table, giving information up to June 1988 is to be produced shortly, and will also be laid in the Library.

Leasehold Reform Act 1967

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish his response to the consultation paper on disputes about valuations under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967.

Mr. Trippier: The responses to our consultation paper are still being considered by the Department and by the Welsh Office. I hope to be able to announce decisions soon.

Inner Aid Programme Funding

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 26 October on the subject of inner aid programme funding, if he will list those local authorities that supplied information to his Department in respect of a part of their application too late to qualify for such funding.

Mr. Trippier: I am writing to my hon. Friend.

National Parks

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, following his decision not to pursue Her Majesty's Government's previous intention to give national park authorities in England and Wales powers to make landscape conservation orders, what steps he now intends to take to introduce new laws giving extra protection to the landscape of national parks.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As I explained when announcing my right hon. Friend's decision not to proceed with the landscape conservation orders proposal, we see no need for further legislation in this area at present.

Livestock Units (Planning Permission)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give a date on which he now expects to lay the proposed consolidated General Development Order to include a provision requiring planning permission for the siting of livestock units within 400 m of most existing permanent buildings.

Mr. Chope: The Town and Country Planning General Developent Order 1988 was laid on 31 October and will come into effect on 5 December. It incorporates new planning controls over livestock units and associated structures proposed to be erected within 400 m of most types of permanent buildings.

Water Supply (Nitrates)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current level of nitrates in water in Derbyshire; and how this compares with the safety limits proposed by the European Community.

Mr. Moynihan: The current level of nitrate in drinking water supplies in the Derbyshire area is well below the limit for nitrate of 50 mg per litre set in the EC drinking water directive, except for a small part of south Derbyshire where the level is around 70 mg per litre. About 1,000 people receive this water. However, there is no danger to health and the water is safe to drink. A remedial programme is in hand.

Radon Gas

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has concerning levels of radon gas in the east midlands; what assessment he has made of the need to inform the owners and occupiers of private dwelling houses built on, over or near granite of the potential danger therefrom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The results of indoor exposure to radon have been published by the National Radiological Protection Board in two documents, "Exposure to Radon Daughters in Dwellings" (NRPB-GS6, January 1987) and "Natural Radiation Exposure in UK Dwellings" (NRPB-R190, May 1988), copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House. There is no need to restrict home building on, over or near granite provided adequate measures are taken to avoid high levels of radon.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider amending the powers of the Nature Conservancy Council to provide a right of independent appeal against a proposed designation of a site of special scientific interest to the proprietor or other affected persons; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. The question of a right of appeal was considered and rejected during the passage of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and subsequently by the Environment Committee of this House (first report Session 1984-85). We are satisfied that the existing procedures are appropriate.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider amending the powers of the Nature Conservancy Council to require it to publish the scientific criteria which it applies in designating a site of special scientific interest; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Nature Conservancy Council's explanatory pamphlet, "The Selection of Sites of Special Scientific Interest," gives details of the selection guidelines currently in use. It is available to the public and a copy is held in the Library of the House. I am advised that the Nature Conservancy Council intends to publish a more detailed exposition early in 1989.

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for publicity on the implementation of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 *(a)* around the time of the compilation of the community charges register, *(b)* around the time of the publication of the community charges register and *(c)* around the time of issue of the first community charge bills; and how much he plans to spend in (i) 1988-89, (ii) 1989-90 and (iii) 1990-91 on such publicity.

Mr. Ridley: I have not yet taken any decisions on what Government publicity will be needed at any of the stages mentioned. £1 million has been allocated this financial year to paid publicity to inform the public of the measures in the Local Government Finance Act 1988. No decisions have been taken on expenditure for subsequent years.

Dieldrin

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to support the introduction of rules to control levels of dieldrin in fish, in line with proposals supported by the European Community.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* The European Community adopted a directive in June setting limit values and quality objectives for discharges to water of dieldrin and related substances. The directive sets water quality standards for these substances in order to protect aquatic life, and provides that concentrations in fish and other aquatic life should not increase over time. It will come into effect on 1 January 1989.

Dieldrin is a highly persistent pesticide. In the United Kingdom most of the dieldrin remaining in the aquatic

environment derives from past use and levels can therefore be expected gradually to decline. None the less, the Government have recently announced that the few remaining authorised agricultural uses of dieldrin will be phased out. All approvals for the use of products containing dieldrin will cease after 30 March 1989. This will ensure that further amounts of the substance do not reach the aquatic environment as a result of spillages or misuse.

Waste Disposal

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his departmental officials have made any assessment of the paper submitted by Friends of the Earth International, by George C. Kasoulides to the October consultative meeting of the 1972 London convention on the prevention of marine pollution by dumping wastes and other matters (the London dumping convention), entitled "Procedures for the Assessment of Liability Concerning Damage to the Environment Caused at Sea."

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 27 October 1988]:* I have been asked to reply.

The paper submitted by Friends of the Earth International on the assessment of liability concerning damage to the environment caused at sea was one of a number of papers considered at the 11th consultative meeting of contracting parties to the London dumping convention in October.

Some contracting parties like the United Kingdom questioned the need to establish a liability regime or considered it premature to do so. Contracting parties agreed, however, to set up a small task team of legal experts to take stock of existing domestic law and public international law on civil and state liability applicable to damage resulting from dumping at sea.

The task team will report to the 12th consultative meeting in October 1989.

10, Downing Street

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been *(a)* expended, and *(b)* allocated for (i) furnishings and (ii) decoration in No. 10, Downing street in 1988-89.

Mr. Chope: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

The information is not available in the precise form requested. As regards the allocation of expenditure in 1988-89, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 29 July 1988, *Official Report*, column *628*. Actual expenditure to date in 1988-89 on furnishings and decorations in 10, Downing street, including the restoration and refurbishment of the state rooms is £213,318.

DEFENCE

HMS Hermes

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to converting a merchantman into a commando carrier so as to provide a replacement for HMS Hermes.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 24 October at column *62*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway), which announced the issue of an invitation to tender for an aviation support ship to provide dedicated helicopter lift in support of amphibious operations. Tenderers will be free to offer varying options for meeting the requirement, not just by new design and build. Other options might include new build to an existing but suitably modified merchant ship design, or the conversion of an existing merchant hull.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the Ulster Defence Regiment are currently estimated to be Catholics; what is the total recruitment since 1985; and what proportion of recruitment since 1985 has been Catholic.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: About 3 per cent. of the Ulster Defence Regiment's current strength have declared their religion as Roman Catholic. Since the beginning of 1985, about 3,000 men and women have been recruited into the regiment of whom just over 4 per cent. declared their religion as Roman Catholic.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the costs of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and its Reserve, divided between wages and salaries, other personnel costs, costs of construction and buildings, investment in military equipment and other costs for the fiscal years 1985-86, 1986-87, 1987-88 and the projected costs for the years 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Estimated costs for the financial years 1985-86 to 1988-89 are as follows:

	(£ million, current prices)			
Financial year	*Wages and salaries*	*Support costs*	*Capital expenditure on equipment*	*Total*
1985-86	48·2	3·9	0·7	52·8
1986-87	48·8	4·1	0·6	53·5
1987-88	48·3	4·1	0·6	53·0
1988-89	49·5	4·7	0·6	54·8

Figures for 1989-90 are not yet available.
The figures for works costs are not readily available.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the military equipment of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and its Reserve, listing separately firearms and the type of firearms, motor vehicles, armoured vehicles and type and number of radio, radar and electronics surveillance equipment with which the regiment is equipped.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current establishment of weapons and vehicles for the Ulster Defence Regiment is outlined as follows. The UDR has no reserve.

	Number
5·56mm rifle SA 80	5,977
5·56mm rifle Light Support Weapon (LSW)	989
0·38in revolver	[1]275
0·22in pistol	[1]1,901
9mm pistol	[2]901
7·65mm pistol	[3]39
Shotguns	3
Landrovers	274
4 ton Trucks	12

	Number
Trailers	61
Recruiting Trailer	1
Other vehicles	232

[1] Personal Protection Weapons (PPWs).
[2] 481 of which are issued as PPWs.
[3] 25 of which are issued as PPWs.

The SA 80 and LSW are replacing the SLRs, LMGs, GPMGs and SMGs with which the regiment has previously been equipped. Other equipment can be issued when commitments or circumstances dictate. The radio allocation varies from week to week, dependent upon the tasks and commitments of each battalion.

Northern Ireland

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the manpower strength of the British Army in Northern Ireland, giving details of the number of operatives for the categories Ulster Defence Regiment, Regular British Army and British Territorial Army, on 30 September.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The figures are as at 30 June 1988, the latest available.

	Number
Ulster Defence Regiment	6,310
Regular Army/Royal Marines[1]	9,868
Territorial Army	3,762

The figures for the Ulster Defence Regiment include both full time and part-time soldiers. Soldiers of the Territorial Army are not used in support of the RUC in counter-terrorist operations.
[1] From time to time a Royal Marine Commando is deployed in an infantry role.

Tornado Aircraft

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Tornado F2 aircraft have been delivered *(a)* with and *(b)* without radar; and how many are in store (i) with and (ii) without radar.

Mr. Sainsbury: I presume that the hon. Member requires information on all marks of Tornado ADV. 111 Tornado ADV's have been delivered to date comprising 18 F2 and 93 F3. All Tornado ADV aircraft in front line service have radars fitted. There are 26 aircraft at present in storage at RAF St. Athan of which 14 are F2 and 12 are F3. While they are in storage there is no requirement to fit these aircraft with radars. The balance of four F2 ADV's are being used to support the development programme.

Armilla Patrol

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the number of merchant ships escorted each year by the Armilla patrol, distinguishing between *(a)* those registered in the United Kingdom, *(b)* those not so registered but flying the Red Ensign and *(c)* those which were in neither category.

Mr. Hamilton: The Armilla patrol's operational pattern has involved accompaniment rather than escort of merchant vessels in the Gulf. In 1987, when the policy began, 405 transits by entitled merchant vessels were accompanied by Armilla warships. For 1988 up to 31 October, when accompaniment ceased, the corresponding figure is 621. It would not be possible to divide the total figure of 1,026 accompanied transits by country of registration and flag at the time without disproportionate cost.

Nitroglycerine Manufacturing

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the management of British Aerospace concerning the maintenance of a nitroglycerine manufacturing facility in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: None. However, RO plc remain committed to us to effect deliveries of products containing components using nitroglycerine in accordance with annual delivery programmes contained within a number of contracts.

Royal Ordnance

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what conditions regarding the nationality of sub-contractors are included in his agreement with Royal Ordnance plc for the supply of 80 per cent. of his Department's requirements for explosives, propellants and ammunition.

Mr. Sainsbury: The agreement includes standard contract conditions which require RO plc to inform us in advance of any direct overseas expenditure likely to be incurred and to obtain approval, prior to purchase, for products manufactured overseas valued at more than £100,000.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made of the effect of an increase in the geographical concentration of Royal Ordnance manufacturing facilities on their vulnerability to attack in time of war.

Mr. Sainsbury: We understand that Royal Ordnance is reducing the number of its sites in order to improve the efficiency of its production. Our aim is, however, to increase the proportion of work going to competition in the ammunition field and this will open up opportunities to other United Kingdom companies to enter the ammunition business at the same time as achieving better value for money for the tax payer.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made on the effect of the recent Royal Ordnance plant closures on the wartime production capability of Royal Ordnance.

Mr. Sainsbury: The possible maintenance of reserve capacity in Royal Ordnance ammunition factories was considered well before the sale of Royal Ordnance to British Aerospace. Whilst we will continue to consider the retention of specific manufacturing capabilities on a case by case basis with the company, we do not believe that the individual plants concerned are, of themselves, an indispensable part of the United Kingdom defence industrial base.

Conservative Party Conference

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any additional costs were incurred by the

Ministry of Defence for services relating to security provision to the 1988 Conservative party conference other than those relating to transport, accommodation, and so on.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

HMS Penelope

Miss Fookes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will reconsider his decision not to award the contract for the repair of the Leander class frigate HMS Penelope to Devonport Management Limited in the light of further information about the relative price competitivenes of the main bidders, as indicated in a letter being sent to him by the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 27 October 1988]:* No. The contract was awarded following competitive tendering to the company submitting the lowest compliant bid which, after due adjustment for comparability was significantly lower than the DML bid. However, I shall write to my hon. Friend.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Personal Financial Information

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what evidence he has received of serious breaches of confidentiality by banks and financial institutions concerning personal financial information; what action he proposes to take to prevent such abuses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I have received no evidence of the kind described by my hon. Friend. If he is able to provide me with evidence I shall have it looked into.

Post Office

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has made, or intends to make, any assessment of the damage caused to the revenue of the Post Office, and of the implications for Government decisions on its future financial framework, by the September strike by the Union of Communication Workers, by way of the transfer of custom from traditional postal methods to facsimile transmission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has asked to be kept closely informed of the Post Office's expectations of the consequences for the business of the recent postal strike.

The Post Office has already been set financial targets for the current financial year. In so far as the consequences of the strike are likely to affect the Post Office's future financial performance, they will be taken into account in decisions on its future financial framework.

Cash Limits

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether any changes will be made to his Department's cash limit for 1988-89.

Mr. Newton: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the cash limit for Class V, Vote 3 (administration, regulation of domestic trade and industry, and consumer protection) will be increased by £2 million from £187,436,000 to £189,436,000. This increase is to meet the cost of certain market assessment studies. The increase will be offset by savings in Class V, Vote 2 (Support for Industry) where the cash limit will be reduced by a corresponding amount from £570,256,000 to £568,256,000. It will not therefore add to the total of planned public expenditure.

Offshore Firms (Investors)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what actions he proposes to take to assist United Kingdom investors who have suffered losses through dealing with offshore firms.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 28 October 1988]:* The Financial Services Act 1986 will provide considerable protections to investors in this position. Where the offshore business is not authorised under the Act and it carries on investment business here unlawfully, there are powers to obtain a restitution order from the courts where investors have suffered loss. A similar order may be sought if the business is authorised and investors suffer loss as a result of its misconduct. In addition, if the business is authorised, the investors' compensation scheme, established under the Act, may provide full or partial compensation for any loss suffered. A number of other provisions under the Act are also relevant. However, investors should recognise that investing with unauthorised overseas businesses is riskier than investing with authorised businesses; and that the provisions of the Act are not retrospective.

Scottish and Newcastle Breweries plc

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what approaches he has received from individuals or companies seeking to arrange meetings in connection with the proposed takeover of Scottish and Newcastle plc by Elders IXL; and if he will list their names.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 28 October 1988]:* A number of representations from hon. Members and others about the proposed acquisition of Scottish and Newcastle Breweries plc by Elders IXL have been received and my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I have had a meeting with the hon. Member and four of his colleagues in the House on this matter.

One request for a meeting has so far been received from one of the parties to the proposed merger. In accordance with our usual practice in such cases this has been declined.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the meetings he has held with Elders IXL or their representatives in connection with their proposed takeover of Scottish and Newcastle plc; and if he will name the individuals who attended those meetings.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 28 October 1988]:* No such meetings have been held.

House of Fraser

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his policy with regard to publication

of the House of Fraser inquiry report before *(a)* the serious fraud office has completed its inquiries, and *(b)* any criminal cases stemming from its inquiries have been disposed of by the courts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* Publication of the report is a matter for the Secretary of State's discretion. His present view is that it would not be proper for the report to be published either before the serious fraud office has completed its inquiries or, if there were to be criminal proceedings, until after those proceedings were concluded.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the names of persons or organisations mentioned in the report to which any sections of the House of Fraser inquiry report have been revealed.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* No.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement outlining the reasons for his decision to postpone the publication of the House of Fraser inquiry report following the announcement by the serious fraud office that further time was needed for investigation and consideration of the case by their officers; and what other considerations he took into account in making his decision.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* I am unable to add to the press statement released by my Department on 29 September 1988.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on what date he received the inspector's report into the affairs of House of Fraser; when he forwarded the report to *(a)* the Office of Fair Trading and *(b)* the serious fraud office; what other bodies outside Her Majesty's Government were sent copies; and what were the reasons for circulating copies to the Office of Fair Trading and the serious fraud office.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 31 October 198]:* The inspectors submitted their report to the Secretary of State on 23 July. As indicated in the Department's press statement on 29 September, a copy of the report was forwarded to the Director General of Fair Trading. This took place on 19 August after the necessary parliamentary order had come into force. The report was passed to the director general because the Secretary of State would have power to refer the merger to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission if the report contained evidence of material facts about the merger that had not previously been notified or made public. The director general is considering the matter and will be advising the Secretary of State as soon as reasonably practicable.

As also indicated in the press statement, a copy of the report was passed to the serious fraud office. This took place on 28 July. This was because the report raised serious issues which required to be looked at by the prosecution authorities.

In answering this question it would not be proper for me to discuss which bodies apart from those indicated in the press statement have received copies of the report. These matters are necessarily confidential.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he received any request from the serious fraud office in respect of the publication of the House of Fraser report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* I have received no such request. Naturally, my Department consults the prosecuting authorities in appropriate cases before publishing material which might be prejudicial to their investigations or to any subsequent prosecutions. Such consultation took place in this case and the views of the prosecuting authorities were given due weight.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has received from the serious fraud office regarding the time which will be required by it to consider the House of Fraser inquiry report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* I have received no information from the serious fraud office in this respect. I am confident that its inquiries will proceed as quickly as possible, consistent with a thorough investigation.

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he received any request from *(a)* the police or *(b)* any other public authority regarding his decision to publish the report into the Barlow Clowes case in light of the prosecutions and further police inquiries which were taking place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State announced his intention to publish Sir Godfray Le Quesne's report at the time of Sir Godfray's appointment subject to there being no legal impediment as to content or timing.

Naturally, my Department consults the prosecuting authorities in appropriate cases before publishing material which might be prejudicial to their investigations or to any subsequent prosecutions. Such consultation took place in this case and the views of the prosecuting authorities were given due weight.

European Standards

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what steps are being taken to encourage British companies to bring their standards up to the level of such European standards as are now required by law;

(2) what steps are being taken to encourage British companies to bring their standards up to the level of such European standards as may in future be required by law.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* The information my Department provides for industry about the single market stresses the increasingly important role of standards and will continue to do so.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the consequence for British industries in relation to any given product to be made, sold or distributed within the European Community if *(a)* the British Standard does not conform to the EEC standard required by law, *(b)* there is no British Standard which conforms to EEC standards required by law and *(c)* the British Standard is not adopted as being consistent with the EEC standard required by law having been rejected by majority vote.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* European Community standards are made by the

European standards bodies, CEN and CENELEC. The British Standards Institute is the United Kingdom member. While every effort is made to achieve unanimity, the British Standards Institute and the other members have agreed to abide by weighted majority voting. Once agreed, European standards are given the status of British Standards by publication of an identical text. Any conflicting existing British Standards must be withdrawn.

Business Regulation

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further plans he has to lift the burden of regulation on business.

Mr. Maude *[pursuant to his oral answer, 9 March 1988, column 314]:* The White Paper "Releasing Enterprise", which will be published tomorrow, reports progress over the last 18 months and makes proposals for taking the deregulation initiative forward with new momentum.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Sound Archives

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he has any proposals with regard to the future preservation of the sound archives of the proceedings of the House, as recommended in the second report of the Sound Broadcasting Committee 1986-87.

Mr. Wakeham: It is proposed, with Mr. Speaker's agreement, to arrange for the implementation as soon as possible of the recommendation made in the second report of the House of Commons Sound Broadcasting Committee (Session 1986-87) that, in accordance with arrangements made with the National Sound Archive, a complete sound record of the proceedings of the House should in future, after retention by the House authorities here for a period of seven years, be stored permanently at the National Sound Archive in South Kensington.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Hurd: I last met the commissioner on 20 October at a lunch at New Scotland Yard organised by the community involvement branch. It was an informal occasion, during which we discussed the work of the branch, and a number of other policing issues.

Electronic Monitoring

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the proposed pilot projects to use electronic monitoring for people on bail to commence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Next summer.

Party Conferences (Security)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received from conference towns and police authorities on the cost of security for party conferences.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received recent representations from 12 hon. and right hon. Members—nine of whom represent districts in which party conferences are held—one district chamber of commerce and a number of members of the public.

We have considered all representations carefully, but have concluded that we would not be justified in departing from normal police funding arrangements in these cases.

Fresh Start

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on the Fresh Start initiative in prisons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Fresh Start is in place at all establishments. We are giving effect to a programme of action plans to improve the carrying out of Fresh Start principles and to develop best practice.

Litter Offences

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been prosecuted for litter offences in each of the last four years.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question from him on 9 June at columns *639-42*. The available information about the number of defendants proceeded against for litter-related offences, which may be incomplete, is published annually in table S1.1(a)(iii) of volume 1 of the supplementary tables to the "Criminal statistics, England and Wales". Copies of the issue for 1987 have been placed in the Library.

Noise Pollution

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to combat noise pollution arising from public houses in residential areas.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In addition to their existing powers, the Licensing Act 1988 empowered licensing justices to make restriction orders, on grounds of disturbance, to limit or nullify the extended opening hours provided for in the Act, to exercise greater control over late-night extensions and to revoke licences at any licensing session following receipt of a complaint. A circular was issued in August drawing to the attention of the courts and the police the wide powers available to them to prevent and curb disorder, infringements of the licensing law and drunkennness.

Data Protection Act

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when the committee reviewing the workings of the Data Protection Act is due to report; whether he will name those organisations that provided evidence to that committee; and whether he will place the evidence in the Library;

(2) whether the committee reviewing the workings of the Data Protection Act have reported to him concerning

the implications for individual privacy that arise from *(a)* the exemption from the whole Act if personal data are used for national security purposes, *(b)* the lack of powers for the registrar in relation to any of the eight data protection principles if a disclosure is required by any enactment, *(c)* the exemption from the duty to obtain personal data fairly and lawfuly, if the data are required obtained by any enactment and *(d)* the powers given under the Local Government Finance Act to the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Mr. Renton: The interdepartmental committee is continuing its review but is conscious of the need to report to Ministers as soon as possible. The committee is awaiting the result of the independent consultation exercise undertaken by the data protection registrar before deciding whether there is need to call for further evidence. It is not intended that such evidence should be placed in the Library. The data protection registrar intends that the outcome of his exercise should be published in due course.

Data Transfers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will place in the Library a copy of the rules that will allow Departments to transfer personal data to other Departments connected to the Government data network.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The principles under which the transfer of personal data may be authorised are the same for the Government data network as for other means of transmission, whether automatic or manual. Authority for the transfer of personal information between Departments is a matter for the Ministers of the Departments concerned.

Electoral Register

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will review the sale of the electoral register in light of restrictions on the sale of the community charge register.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The Government made it clear, during the passage of what is now the Local Government Finance Act 1988, that the provisions governing the sale of the electoral register would remain in force irrespective of any decision on the sale of the extract of the community charges register.

Litter

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward legislative proposals to permit the police to levy on-the-spot fines for littering of public places.

Mr. John Patten: No; the police must give priority to dealing with violence and other more serious crime.

Bogus Refugees

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the numbers of bogus refugees coming into Britain over each of the past nine years and the current figure for 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Information on applications for refugee status is published in an annual series of statistical bulletins, most recently "Refugee statistics, United Kingdom, 1987" Home Office statistical bulletin 16/88. The statistics show a marked decline over the last nine years in the number of grants of refugee status as a proportion of applications received. But we do not categorise "bogus" applications separately. The refusal of an application means that the asylum-seeker is not considered to have a well-founded fear of persecution; it does not necessarily suggest that the application was not made in good faith.

Terrorism

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons in England and Wales were charged with terrorist-type offences relating to Northern Ireland in the current year; how many of those charged were released on bail; and what was the average period between remand and trial for prisoners refused bail relating to such charges in Britain in the current year.

Mr. Hurd: In the current year one person has been charged with such an offence and he was remanded in custody for 47 days before trial. In addition the three persons remanded in custody last year on charges of conspiracy to murder the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland were further charged this year with conspiracy to murder persons unknown. The total period spent on remand by the three before trial was 393 days.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were remanded in custody before trial for terrorist-type offences in the current year.

Mr. Hurd: Four.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of deaths and injuries which have occurred in Great Britain in 1987 and 1988 connected with present civil unrest in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hurd: In 1987 no homicides were recorded in England and Wales as attributed to acts of terrorism connected with Northern Ireland. Provisional information for the first nine months of 1988 is that there has been one such offence of homicide, in an IRA bombing in which nine persons were also injured. I understand from my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland that there were no such deaths or injuries recorded in Scotland either in 1987 or so far in 1988.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in British prisons who give as their domicile Northern Ireland have been returned to Northern Ireland to serve the whole or part of their sentences in the current year; and how many of these prisoners were serving sentences for terrorist-type offences.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Six inmates of English prisons who gave Northern Ireland as their domicile have been granted transfer to Northern Ireland at their own request to serve the remainder of their sentences since 1 January this year. One is serving a sentence for a terrorist-type offence. Not all these transfers have yet taken place. Transfers of inmates from Scotland to Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Custodial Remands

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average period of custodial remand for female custodial remand prisoners in England and Wales for the first half of the current year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is estimated that the figures for the first half of 1988 were broadly similar to those for 1987, that is an average of 45 days spent by untried females in prison service establishments and an average of 27 days for convicted unsentenced females.

Custodial Sentences

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average length of custodial sentence of female prisoners in England and Wales in the first six months of the current year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information on the distribution of the length of sentence for females received under sentence or serving sentences is published annually in "Prison statistics, England and Wales"—tables 3.3, 3.10, 5(a), 5.9 and 7.1 of the latest issue for 1986, Cm. 210—copies of which are in the Library. The average length of sentence for females received into prison service establishments in England and Wales in the first six months of 1988 to serve a determinate sentence, excluding those in default of payment of a fine, was about 8·1 months for young offenders and 12·5 months for adults.

I regret that corresponding information for the complete year of 1984, given in an earlier reply on 3 February 1986, at column *5*, was incorrect. The correct figures are 6·5 months for young offenders and 8·5 months for adults.

Prisoners (Transfers)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were transferred from *(a)* England and Wales to Northern Ireland and *(b)* Northern Ireland to England and Wales in the current year; and under which section of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 such transfers were carried out.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since 1 January 1988, six inmates have been accepted for permanent transfer from England and Wales to Northern Ireland under section 26 of the 1961 Act, and six for temporary transfer under section 27. One inmate has been accepted for transfer from Northern Ireland to England and Wales under section 26 and one under section 27. No transfers have been made this year under other sections of the Act.

Prisoners (Parole)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list separately how many prisoners giving as their domicile either the Republic or Northern Ireland, respectively, have been permitted to return home to the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland, respectively, on parole for humanitarian reasons in the current year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Prisoners may be temporarily released on compassionate grounds under rule 6 of the Prison Rules 1964, as amended.

Records of the number of prisoners granted temporary release are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Prisoners are not temporarily released under rule 6 to any place, including the Republic of Ireland, which is outside the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom.

Prisoners (Searches)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the number of body searches, cell searches and cell changes and strip searches carried out on each of the category A prisoners being held at Her Majesty's prison, Durham, monthly since May.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to replies given to his questions on 20 July 1987, columns *56-57*, as to the practice relating to body searches, cell searches and cell changes, and 14 June 1988, at columns *95-96*, 29 July 1988, at columns *760-61*, and 19 October 1988, at columns *881-82*, as to the number of strip searches.

Dr. Paul Vickers

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will report what progress has been made on the review of Dr. Paul Vickers' sentence.

Mr. John Patten: Dr. Vickers' solicitors submitted a long and detailed report on the medical evidence given at trial, suggesting that his conviction for murder is unsafe. This report is being considered in the light of a further report by a forensic pathologist.

Correspondence

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when, further to his letter of 18 August to the hon. Member for Copeland, his Department proposes to make contact with Mr. A. P. Bamidele of 23 Charlton court, Hows street, London E2 8LU, as promised in the letter.

Mr. Renton: We have now written to Mr. Bamidele.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sodium

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to require all pre-packed or bottled foods or beverages to list on a label affixed thereto their sodium content.

Mr. Ryder: We are strongly encouraging manufacturers and retailers to adopt the fullest format of voluntary nutrition declarations, including sodium content, set out in the guidelines on nutrition labelling issued on 21 January. Many are already providing this information. Recent European Community proposals on voluntary nutrition labelling, which we have just formally received, would introduce a format which is, as expected, broadly similar to the one set out in our guidelines and would thus include sodium in the list of nutrients. The Community proposals would also provide for the labelling of certain nutrients to be made compulsory where, after taking account of the medical evidence, this is considered necessary in order to protect or enhance the health of the population or important groups of it. We will be consulting with a wide range of interested parties on the Community proposals and will fully take account of views in forthcoming negotiations.

Potatoes

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the implication of the decision by certain leading retailers in imposing United Nations maximum residue level standards on the fungicide and sprout inhibitors used in treatment of potatoes for the maintenance of the standards imposed by Her Majesty's Government in these areas.

Mr. MacGregor: The fungicide and sprout inhibitor referred to is Tecnazene, for which we proposed in a consultative document issued in April a maximum residue level for potatoes of 1 mg/kg to be introduced in five years' time.

Contracts made by retailers with their suppliers are a matter for their commercial judgment. Tecnazene is controlled under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 and its presence in potatoes is regularly monitored by the working party on pesticide residues. There is no indication of a health hazard in the levels of this fungicide currently used in the United Kingdom. The Advisory Committee on Pesticides is currently considering the matter and I hope to have its advice on a figure appropriate to United Kingdom conditions as soon as possible.

Pesticides

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of samples notified to his Ministry of bread, bran or flour contained residues of pesticides or insecticides.

Mr. MacGregor: The working party on pesticide residues has mounted a major survey of residues in cereals and cereal products over the last three years. The results have been passed to the Advisory Committee on Pesticides and the steering group on food surveillance, who were satisfied that the figures did not represent a hazard to consumers. These results will be published in the next report of the working party on pesticide residues.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to introduce maximum residue levels for relevant pesticides used on celery, lettuce and potatoes; and what evidence he has as to whether the relevant levels recommended by the United Nations are regularly exceeded in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ryder: Over 90 maximum residue levels (MRLs) for pesticides used on celery, lettuce and potatoes will come into effect on 31 December 1988. A further six MRLs, which are the subject of this question, will be introduced as soon as possible thereafter. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on this point to the hon. member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 19 October 1988, at column 875. For these six pesticide/commodity combinations it is recognised that approved uses in this country can sometimes lead to residues above the United Nations Codex Alimentarius Commission limits. Evidence for this derives from research and monitoring and is published in the reports of the working party on pesticide residues. The results of monitoring suggest that only a small proportion of samples reaching the consumer will have residues above codex MRLs, which are themselves not safety limits but designed to incorporate margins of safety. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on this point to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on 25 October 1988, at column 1408.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the health risks associated with the consumption of baby vegetables grown on peat blocks impregnated with combinations of pesticides.

Mr. MacGregor: The Research Consultative Committee Residues sub-group set up to advise the main committee on its report to the Priorities Board for Research and Development in Agriculture and Food noted that there is an increasing tendency to harvest "baby" beetroot, carrots and onions. Clearance data relate to full-term crops and the sub-group therefore recommended that studies should be undertaken to investigate the implications for residues especially where the crop is grown in peat blocks treated with pesticide. The Priorities Board will consider this recommendation later this month.

Dietary Studies

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to increase the number and scale of dietary studies conducted in the United Kingdom; and what assessment he has made as to whether the extrapolations developed from such studies are accurate.

Mr. Ryder: I shall continue to commission such studies as are required to monitor the safety and nutritional quality of diets in the United Kingdom. Advice on the need for, and the scale of, such surveys and on their interpretation is taken from a number of independent expert committees.

Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any changes are proposed in the cash limits for the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class IV, vote 2 will be increased by £1,714,000 from £34,932,000 to £36,646,000 to rectify difficulties in processing external trade claims. The running cost limit will also be increased by £2,519,000 from £15,207,000 to £17,726,000. The increase of £1,714,000 will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planning total of public expenditure.

THE ARTS

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will now place in the Library copies of the results of the monitoring exercises in respect of Office of Arts and Libraries staff which has been carried out by the Cabinet Office, in accordance with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. and learned Member to two reports by the Cabinet Office and Office of the Minister for the Civil Service, copies of which have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The first is "Ethnic Origin Surveys of Non-industrial Staff in the Civil Service: London and the South East of England", published in December 1987. The second is entitled "Equal Opportunities for Women in the Civil Service, Progress Report 1984-1987", published in April 1988.

The monitoring of staff in relation to the codes is undertaken by the Cabinet Office as a continuing process.

Regional Arts Associations

Mr. Key: To ask the Minister for the Arts, if he will list the grants to each of the regional arts associations in the current financial year, expressed in terms of pence per head of their population, and including the average grant per head for all the associations.

Mr. Luce: Latest available figures for Arts Council grants for 1988-89 to the regional arts associations in terms of pence per head of their population are as follows:

	Pence
Eastern Arts	39·2
East Midlands Arts	51·6
Greater London Arts	116·9
Lincolnshire and Humberside Arts	69·9
Merseyside Arts	62·6
Northern Arts	114·6
North West Arts	45·9
Southern Arts	36·8
South East Arts	43·2
South West Arts	48·0
West Midlands Arts	47·4
Yorkshire Arts	53·2

The average grant per head for all the associations is 61·5.

HEALTH

Disabled People

12. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his Department's responsibilities in relation to disabled people.

Mr. Mellor: The Department is responsible for health and personal social services for people with disabilities, both in the community and in hospital. It promotes good practice in the field and contributes funds to a large number of disability organisations. It represents United Kingdom interests in many international developments benefiting disabled people.

NHS (Capital Expenditure)

14. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list National Health Service capital expenditure projects costing more than £1 million which have been completed in the Staffordshire, Moorlands parliamentary constituency during the last 14 years, and those projected in the next five years.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend probably has in mind the new Cheadle geriatric unit which was completed in July 1987 at a cost of £5 million; the Leek Moorlands hospital redevelopment which is due for completion in 1989 at a cost of just over £2 million and Biddulph neighbourhood hospital which is due for completion in 1993 at a cost of £1·65 million. In addition major redevelopments elsewhere in north Staffordshire with a total value of £46·5 million are at various stages of planning, design and completion.

Nurses

15. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the number of nurses employed in the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: The number of nursing and midwifery staff employed in the NHS in England continues to increase and at September 1987 there were 404,000 wholetime equivalents; the highest number ever.

66. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current position on the supply and recruitment of nurses.

Mr. Mellor: The number of nursing and midwifery staff employed in the National Health Service in England continues to increase and at September 1987 there were 404,000 wholetime equivalents; the highest number ever. However, there are still recruitment difficulties in some specialties and localities particularly in London and the south-east, although the recently introduced London pay supplement and clinical grading structure are expected to improve the situation when they are fully implemented.

North Western Regional Health Authority

16. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next plans to meet the chairman of the North Western regional health authority; and what subjects he proposes to discuss.

Mrs. Currie: My right hon. and learned Friend will next meet the chairman of North Western regional health

authority at the regular meeting of RHA chairmen on 16 November 1988. The agenda for this meeting has not yet been finalised, though doubtless we will discuss the substantial extra money being provided for the NHS.

Hospital Building

18. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a further statement on the hospital building programme.

Mrs. Currie: We have the largest ever sustained building programme in the history of the Health Service. There are currently 506 health building schemes, each costing over £1 million, at various stages of planning design and construction with a total value of over £4 billion. This year capital investment in the National Health Service is expected to exceed £1 billion.

20. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all hospital building completions in the last 12 months.

Mrs. Currie: Following is a list of the 60 health building schemes, each costing over £1 million, which were completed between 1 October 1987 and 30 September 1988.

Region	*Scheme*	*Date of completion*
Northern RHA	South Cleveland General Scheme 2 Phase 1B	30 January 1988
Yorkshire RHA	Bridlington New Community Hospital	23 October 1987
Yorkshire RHA	Goole New Community Hospital	15 January 1988
Yorkshire RHA	Northowram Hospital EPD Ward and Day Hospital	19 November 1987
Yorkshire RHA	Regional Distribution Centre	5 October 1987
Trent RHA	Chesterfield and NRDH Phase 2B	23 November 1987
Trent RHA	Coalville Community Hospital	16 October 1987
Trent RHA	Kings Mill DGH Phase 3 Enabling works	26 February 1988
Trent RHA	Northern General Geriatric	12 February 1988
Trent RHA	Victoria Mansfield—Phase 1	16 February 1988
East Anglian RHA	Ipswich Phase 3 Heath Road Wing (Nucleus)	18 January 1988
East Anglian RHA	Peterborough 2nd DGH Phase 1	11 December 1987
East Anglian RHA	Regional Blood Transfusion Centre	11 November 1987
North West Thames RHA	Bedford General Rehabilitation Facilities	25 January 1988
North West Thames RHA	Central Middlesex Psychiatric Unit	11 April 1988
North West Thames RHA	Ealing Maternity Unit	7 March 1988
North West Thames RHA	Edgware General Hospital—Pathology	13 May 1988
North West Thames RHA	Mount Vernon Medical Block	24 February 1988
North West Thames RHA	St. Stephen's Aids Centre	30 June 1988
North East Thames RHA	Clacton Community Hospital Phase 2	19 August 1988
North East Thames RHA	Harold Wood Phase 2 School of Nursing	22 September 1988
North East Thames RHA	St. Ann's M I Day Hospital and ESMI	8 July 1988
South East Thames RHA	Faversham Hospital Geriatric Wards	26 July 1988
South East Thames RHA	Hastings DGH Pre-Phase Works	16 February 1988
South East Thames RHA	Queen Mary's Sidcup—Pathology	10 December 1987
South West Thames RHA	Crawley Hospital Phase 4	20 May 1988
South West Thames RHA	East Surrey DGH Phase 2 Frame Contract	25 July 1988
South West Thames RHA	East Surrey DGH Phase 2 Preliminary Works	25 January 1988
South West Thames RHA	Harrowlands—Unit for Younger Disabled	22 January 1988
Wessex RHA	Bournemouth DGH—Phase 1B Residential	4 December 1987
Wessex RHA	Poole General Hospital—Maternity Extension	2 October 1987
Wessex RHA	St. Andrew's Redevelopment—Phase 1A	6 November 1987
Oxford RHA	Heatherwood MI/EMI	7 December 1987
Oxford RHA	Horton Phase 3A Geriatric	6 November 1987
Oxford RHA	Wexham Park—Mods Pathology Pharmacy and X-Ray	1 August 1988
South Western RHA	Charlton Lane Development Phase 1	5 January 1988
South Western RHA	Cirencester Memorial Replacement and ESMI beds	31 March 1988
South Western RHA	Glenside Sub-Regional Secure Unit	19 July 1988
South Western RHA	South Molton Hospital Geriatric and GP Unit	31 March 1988
South Western RHA	Tewkesbury General Hospital Geriatric and GP Unit	21 March 1988
West Midlands RHA	Bradwell New Geriatric Unit (Nucleus)	30 October 1987
West Midlands RHA	Good Hope Phase 3A	13 April 1988
West Midlands RHA	Warwick DGH—Phase 1 (Nucleus)	31 March 1988
West Midlands RHA	Wordsley—Obstetrics	15 December 1987
Mersey RHA	Alder Hey Paed, Cardiology and Institute of Child Health	11 May 1988
Mersey RHA	Broadgreen Development Phase 1 (Nucleus)	2 September 1988
Mersey RHA	Fazakerley Hospital Acute MI Unit	29 July 1988
Mersey RHA	North Sefton DGH Southport Phase 1 (Nucleus)	30 June 1988
Mersey RHA	St. Catherine's Birkenhead Redevelopment Phase 1	7 December 1987
Mersey RHA	St. Helen's Phase 2 Central Production Unit	6 January 1988
Mersey RHA	Warrington DGH Phase B (Nucleus)	24 March 1988
North Western RHA	Burnely Gen Reedyford—HSDU and replace Pharmacy	19 February 1988
North Western RHA	Chorley Regional Store	25 October 1987
North Western RHA	Clifton Community Hospital	18 January 1988
North Western RHA	Fairfield Phase 1	14 June 1988
North Western RHA	Oldham DGH HSDU	9 October 1987
North Western RHA	Tameside General Phase 2	27 January 1988
North Western RHA	Trafford Regional Store	6 December 1987

Region	Scheme	Date of completion
Non RHA	Hammersmith Hospital Redevelopment Phase 1	27 April 1988
Non RHA	Moorfields Eye Hospital Redevelopment Phase 2B	11 March 1988

36. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many major hospital building schemes have been started and completed since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: Since 1979, 306 health building schemes, each costing over £1 million, have been started and completed in England.

60. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many major hospital schemes are currently under construction.

Mrs. Currie: There are currently 143 health building schemes, each costing over £1 million, under construction in England.

NHS (Performance Indicators)

21. **Mr. Michael Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the use of performance indicators in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: Health Service indicators for 1986-87 were published in April of this year. At this time all district health authorities were asked to examine their indicators over the four years for which data have been available and to report to their members on progress in improving services, identifying major problems and the action being proposed to deal with those problems. Each district was asked to send a copy of its report to the local Member of Parliament. Performance is also featuring this year in review meetings between the Department and regional health authorities for which the latter were asked to present an analysis of their indicators. Regions are being asked about progress in reducing variations between their districts.

The Department commissioned an independent study carried out last year on the use being made of Health Service indicators by managers in the NHS. The findings were encouraging and showed a wide awareness of indicators among managers.

Out-patients

22. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many out-patient attendances there were in 1978 and in the latest period of 12 months for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: In 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, there were just under 38 million out-patient attendances in England. This was 11 per cent. more than the approximately 34 million out-patient attendances in 1978. National figures for 1987-88 will be available in a matter of weeks.

Family Doctor Service

23. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he is encouraging health promotion in the family doctor service.

Mr. Mellor: Our plans are laid out in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" (Cm 249) published in November 1987. Major changes are to be made in the system of payment to doctors to encourage them to devote more time to a range of health promotion and preventive activities. Their contracts with the National Health Service will be clarified to make health promotion and the prevention of disease a specific part of their terms of service.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he intends to increase the amount of choice for patients in the family doctor service.

Mr. Mellor: One of the main aims of the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" (Cm 249) is to give patients the widest range of choice in obtaining high quality primary medical care. To this end: Family practitioner committees will be required to provide consumers with more information about family doctor services, and to make the information more widely available. It will be made easier to change doctor. Steps will be taken to ensure that the public's comments are sought on local services and that their views are taken fully into account. Family doctors themselves will be encouraged to provide consumers with more information about the services that their practices provide.

Pharmaceutical Staff

24. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the shortage of qualified pharmaceutical staff in the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: We are aware of reports of a shortage of qualified pharmaceutical staff in some areas. I understand that the two sides of the pharmaceutical Whitley council are currently negotiating a new pay and grading structure for hospital pharmacists.

Nurses (Pay)

25. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the cost of funding the nurses pay settlement; and what plans he has to fund it in full.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply by my right hon. and learned Friend to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) earlier today.

27. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the cost of funding the nurses pay settlement; and what plans he has to fund it in full.

65. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the cost of funding the nurses pay settlement; and what plans he has to fund it in full.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) earlier today.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress of implementation of the nurses pay award.

29. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress in implementing the recent nurses pay award and on his current assessment as to whether the funds allocated are sufficient to meet the cost in full.

Mr. Mellor: The Government have announced the allocation to regional health authorities of an additional £98 million to meet in full the authorities' estimates of the final cost of the nurses clinical grading exercise in England. This brings the total which has now been provided to meet the cost of this year's pay award for nurses in England to £731 million.

Regions have been asked to arrange for staff to be notified of their new grades as soon as possible and for payment of the new rates and back pay to be made by Christmas.

30. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking to ensure that the nurses pay award is beng implemented fairly by health authorities.

34. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking to ensure that the nurses pay award is being implemented fairly by health authorities.

38. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking to ensure that the nurses pay award is being implemented fairly by health authorities.

50. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he is taking to ensure that the nurses pay award is being implemented fairly by health authorities.

Mr. Mellor: The Department has issued a range of detailed guidance to health authorities.

In addition, officials have worked closely with regional health authorities in monitoring district health authorities' implementation of the new structure. The objective has been to ensure the fair and consistent application of the grading definitions, in line with the letter and spirit of the agreement reached by both sides of the nursing and midwifery staffs negotiating council.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from trade unions and professional bodies with members in the nursing profession about the recent pay award.

32. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from trade unions and professional bodies with members in the nursing profession about the recent pay award.

52. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from trade unions and professional bodies with members in the nursing profession about the recent pay award.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Members to the reply to the hon. Members for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) and Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), earlier today.

44. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had with the managers of health authorities about the nurses pay award.

61. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had with the managers of health authorities about the nurses pay award.

71. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had with the managers of health authorities about the nurses pay award.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have kept in very close touch with RHA chairmen and senior management over the implementation and financing of the new clinical grading structure for nurses.

Day Cases

26. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many day cases were treated in 1978 and the latest period of 12 months for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: In 1986, 1,050,200 day cases were treated in England. This was 87 per cent. more than the 562,200 day cases treated in 1978. Figures for 1987-88 are not yet available. Day cases in 1986 represented 14·1 per cent. of all patients treated (other than outpatients) in NHS hospitals.

NHS (Pay and Conditions)

28. **Mr. Tom Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the pay and conditions of service of ancillary staffs in the National Health Service.

33. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the pay and conditions of service of ancillary staffs in the National Health Service.

53. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the pay and conditions of service of ancillary staffs in the Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) earlier today.

Doctors (Efficiency)

31. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his Department is doing to reduce the differences in efficiency between different doctors.

Mr. Mellor: Value for money in delivering high quality patient services remains a key component of the Government's policies. In the hospital service current initiatives include promoting the wider use of Health Service indicators, the resource management initiative and the development of better methods for medical manpower planning.

With regard to family doctors, the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" proposed a number of important changes which would lead to increased efficiency in general practice including relating pay more closely to performance, more clearly defined terms of service, greater accountability, increased competition and greater involvement of other health professionals in patient care. In particular it is intended to encourage more efficiency and cost-effectiveness among family doctors in relation to prescribing and hospital referrals decisions.

Family Practitioner Service

35. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to increase the amount of information available to patients in the family practitioner service.

Mr. Mellor: As the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" (Cm. 249) makes clear, the Government believe that consumers need more detailed and more accessible factual information about family practitioners and their services. Family practitioner committee medical and dental lists will therefore contain more information and will be made more widely available locally. In addition we shall encourage the wider provision of family doctor practice leaflets.

The Government also believe that present restraints on advertising by family doctors should be removed, subject to proper safeguards, in order to make possible better informed choices by patients. We therefore welcome the announcement last May of the Office of Fair Trading's decision to refer the matter for investigation by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Dental Examinations

37. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will review current proposals to introduce charges for dental examinations.

40. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will review current proposals to introduce charges for dental examinations.

64. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will review current proposals to introduce charges for dental examinations.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Members to my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 22 July at column *896*.

NHS (Efficiency)

41. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new proposals he has for improving the efficiency of the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: The National Health Service is not a business, but it has to be more business-like. There is still a huge gulf between the best and the worst in terms of efficiency, customer choice, standards, good management and clear decision-taking. The Government intend to spread the best qualities of the enterprise economy more widely throughout the National Health Service, and we shall be bringing forward proposals to this end in the new year.

Hospitals (Privatisation)

42. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to privatise National Health Service hospitals.

59. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to privatise National Health Service hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: None.

Northern Regional Health Authority

43. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the level of funding available to the Northern regional health authority.

Mr. Mellor: Gross revenue expenditure in the Northern regional health authority has increased from £277·4 million in 1978-79 to £726·4 million (provisional) in 1987-88, the latest year for which figures are available. This is an increase of 161·9 per cent. in cash and 27·6 per cent. in real terms. The region has received a further real terms increase this year and it is expected that the level of expenditure in 1988-89 will be over 30 per cent. above the level in 1978-79.

Doctors' Lists

45. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how doctors average list sizes have changed since 1978.

Mr. Mellor: Average list sizes in England have fallen from 2,312 per unrestricted general medical practitioner at 1 October to 2,020 at 1 October 1987, the latest date for which figures are available. This is a decrease of nearly 13 per cent., and reflects the increase in the number of general practitioners.

In-patients

46. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many in-patient cases were treated in 1978 and in the latest period of 12 months for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: In 1987-88, 6,619,354 in-patient cases were treated in England. This is 25 per cent. more than the 5,370,319 cases treated in 1978.

Association of Hospital Physicists

47. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the Hospital Physicists Association, and when he plans to meet it again.

Mr. Mellor: Neither my right hon. and learned Friend nor I have met the Hospital Physicists Association and we have no plans to do so.

Children (Medical Care)

48. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that children attending private schools receive the same degree of medical care as those at state maintained schools.

Mrs. Currie: Under existing legislation, health authorities have a statutory duty to provide school health services for all those pupils attending state maintained schools. This statutory responsibility does not extend to private schools which are responsible for securing their own health services for their pupils.

NHS (Ownership and Management)

49. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any proposals to change the ownership or management of National Health Service hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: A number of ideas have been put forward for changing the ownership or management of NHS hospitals. We are loking carefully at the options and will bring forward our own proposals in the new year.

Royal College of Nursing

51. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing since his appointment; and what subjects were discussed.

58. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the secretary of the Royal College of Nursing; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I last met the general secretary of the RCN by chance at a reception on 13 October when we discussed informally a number of matters.

Department of Health

54. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the first three months' operation of the Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Major improvements in the career structure and salaries of the nursing profession have been implemented in the course of the last three months. We have secured the successful implementation of the new clinical grading structure within the timetable set for the completion of the process. A new improved career structure will now be established for nurses and midwives, together with salary increases averaging 17·9 per cent. for the profession as a whole. I have allocated additional funds to the regional health authorities to enable them to fund the new structure in full. This was the largest regrading exercise in the history of the National Health Service, affecting nearly half a million staff.

On the Project 2,000 proposals for major changes to nurse education and training, significant progress has been made on outstanding work by the statutory nursing bodies, and my Department has advised health authorities of the implementation action expected of them in the coming months.

Pay settlements for 1988-89 have been negotiated within the Whitley councils for the vast majority of staff not covered by the pay review bodies.

Since July, we have seen the completion of nine major health building schemes each costing over £1 million.

On 27 September, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health announced the allocation of an extra £3 million to health authorities in 1988-89, for measures to prevent the spread of HIV infection among injecting drug misusers, and from them to a wider population.

On 3 October we launched the biggest change in immunisation policy for 20 years, by introducing a combined vaccine against measles, mumps and rubella (known as MMR) for children in the second year of life and, for a "catch-up" period, at pre-school entry. This development offers a tremendous chance of stamping out, with just one injection, three diseases which lead to between 2,000 and 3,000 children being admitted to hospital each year, as well as needless deaths and babies handicapped by rubella.

A new prescribing information system for general medical practitioners was launched on 2 August. Known as PACT (prescribing analyses and cost), it is the most advanced prescribing feedback system in Europe and is the result of a successful collaboration between the Government and the medical profession. The information provided will make it much easier for all GPs to examine their prescribing patterns in details. The result should be more effective and economic prescribing, including an increase in generic prescribing.

London Ambulance Service

55. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he recently met representatives of the London ambulance service; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We have not recently met representatives of the London ambulance service. However, the Department is in close contact with the South West Thames regional health authority which manages the service on behalf of the four Thames regions.

Cost Improvement Programme

56. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the cost improvement programme.

Mr. Mellor: Since we introduced cost improvements in 1984, health authorities have achieved cash savings worth £580 million a year to the end of March 1988 with further savings of £152 million planned for this year.

NHS (Review)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to complete his review of the National Health Service.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to publish the results of his review of the National Health Service.

57. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress on the National Health Service review.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to publish the results of his review of the National Health Service.

Mr. Clarke: I refer my hon. Friends and the hon. Members to my reply earlier today to the hon. Members for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) and for Leyton (Mr. Cohen).

Transplants

62. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a further statement on the transplant programme.

Mrs. Currie: Provisional figures for the number of cadaveric transplants carried out in the United Kingdom during the first nine months of 1987 and 1988 are as follows:

	January-September		
	1987	*1988*	*percentage change*
Kidneys	1,107	1,205	+ 9
Hearts and heart/lungs	214	269	+ 26
Livers	127	184	+ 45

Note: The totals refer to operations performed on patients entitled to NHS treatment.

Plans for implementing the recommendations of Sir Raymond Hoffenberg's working party on the availability of organs are well advanced. We are now concluding our consultations with health authorities and interested organisations about operational policies for organ donation. Detailed guidance will be issued shortly. We are also planning further publicity—in support of the transplant programme and have committed £250,000 to the campaign for this winter.

Congenital Handicap (Research)

63. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received since 27 July, regarding measures to safeguard embryo research into congenital handicap.

Mrs. Currie: None.

NHS (Estate Management)

67. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what conclusions he has drawn from the 40th report of the Committee of Public Accounts, "Estate Management in the National Health Service" (HC 481); and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The report draws attention to a number of significant factors in the management of the National Health Service estate and points to the lessons to be learnt by all those who have a responsibility for managing property effectively and efficiently. We are considering the report carefully there will shortly be a formal Government response and my hon. Friend will receive a copy.

Intractable Pain

68. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make ear-marked funding available to health authorities for relief of intractable pain, including provision of dorsal column stimulators in appropriate cases.

Mrs. Currie: No. The funding of these services is a matter for individual health authorities who are best placed to assess local needs. The need for a dorsal column stimulator is determined by a consultant.

Resource Allocation Working Party

69. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the review of resource allocation working party funding.

Mr. Mellor: The National Health Service management board was asked to explore the scope for improving the way in which the national resource allocation working party formula measures relative need for health care across the country. Full details of the recommendations are contained in the board's final report on the review, which was published on 19 July. A copy is in the Library.

The review of the RAWP formula was already close to completion when the Government began their wide review of the National Health Service. The Government will consider this report within the context of this wider review.

General Practitioner Surgeries

70. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he intends to take to ensure that family practitioner committees conduct regular inspections of general practitioners surgeries.

Mrs. Currie: Family practitioner committees already inspect doctors' surgery premises on a regular basis and the Department will continue to monitor, during the course of FPC performance reviews, the effectiveness of their inspection programmes.

North West Thames Regional Health Authority

72. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next plans to meet the chairman of the North West Thames regional health authority; and what matters he intends to discuss.

Mrs. Currie: My right hon. and learned Friend will be meeting the chairman of North West Thames regional health authority at the next meeting of regional chairmen on 16 November. He will be discussing a variety of topics which will be of interest to all the chairmen attending the meeting.

AIDS

73. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how far HIV infection has spread from the identified high risk groups to the general low risk population; and what conclusions he has drawn as to the precise targeting of the Government's publicity campaign about the risks of AIDS.

Mr. Mellor: There has been a slow increase in the proportion of persons known to be HIV antibody positive who are reported to have acquired the infection heterosexually; this now stands at about 5 per cent. of the total. There is also some evidence of a change of behaviour among homosexuals, one of the identified high-risk groups. The targeting of the national publicity campaign seeks to take into account these factors and particularly to ensure that public awareness of the need to contain the spread of HIV infection is maintained at a high level.

Cancer Screening

39. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress of the breast cancer screening programme.

Mrs. Currie: By the spring of this year each regional health authority in England had established at least one centre for breast cancer screening. The list is as follows:

Region	*Centre*
Northern	Gateshead
Yorkshire	Huddersfield
East Anglian	King's Lynn
Trent	Nottingham
North West Thames	Barnet
North East Thames	Epping
South East Thames	Camberwell, King's College Hospital
South West Thames	Guildford
Wessex	Southampton
Oxford	Aylesbury
South Western	Cornwall (Truro)
West Midlands	Stoke-on-Trent

Region	Centre
Mersey	Liverpool
North Western	Manchester, Bolton, Wigan

Guildford, King's College, Manchester and Nottingham have also been designated as training centres for staff in England.

Health authorities are currently developing their plans for the extension of the breast screening service to cover all eligible women by 1990 and have already opened additional centres in:

Region	Centre
North East Thames	Elizabeth Garratt Anderson Hospital
Wessex	Isle of Wight

The service will provide routine screening for women aged 50–64 and for older women on request. We are very pleased with the commitment which health authorities and their staff are showing towards this programme which will make a significant contribution to the health of the women of this country. I expect to make a further announcement soon about the next group of centres planned for opening in 1989 and 1990.

NHS (Income Generation)

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest information he has regarding the income generation pilot schemes in the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: Income generation schemes in the National Health Service are expected to produce about £11 million in the current financial year.

The Health and Medicines Bill will significantly increase the ability of health authorities to generate extra income. As a result, income from such schemes is likely to increase substantially during the next few years.

St. Thomas's Hospital (Cyclotron)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evaluation his Department will make of the cyclotron at St. Thomas's hospital; and if he will list any controlled trials that will be used for this purpose.

Mrs. Currie: The Cyclotron trust still has to work out with all those concerned the details of the operation and evaluation of this project. The Department will certainly be taking a close interest in the evaluation.

Brook Hospital, Woolwich

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he now expects to reach a decision on the proposed removal of the neurosciences unit from the Brook hospital, Woolwich.

Mrs. Currie: My right hon. Friend, the then Minister for Health (Mr. Newton) visited the Brook hospital in June, and following this asked the region and Greenwich district to provide him with further information. This has now been received and we hope to make a final decision soon.

Leigh House, Chandler's Ford

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are his plans for the future of the Wessex region's adolescent psychiatric unit at Leigh house, Chandler's Ford, Eastleigh; and if he will take steps to ensure that this unit is not closed until alternative facilities are established and running.

Mrs. Currie: The Wessex regional health authority is responsible for planning services for disturbed adolescents within the region. It is currently discussing future provision with its district health authorities and with directors of social services in Wessex, with a view to providing an improved and more easily accessible service on sites other than that at Leigh house. We have been assured by Wessex regional health authority that funds will continue to be provided to run Leigh house until alternative facilities are established and running.

Allergies

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list those hospitals and their respective health authorities or boards who have facilities to treat patients with multi-allergies;

(2) what resources are devoted within the National Health Service to the treatment of allergies; what steps are taken to ensure that such treatment is uniformly available throughout the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Treatment for allergies is widely available. The amount of resources devoted to it is for decision by health authorities in the light of their knowledge of local needs, priorities, and resources. No central record is kept of specific facilities or clinics for treatment of multi-allergies.

Sheep Dipping

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the incidence of cancers from overexposure to pesticides used in sheep dipping.

Mrs. Currie: We are not aware of any epidemiological studies into the possibility that over exposure to sheep dips, or exposure in proper use, has increased the incidence of cancer among those working with the dips. Sheep dips are licensed under the Medicines Act 1968 on the recommendation of the Veterinary Products Committee and are tested and assessed in accordance with the licensing conditions to exclude any product that would be carcinogenic. The major risk factor associated with cancer continues to be cigarette smoking.

Mental Illness

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the average cost per in-patient treated for mental illness *(a)* per month and *(b)* per year;

(2) what is the average cost per out-patient treated for mental illness *(a)* per month and *(b)* per year.

Mrs. Currie: For information on average treatment costs in 1986-87 I refer the hon. Member to the annual publication "Health Services Costing Returns", mentioned in my reply to him on 7 June 1988 at column *578*.

Information on treatment costs in 1987-88 is not yet available.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children have been taken into care, suffering from mental illness in the United Kingdom annually since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that we do not hold this information centrally.

Charitable Institutions (Government Funding)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was his Department's total funding in the last financial year to charitable institutions.

Mrs. Currie: Total funding to the voluntary sector in 1987-88 was £35·1 million. In addition £10 million was paid to the McFarlane trust to help haemophiliacs infected with the AIDS virus.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what level of funding for research into myalgic encephalomyelitis his Department has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The main agency through which the Government support medical research is the Medical Research Council which receives a grant in aid from the Department of Education and Science. I understand that although the Medical Research Council does not directly fund any research in myalgic encephalomyelitis it does support some work in immune responses to muscle, nerve cells and related structures which may be relevant to the understanding and treatment of this condition.

The Department is not funding any research into myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what account he takes in allocating resources to the National Health Service of advice from the medical profession as to whether myalgic encephalomyelitis should be recognised as an illness; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Most people suffering from myalgic encephalomyelitis are treated by their general medical practitioners.

The funding of the NHS takes account of total demand and is not based on individual illnesses treated.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department has had any discussions with the authorities in other countries concerning the illness myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Mrs. Currie: The Department keeps closely in touch with relevant developments in other countries.

Antibiotics and Anti-depressants

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give details of the cost in 1987-88 to the National Health Service for *(a)* antibiotics and *(b)* anti-depressants; and if he will give in percentage terms such cost in relation to the annual Health Service budget.

Mr. Mellor: Antibiotics are generally regarded as forming part of the therapeutic group covering preparations acting systematically on infections, but costs cannot be identified specifically within the group. The net ingredient cost of drugs in that therapeutic group dispensed by pharmacists (through the family practitioner services in England) in 1987-88 was £149·3 million, and for anti-depressants £29·2 million. As percentages of expenditure on the family practitioner services, these costs were 3·89 and 0·76 respectively; as percentages of the cost of the whole of National Health Service in England they were 0·90 and 0·18 respectively.

Information is not collected by therapeutic group as to the cost of drugs supplied in hospitals or by dispensing doctors.

Environmental Illness

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the National Health Service budget is expended on environmental illness.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that we do not record National Health Service expenditure in a form which readily identifies and allocates costs to the primary causes of individual illnesses.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the growing provision for environmental illness in the private sector of medicine.

Mrs. Currie: It is not clear what the hon. Member means by "environmental illness". We understand that there are now some 200 clinics offering health screening, occupational health, allergy treatment and similar services. We welcome good quality services developed in response to public demand.

NHS (Performance Statistics)

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if in compiling further statistics about the performance of the National Health Service, he will distinguish between discharges from, and deaths in hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: Yes. As part of the new information system about patients using the National Health Service, such a distinction will be made. The first results from the patient administration systems which will provide this distinction will be available early next year.

Waiting Lists

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent waiting lists have been reduced for National Health Services operations and consultations.

Mr. Mellor: The most recent figures, for March 1988, show that, on a comparative basis with previous statistics, the waiting list for hospital in-patient treatment stood at 678,800. This is 1·3 per cent. lower than March 1987 and almost 10 per cent. lower than March 1979. Information on waiting time for out-patient consultations is not collected centrally.

Pathology Manpower (Report)

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when his consideration of the Management Advisory Service report on pathology manpower will be completed; when the report will be made generally available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: A consultation paper on the future management and staffing of pathology services in the NHS has been sent to health authorities plus professional and

staff side bodies. A copy of the MAS report has also been sent to these bodies. I have arranged for copies of both documents to be placed in the Library.

Cash Limits

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any changes will be made in the cash limits of his Department for 1988-89.

Mr. Mellor: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for Class XIV Vote 1 (Hospital and community health and other services, England) will be increased by £112,900,000 (from £11,199,082,000 to £11,311,982,000). This increase provides an additional £109,900,000 for nurses' and midwives' pay and £3,000,000 for further expansion of services related to AIDS and drug misuse in line with the proposals in the report on AIDS and Drug Misuse from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs.

A further £100,000 for nurses' and midwives' pay will also be added to the cash limit for Class XIV vote 3 (Miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England) at a later date.

The public expenditure costs of these changes have been charged to the Reserve and do not add to the public expenditure planning total.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Russian Navy

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiative Her Majesty's Government propose to take in response to the submission by the Soviet delegation to the 43rd session of the United Nations General Assembly of detailed data on the Russian Navy, with a view to promoting exchanges of military information and confidence building measures in the naval field; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We took an initiative on military information at the United Nations General Assembly two years ago by tabling a resolution on objective information on military matters which invited member states to provide information on the whole range of their military forces and on their military budgets. We tabled a similar resolution again yesterday and look forward to a positive response from the Warsaw pact, particularly on military expenditure.

We shall have no difficulty in providing our share of the information, including on naval forces, as it is already freely available through such publications as the annual statement on the Defence Estimates. As regards proposals for naval arms control, the Government's attitude was set out in my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney's answer to a question from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) on 28 June.

Mr. James Speirs and Mr. Peter Troughton

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date and for what reason Mr. James Speirs and Mr. Peter Troughton left the service of the Crown.

Mr. Waldegrave: Mr. Speirs left Her Majesty's diplomatic service in 1986. Mr. Troughton left Her Majesty's diplomatic service in 1978.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Special Schools

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the requirements on pupil-teacher ratios in special schools; and if he will introduce appropriate regulations for mainstream classes where special needs children are integrated.

Mr. Butcher: Current guidance on the staffing of special schools and classes is set out in the Department's circular 4/73. My right hon. Friend is presently considering a revision.

Deaf Children

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will request from local authorities information regarding the amount and nature of specialist support being provided for children with special needs through the machinery of statementing; if he will take steps to ensure that the help given to deaf children comes from qualified teachers of the deaf; and if he will make a statement regarding the availability of such teachers.

Mr. Butcher: Local education authorities have responsibility for meeting the special educational provision contained in a child's statement of special educational needs. Information about this provision is not collected centrally. The Education (Teachers) Regulations 1982 set out the additional qualification which teachers must acquire in order to teach classes of hearing-impaired children. The training of teachers of the deaf is recognised as a national priority area within the local education authority training grant scheme and sufficient resources are made available annually to maintain a regular supply of trained teachers.

If any local authority or school is having difficulty in recruiting teachers for this work, it would be helpful if they would inform my Department.

Education Reform

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all the consultation documents, draft statutory instruments, circulars and letters to chief education officers which have so far been issued by his Department as a direct result of the passing of the Education Reform Act 1988, together with those likely to be issued in the foreseeable future.

Mrs. Rumbold: Consultation documents, draft statutory instruments, circulars and letters to chief education officers which have so far been issued by the Department as a direct result of the passing of the Education Reform Act 1988, and those likely to be issued in the foreseeable future, are as follows.

ISSUED TO DATE

Circulars

From the end of July to the present date, the following circulars of advice have been issued to LEAs following the passing of the Education Reform Act:

Circular 6/88 The transfer of responsibility for education in Inner London—(Published 18 August 1988).

Circular 7/88 Education Reform Act 1988: Local management of schools—(6 September 1988)—

Circular 8/88 Education Reform Act 1988: Governance of maintained further and higher education colleges—(13 September 1988)—

Circular 9/88 Education Reform Act 1988: Local management of further and higher education colleges: planning and delegation schemes and articles of government —(13 September 1988)

Circular 10/88 Education Reform Act 1988: Grant-maintained schools—(13 October 1988).

Circular 11/88 Admission of pupils to county and voluntary schools—(20 October 1988).

Draft circulars

The following draft circulars have been sent out for consultation and have also been sent for information to each Chief Education Officer. *Final circulars* will be issued on completion of the consultation.

Education Reform Act 1988: Draft circular: Charges for school activities—(13 September 1988)

The Education Reform Act 1988: Religious education and collective worship: Draft circular—(29 September 1988)

Local arrangements for the consideration of complaints made under Section 23 of the Education Reform Act—(30 September 1988)

Education Reform Act 1988: The school curriculum and assessment—(17 October 1988).

Education Reform Act 1988: Draft circular onorder under Section 222 (modifications to employment law)—(19 October) (See also draft statutory instrument below).

Consultation Documents

Education Reform Act: Information requirements relating to the school curriculum and assessment—(23 September 1988).

The National Curriculum Council are consulting on the following proposals of the Secretary of State:

National Curriculum: Mathematics for ages 5 to 16—(16 August 1988)

National Curriculum: Science for ages 5 to 16—(16 August 1988)

The proposals for primary English will follow shortly.

Draft Statutory Instruments

The Education (Modification of Enactments Relating to Employment) Order 1988—(19 October) (see draft circular above).

Letters to CEOs

City Technology Colleges and proposals under Section 12 of the Education Act 1980—(5 August).

Education Act 1988: Transitional arrangements for grant-maintained school applications—(8 August).

Letter, with note on 'Corporate status for maintained further and higher education colleges'—(13 September).

Reform of further education: Submission of instruments, articles and schemes of planning and delegation—(20 September).

New polytechnics and colleges sector staff transfer orders —(7 October).

Higher Education Corporations: Local authority members—(12 October).

TO BE ISSUED

Circulars

See note on draft circulars in 1 above.

Draft Circulars

On new regulations on premature retirement compensation for teachers (see also draft statutory instruments below).

Consultation Documents

Consultation paper on financial arrangements for grant-maintained schools and draft finance regulations.

Education Reform Act: a consultation paper on the modern foreign languages to be specified as National Curriculum foundation subjects.

National Curriculum: Arrangements for temporary withdrawal of individual pupils.

Draft Statutory Instruments

Financial statements in respect of schools not covered by statements under Section 42.

The Teachers (Compensation for Redundancy and Premature Retirement) Regulations 1989.

Letters to CEOs

Letter advising of formal appointment of Shadow Boards of Governors.

Teacher Training

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to make changes in teacher training, including the provision of extra funding, in the light of the findings of Her Majesty's inspectors' report "The New Teacher in School".

Mrs. Rumbold: The teachers covered by this survey undertook their training in the early to mid-1980s. In the meantime the Government established in 1984 tough new criteria for the approval of initial teacher training courses and set up the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education to scrutinise all courses and advise the Secretary of State on whether they satisfy those criteria. Over the period 1983 to 1988 HMI have also carried out inspections of all initial teacher training institutions. The report shows how right the Government were to take these steps. My right hon. Friend will shortly be considering what arrangements to put in place of the present course approval system when the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education reaches the end of its term of office at the end of 1989.

Teachers

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in the light of the findings of Her Majesty's inspectors' report "The New Teacher in School", he will reconsider proposals to allow unlicensed persons to become classroom teachers.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has made no such proposals. His proposals for reform of qualified teacher status are for existing non-standard routes, which include provision for untrained persons to be granted QTS with no post entry training obligation, to be replaced with a single licensed teacher route involving obligatory training.

Parent Governors

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will produce figures to show the number of parent governors on *(a)* existing and *(b)* previous school governing bodies who are also teachers by profession.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not available centrally.

Schools (First Aid)

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he intends to take, in view of population levels in excess of 1,000 in some secondary schools, to ensure that at least one member of staff at each school is first aid trained in order to alleviate the repercussions of accidents on school campuses.

Mr. Butcher: Responsibility for the training of school and college staff in first aid rests with the individual local authorities concerned. In September 1987 my Department issued advice to all authorities on first aid arrangements, re-stating a long-standing recommendation that a

proportion of teaching staff at every school and college should receive first aid training. I am sending my hon. Friend a copy of this guidance and placing copies in the Library.

Cash Limits

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of any revisions to cash limits on his Department's Votes in 1988-89.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have today announced an increase of £14 million in grants this year to the research councils and the university grants committee mainly to enable them to provide additional or replacement equipment in support of basic science. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the following cash limit changes will be implemented:

Vote	*Current cash limit*	*Increase*	*Revised cash limit*
Class XII Vote 3	1,844,624,000	5,000,000	1,849,624,000
Class XII Vote 5	58,479,000	1,700,000	60,179,000
Class XII Vote 6	146,677,000	3,000,000	149,677,000
Class XII Vote 7	90,864,000	1,000,000	91,864,000
Class XII Vote 8	366,284,000	3,050,000	369,334,000
Class XII Vote 10	8,864,000	250,000	9,114,000

The increases will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to planned total public expenditure.

Spending Plans

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the Government's plans for expenditure on education and science over the next three years.

Mr. Kenneth Baker:

PUBLIC SPENDING ON EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

1. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his statement today, provision for education and science in 1989-90 will be £19,570 million. This total is £1,600 million or 8·9 per cent. higher than the provision for 1988-89 made a year ago. Details of the main changes from the earlier plans are shown in the attached table.

2. The Government's spending plans include: the addition of more than £300 million over three years for science; over £1,100 million in 1989-90 to provide a sound financial base for the new polytechnics and colleges sector; an addition of more than £100 million over three years for the universities; more than £550 million over three years for specific programmes supporting the implementation of the Government's school and college reforms; and planned local authority current expenditure up by £940 million in 1989-90, or 7·2 per cent. over plans for 1988-89.

VOTE EXPENDITURE

Science

3. I am allocating an additional £306 million to the science budget over the period 1989-90 to 1991-92 to strengthen the United Kingdom science base in higher education and the research councils. This substantial increase reflects the importance that the Government attach to basic and strategic science and their policy of redeploying resources to these areas from those near to the markets which are properly the responsibility of industry. As a special addition I am also allocating an extra £14 million for urgently needed equipment for basic science in research councils and universities in 1988-89.

4. The science budget in 1989-90 will be £825 million. This is an increase of 16 per cent. over the provision made for science in 1988-89. The planning figures for future years will be £837 million in 1990-91 and £855 million in 1991-92.

5. I shall be making a further announcement shortly on the detailed implications of the settlement for science; and shall be inviting the advisory board for the research councils to advise me on the allocation of the money now available.

Polytechnics and Colleges

6. The plans allow for current expenditure of £1,035 million and capital expenditure of £84 million in 1989-90 by the polytechnics and colleges funding council (PCFC). Provided that the polytechnics and colleges contain their costs and continue to improve their efficiency, this money should ensure that the new sector starts on a sound financial basis. It will sustain higher education and research in the institutions to be transferred next April to the PCFC sector, prescribed courses of higher education in colleges remaining with local authorities and certain payments to local authorities in respect of former staff of transferred institutions. Excluding additions for restructuring and inherited liabilities, the plans assume that funding will be held broadly level in later years.

7. Within the total of current expenditure, I have allowed for an earmarked restructuring fund of over £20 million over three years to help institutions attain affordable levels of staffing; for an additional £44 million over two years to deal with liabilities, for example for repairs and maintenance, inherited by the institutions; for the full estimated cost of some £35 million each year for the new sector's liability for VAT; for the forecast increase in student numbers; and for £1·5 million to support fund-raising initiatives in polytechnics and colleges. I have assumed that the selective initiatives already started in the sector will continue at broadly their present level.

8. I shall now seek the national advisory body's advice on the distribution of the recurrent grant between institutions. I shall pass that advice, together with any comment on it which I may wish to make, to the PCFC, to whom it will fall to take decisions early in the new year.

9. Subject to further consultation with the PCFC about the distribution of the £84 million available for capital expenditure, the plans include some £60 million for the purchase of equipment by polytechnics and colleges, both for teaching and administrative purposes. This should allow polytechnics and colleges to make good progress with replacing out-of-date and unserviceable teaching

equipment and to meet more effectively the new demands of corporate status. The remainder is for building work, including that in progress on vesting day.

Universities

10. The plans allow for an increase of over £100 million in the funding over three years for the universities. Allowing for the completion in 1990-91 of the £155 million three-year restructuring programme agreed last year and some £20 million provided for the associated continuing costs in 1991-92, in particular for new academic staff appointments, the additions provide for broadly level funding in real terms during the period. The total available in 1989-90 to the universities funding council for recurrent grant will be £1,672 million. This includes an addition of £8·5 million to the university restructuring programme; £1·5 million to support fund-raising initiatives within universities; and £3·1 million to meet the continuing cost of implementing the 1988 increase in clinical academic pay. After allowing for these additions, the grant is some 5 per cent. higher than the corresponding figure for 1988-89. The grant also includes provision of £71 million linked to the pay settlement for academic and academic related staff announced on 5 March 1987: this funding will be made available provided that satisfactory progress is maintained on the arrangements for academic staff appraisal, probation and promotion.

11. In 1989-90, provision for the Open university will be increased by £4·2 million, compared with previous plans; and an addition of £3·0 million will be provided for the computer board.

Student Awards

12. Provision for student awards allows for the forecast increase in the number of mandatory award-holders. Details of the new rates of award and revised contribution scales will be announced later. Provision is also made for the basic tuition fee for courses eligible for mandatory awards to increase from £578 to £607.

EDUCATION REFORMS IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

13. I have set aside some £90 million over the three years 1989-90 to 1991-92 for the development, introduction and monitoring of the national curriculum and associated assessment arrangements including the cost of the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council. In addition, I plan to support spending by local authorities over the same period. In 1989-90, I shall be supporting spending of £90 million through education support grants and £65 million through in-service training grants on programmes related to the implementation of my reforms for the school curriculum and financial delegation to schools and colleges. My plans for current and capital spending by local authorities allow for some further re-direction of resources in support of the implementation of my reforms.

LOCAL AUTHORITY CURRENT EXPENDITURE

14. The total provided for local authority current spending on education in 1989-90 in the Government's plans is £14,070 million. This figure reflects an appropriate transfer of resources from provision for local authorities to enable the Government to provide funds for polytechnics and colleges transferring from local authorities. Allowing for this transfer, the provision is £940 million or 7·2 per cent. more than the plans for 1988-89 as set out in Cm. 288. It represents the likely level of spending by local education authorities collectively, on the basis that they keep their costs within the level of cost increases in the economy as a whole. In addition, the education service will receive income from the training agency in respect of TVEI and work-related non-advanced further education in 1989-90. The total for determining the education component of the grant-related expenditure (GRE) has been set nearly 10 per cent. above the equivalent level in 1988-89 or £330 million lower than the total for expenditure provision.

Schools

15. The plans assume that local authorities will not reduce the pupil to teacher ratio below the existing record low level of 17:1. This will imply some reduction in teacher numbers as pupil numbers continue to fall.

16. The plans allow for substantial real increases in spending per pupil on education support staff, administrative and clerical staff and books and equipment, in support of the introduction of the national curriculum and local financial management. They also allow for substantial increases in spending on the repair and maintenance of school buildings.

Further and Higher Education

17. The student:staff ratio (SSR) in further education is assumed to tighten from 8·8:1 in 1987-88 to 9·4:1 in 1989-90 as local authorities and colleges make progress towards the national target SSR recommended by the joint efficiency study conducted by my Department and the local authority associations. The plans should enable local authorities and colleges broadly to maintain levels of spending on non-teaching costs in further education. It is assumed that local authority insitutions which offer higher education will continue to improve efficiency.

Administration

18. The plans allow for substantial real increases in spending on local authority administration and advisory services in support of the implementation of the education reforms.

Specific Grants

19. Within the total of £14,070 million, education expenditure supported by specific grants is expected to amount to some £500 million in 1989-90. The Government will provide grant of some £81·5 million in support of expenditure of £125·5 million under the 1989-90 education support grants programme; and up to £214 million of expenditure by local authorities on staff development will be supported under the in-service training grants scheme. The Government will also support spending on education through section 11 grant for Commonwealth immigrants and the urban programme.

LOCAL AUTHORITY AND VOLUNTARY SCHOOL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

20. Capital allocations to LEAs in 1989-90 will be £352 million, broadly at the same level as in 1988-89 after allowing for the transfer of polytechnics and colleges. Local education authorities will also benefit from increased spending power from capital receipts. In consequence, gross provision for capital expenditure by local authorities and voluntary schools has been increased by £95 million or 17 per cent. in 1989-90, compared with previous plans for the same year.

21. The new provision will allow for new school places in areas of population growth, continuing progress with the removal of surplus places and sustained spending on equipment in the local authority maintained further education colleges. Additionally local authorities and voluntary bodies should be able to continue the programme of school building improvements begun in 1988-89. This will help schools to provide for the introduction of the national curriculum.

Changes from the 1988 expenditure plans

£ million

	1989-90		*1990-91*	
	Planned expenditure	*Increase*	*Planned expenditure*	*Increase*
Science budget	825	+95	837	+107
Polytechnics and Colleges	1,119	+95	1,147	+84
UFC sector	1,811	+31	1,878	+56
Other expenditure	420	+39	427	+26
Student awards	855	+64	903	+93
Local authority current expenditure	14,070	+502	14,562	+593
Local authority (net provision) and voluntary schools capital expenditure	469	+39	486	+40
Departmental total	19,569	+865	20,240	+1,000

Note: Totals are based on unrounded figures and may not always equal the sum of the components shown.

EMPLOYMENT

Women Workers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will define the special consideration which will be given to women returning to the labour force; and what will be the definition of eligibility for the programme, in the light of the basic requirement to have been unemployed for six months or more.

Mr. Nicholls: Women (and men) returning to the labour force after an absence of two years or more for domestic reasons are eligible to join employment training straight away. There is no need to satisfy the normal eligibility condition, namely, being unemployed and held to be available for work for at least six months. Lone parents are eligible to enter through the normal eligibility route or as returners to the labour force. However, in addition, lone parents who have been in receipt of income support on an order book for at least six months, and whose youngest child is in full-time education, can also enter straight away. Childcare costs of up to £50 per week for each child are available to assist all eligible lone parents.

Skill Shortages

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement about proposals to deal with skill shortages.

Mr. Cope: The continuing strength of the economy is leading to increasing demand for skills. But it is primarily the responsibility of employers to meet their skill needs. The Government have increased their investment in training massively since 1979, particularly for young people with YTS and for the unemployed with employment training.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently unemployed aged between 18 and 25 years of age; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In July 1988 (the latest available date) the number of unemployed claimants aged 18 to 24 years in the United Kingdom was 663,367 compared with 859,071 in July, a fall of 195,704, or 22·8 per cent., over the last 12 months.

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of those currently available for work in Derbyshire are unemployed, and what is the relevant percentage for each of the years 1983 to 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: The table shows the annual average number of unemployed claimants in Derbyshire expressed as a percentage of employees in employment plus the unemployed. Estimates of the self-employed, the armed forces and participants on work-related Government training programmes, also part of the work force, are not regularly produced for counties.

County of Derbyshire

Year	*Unemployed[1] Claimants Per cent.*
1983	12·4
1984	12·7
1985	12·7
1986	12·8
1987	12·1

[1] Comparisons are affected by changes in the coverage of the count.

Youth Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people in Newham are on YTS; what are the trades being studied; how many of those are on schemes in the borough; and how many are outside the borough.

Mr. Cope: I will write to the hon. Member with the information requested and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Benefit Applications

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures are taken by his Department

when an applicant for unemployment benefit declares that he is available for work in an occupation for which there are vacancies in the area in which the applicant resides.

Mr. Nicholls: All applicants for unemployment benefit are required to be available for work without undue restriction. All recipients of unemployment benefit are encouraged to make full use of the extensive job-seeking service provided by the employment service local offices. The White Paper published in February announced that the Department would be progressively moving towards a situation where newly unemployed clients were interviewed by higher grade staff. Through longer and fuller interviews by staff of a higher grade clients will be given positive help to enable them to return to work as quickly as possible. Gradually as offices introduce the new system interviewers will have details of all vacancies which have been notified to the local jobcentre. During the interview the interviewer will, by consultation with the client, establish whether there are any suitable vacancies for which the client could apply. If so, arrangements will be made for the client to attend for an interview with the employer. This new system is being progressively introduced and will be fully in place by April 1989 when some 2,000 new client advisers will be engaged in this work.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether his Department's race relations advisory service has made further contact with the 47 major private sector employers who were actively considering the introduction of ethnic monitoring when visited in the period April 1985 to December 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Yes. The advisory service continues to work with a number of these employers.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) whether he will issue a circular to major private sector employers, urging them to comply with the recommendations for monitoring and positive action for the removal of race and sex discrimination in the codes for the Commission for Racial Equality and of the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively;

(2) whether he has asked the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission, respectively, to issue circulars to major employers in the private sector, requesting them to comply with the codes of the Commission for Racial Equality and of the Equal Opportunities Commission in respect of monitoring and positive action.

Mr. Nicholls: No. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State previously indicated in his reply to the hon. and learned Member on Wednesday 20 April, *Official Report*, column *474*, initiatives of this kind are matters for the commissions themselves to consider.

Race Relations Advisory Service

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current budget of his Department's race relations advisory service.

Mr. Nicholls: The current budget for the race relations employment advisory service for 1988-89 is £577,297.

Young People

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether decisions have been made regarding the legislation covered by his Department's consultative document entitled "Restrictions on Employment of Young People and the Removal of Sex Discrimination in Legislation"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: After giving careful consideration to the responses to the consultative document received by my Department the Government have decided to introduce legislation as soon as parliamentary time permits to effect the following measures.

Measures will be taken to reduce sex discrimination in employment. We have examined existing legislation to identify unnecessary requirements which involve discrimination. These will be removed. They include the outdated restrictions on women working underground in mines and on cleaning machinery in factories. Section 51 of the Sex Discrimination Act will be amended and section 7(2)(f) of the Act will be repealed to remove the protection they provide for discriminatory acts required by earlier legislation in the area of employment and vocational training.

In future the Sex Discrimination Act would override discriminatory requirements unless they are positively justified, for instance, to protect women in connection with pregnancy and maternity. We shall ensure that requirements will continue in force where we are satisfied, particularly on the advice of the Health and Safety Commission, that there are sound health and safety reasons for their retention. These include the regulations on women working with processes involving lead or ionising radiation, which might be damaging to an unborn child. As proposed in the consultative document, we shall also provide for certain single sex educational appointments to continue. These include the appointment of academic staff at the women's colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, in view of the continuing under-representation of female academic staff.

All the restrictions on young people's hours of work and related conditions of employment, including the associated record-keeping burdens on employers, will be lifted because they are outdated. The restrictions presently dictate maximum working hours; earliest starting and latest finishing times; minimum meal and rest breaks and holidays; and put limits on what weekend work, shift work and night work young people may do.

Regarding other restrictions on the kind of work young people may undertake, the Health and Safety Commission's recommendations were published on 18 March and the Government will be acting on that advice. This will result in a number of detailed adjustments which will include treating young persons over school-leaving age but under 16 in the same way as other young persons and the removal of some restrictions particular to certain industries. Restrictions on young persons working with dangerous machinery will be retained.

These measures will encourage flexibility in industry; extend employment opportunities for women and young people; simplify the legislation, and reduce the burdens on business. It is important that whilst retaining necessary health and safety protection, legislation on young people's employment and sex discrimination should not place restrictions on British industry's ability to compete in

domestic and world markets; and that young people and women should be able to participate fully in Britain's growing economic success.

Young People

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on progress on consultation on the proposals in the consultative document on the restrictions on the employment of young people and the removal of sex discrimination in legislation, to allow removal of restrictions on the hours of work of young persons and on the machines and substances with which they may work.

Mr. Fowler *[holding answer 27 October 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick).

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to increase the threshold of inheritance tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend has no plans but the matter will be kept under review.

Savings

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to encourage the small investor to take advantage of any of Government-created savings schemes including personal equity plans.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government intend to introduce a new national savings product in January 1989. The Government also continue to attach importance to personal equity plans as an encouragement to small investors to own shares.

Share Ownership

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any further plans for widening share ownership.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Wider share ownership forms a central part of the Government's plans. The continuing programme of privatisation will provide an opportunity for first-time investors to take a stake in British companies. The Government also continue to encourage wider share ownership through personal equity plans and the various employee share schemes that are available.

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of personal equity plan holders are standard rate tax payers.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that the information is not available.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he is satisfied with the take up of personal equity plans.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Investors hold in excess of 350,000 personal equity plans at present. This is a significant number, though I would naturally like to see still more investors take advantage of the PEP scheme.

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to allow investment companies who administer personal equity plans to operate them as collective investment schemes.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Personal equity plans are designed to encourage small investors to make direct investments in British companies. The rules already allow some holding of unit trusts and investment trusts within a PEP. PEP rules are kept under review.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the cost-effectiveness of the current administration of personal equity plans; and what plans he has to assist investment companies in improving the administration of such plans.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A number of changes to the personal equity plan rules were made at the beginning of the year, largely in order to reduce managers' costs. The scheme is kept under constant review.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, as a means of reducing administration costs, he will take steps to allow the paying of personal equity plan dividends gross.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 25 October 1988]:* I have noted my hon. Friend's suggestion. We keep the operation of personal equity plans under constant review.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer of allowing front-end tax concessions on personal equity plans for basic rate taxpayers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* The cost would depend on the precise form of the tax concessions and the number of investors attracted to the scheme. If the concessions were generous, the costs could be substantial.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will consider ways in which costs of running personal equity plan schemes could be kept to a minimum; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will estimate the cost in revenue to the Exchequer of streamlining the administration of personal equity plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* The PEP scheme is kept under review, including the need to keep down running costs, particularly for plan managers.

Income Tax

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many taxpayers constitute the top 10 per cent. of all taxpayers, on current data; at what income point a taxpayer is included in the top decile; and whether these data on the top decile include or exclude the claiming of tax allowances.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 28 October 1988]:* It is estimated that in 1988-89 the top 10 per cent. of taxpayers includes 2·1 million single people and married

couples, each with total income of over £23,000 per annum. The estimates are based on the income before deductions and personal allowances of all tax units liable to income tax.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to seek to change the distinctions for tax purposes in the treatment of a married couple and those living together as common law husband and wife; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: This year's Budget introduced a number of changes to remove the tax penalties on marriage which cause some married couples to pay more tax than they would if they were living together outside marriage.

Unpaid Income Tax

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer why he has established the rate of interest on unpaid income tax, in Statutory Instrument No. 1621, at 10·75 per cent. per annum from 6 October.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 25 October 1988]:* The rate change follows recent movements in bank base rates. It is set by reference to commercial rates and reduced to take account of not being allowable for tax purposes.

Residential Homes (VAT)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to zero-rate for value added tax purposes bona fide residential homes run by churches or charitable organisations.

Mr. Lilley: Following the European Court of Justice ruling on 21 June that certain United Kingdom zero rates were illegal, Customs have been consulting with interested parties—including Church and charitable residential homes—about the implementation of that ruling.

Mortgages

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated extra sum to be paid by a person with *(a)* a £20,000 mortgage, *(b)* a £25,000 mortgage, *(c)* a £30,000 mortgage, *(d)* a £35,000 mortgage and *(e)* a £40,000 mortgage, as a result of the total increase in mortgage interest rates which have taken place since 1 January.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 24 October 1988]:* The table shows the difference between the mortgage interest, net of tax relief at 25 per cent. which is payable on the basis of current mortgage interest rates and the amount payable if the interest rate at 1 January 1988 were applicable. The effect of interest rate changes on the amount of capital repaid on repayment mortgages is not included in these figures.

Size of home loan outstanding £	*Increase in net monthly interest payable* £
20,000	31·25
25,000	39·06
30,000	46·88
35,000	57·29
40,000	67·71

Inflation and Unemployment

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the information he has as to *(a)* the rate of inflation and *(b)* the rate of unemployment in each of the European Economic Community member states, Australia, Canada, Japan, Sweden and the United States of America in each year since 1980, with estimates where possible for 1988.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 27 October 1988]:* OECD main economic indicators, published monthly, give inflation and unemployment rates for all the countries in question, the former on a non-standardised and the latter on a standardised basis.

BP

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, in the light of the decision to accept the recommendation of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission that on the grounds of the public interest in the United Kingdom, the Kuwait Investment Office should reduce its shareholding in BP to 9·9 per cent., he will explain the factors which led Her Majesty's Government not to take or retain a special strategic share in BP on the most recent occasion when it sold Her Majesty's Government's stake in the company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 26 October 1988]:* It would not have been appropriate to take a special share in BP last year, since it is a longstanding company which has always been in the private sector.

SCOTLAND

Hospitals (Fire and Safety Standards)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will name the hospitals in Scotland which are described by the Public Accounts Committee in its 40th report of Session 1987-88 (HC 481), paragraphs 9 to 13, as having inadequate fire and safety standards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Home and Health Department urgently followed up its survey of 1,463 hospital wards, which showed that 33 (2·2 per cent.) fell short of desirable standards.

The work on the relevant wards has been satisfactorily completed at Craig Dunain hospital, Inverness, and at the Royal Edinburgh hospital. Most of the recommendations have also been implemented in the relevant wards in the Royal Scottish national hospital, Larbert, and in Lennox castle, Gartnavel Royal and Leverndale hospitals. The remaining recommendations will be completed shortly. The Fire Inspectorate visits the wards on completion to ensure that all the work is satisfactory.

Housing Conditions

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many occupied dwellings in *(a)* Glasgow and *(b)* Scotland are below the tolerable standard at the most recent available date.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Pheasants

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the statutory powers which exist to regulate or control the setting up, development and expansion of pheasant rearing units with regard to *(a)* the suitability of the site, *(b)* the size of the units, *(c)* the odour therefrom, *(d)* control of any vermin attracted to the site, *(e)* fire precautions for gas cylinders for heating and *(f)* storage requirements for feedstuffs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Statutory controls under the following enactments may apply. The exact controls would depend on the individual circumstances of each case.

Pheasant unit control	*Statutory policy*
(a) Suitability of the site *(b)* Size of the units *(f)* Storage for feedstuffs	Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972 Town and Country Planning (General Development) (Scotland) Order 1981
(c) Odour	Public Health (Scotland) Act 1897
(d) Control of vermin	Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949
(e) Fire precautions	The Highly Flammable Liquids and Liquified Petroleum Gas Regulations 1972

Housing Grants

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* all the statutory or discretionary grants that are available through local housing authorities, central Government Departments, SDD-funded organisations or any other bodies which directly or indirectly assist the building, improvement or repair of commercial or domestic property in Scotland, showing how much was awarded under each heading in each local authority housing area in Scotland for the last year for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Nurses

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* by health board area, those maternity units, and neonatal intensive care units, that regularly rely on agency nurses as bank staff to meet normal planned patient requirements in the areas the units serve.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No health board relies on agency midwives. In the quarter ended 31 March 1988 only 0·4 of a whole-time equivalent agency midwife was engaged in Scotland.

Midwives

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of fully qualified midwives in each health board area and show that figure as a percentage of the recommended level of fully trained midwifery staff for each board area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is no centrally recommended level for midwifery staffing. Health boards set their own staffing levels according to their local circumstances. The table shows the whole-time equivalent numbers of qualified staff employed by health boards in hospital and community maternity services at 30 September 1987. Statistics are not held centrally by qualification and although the majority of those recorded are qualified midwives the figure includes a small number of registered nurses who have no midwifery qualification and who work in areas such as special care baby units. Also included in the table are about 700 combined duty nurses working in the community who are qualified midwives but who do not work exclusively in maternity services. Enrolled nurses are excluded.

	Whole-time equivalents
Scotland	3,365·3
Argyll and Clyde	296·3
Ayrshire and Arran	220·0
Borders	83·3
Dumfries and Galloway	122·4
Fife	167·1
Forth Valley	183·6
Grampian	325·1
Greater Glasgow	652·7
Highland	220·7
Lanarkshire	277·8
Lothian	388·1
Orkney	27·4
Shetland	28·3
Tayside	314·8
Western Isles	57·7

Road Accident Statistics

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for the last five years the number of people killed in road accidents in which drink was involved.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest estimates of number of people killed in accidents in which at least one driver involved was over the legal limit of alcohol in breath or blood, for the five years 1982 to 1986 (the latest available), are as follows:

	Minimum	*Maximum*
1982	165	178
1983	129	141
1984	126	139
1985	111	116
1986	107	114

The available data may result in some double counting and it is necessary therefore to show minimum and maximum figures of the number of people killed.

In addition, the latest estimates of number of pedestrians killed who were over the same limit for the same years are as follows:

	Number
1982	111
1983	96
1984	103
1985	78
1986	80

Health Boards (Regrading Reviews)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the health boards which have been asked to review their initial regrading and the reasons why.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No health board has been asked to review its initial regrading of nurses.

Hospital Services (Privatisation)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of all new contracts awarded by 30 September by each health board, by hospital, for *(a)* portering, *(b)* catering, *(c)* laundry, *(d)* cleaning and *(e)* other ancillary work; and if he will give the estimated annual saving for each contract awarded.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on contracts awarded between June and September 1988 is as set out.

Health Board	*Unit*	*Estimated Annual Savings £000s*
Domestic		
Argyll and Clyde	Royal Alexandra Hospital	108
	Inverclyde Royal Hospital	21
Ayrshire and Arran	Crosshouse Hospital	43
	Ayrshire Central Hospital	29
Borders	Borders General Hospital	63
Dumfries and Galloway	Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary	120
Fife	Stratheden	no actual savings but specifications upgrade without additional cost
	Kirkcaldy Unit	102
Forth Valley	Falkirk Unit	67
	Clackmannan County Hospital	9
Grampian	Geriatric and Specialist Services Unit	209
	Mental Health Unit	75
Greater Glasgow	Stobhill General Hospital	531
	Victoria Group	145
	Gartloch Hospital and Parkhead Psychiatric Hospital	45
	Community and Primary Care Unit, North and West	82
	Community and Primary Care Unit, East, South East and South West	114
Lanarkshire	Hartwood Hospital	149
	Law Hospital	115
Lothian	Edinburgh Royal Infirmary/Simpson Memorial Unit	635
	Mental Health Unit	343
Catering		
Argyll and Clyde	Dumbarton Group	18
Ayrshire and Arran	Crosshouse Hospital	34
	Ayrshire Central Hospital	9
Dumfries and Galloway	Crichton Royal Hospital	110
Fife	Kirkcaldy Unit	10
Grampian	Geriatric and Specialist Services Unit	158
	Mental Health Unit	156
Lanarkshire	Law Hospital	122
Lothian	East Unit	117
	Northern General, Royal Victoria and Western General Unit	30

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the latest figures, as a percentage of services put out to tender by each district health authority, for *(a)* catering, *(b)* domestic services and *(c)* laundry; and if he will give the estimated annual savings.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No contracts for laundry services have been awarded in Scotland. The information requested covering contracts awarded so far for catering and domestic services is set out by the health board in the table. Thirty-seven contracts have been awarded; 26 of these to the in-house teams.

Board	*Domestic Services*		*Catering Services*	
	Value of contracts awarded as a per cent. of total 1987-88 service expenditure	*Estimated savings £000s*	*Value of contracts awarded as a per cent. of total 1987-88 service expenditure*	*Estimated savings £000s*
Argyll and Clyde	36	129	15	18
Ayrshire and Arran	50	72	34	43
Borders	48	63	Contract not yet awarded	

Board	Domestic Services		Catering Services	
	Value of contracts awarded as a per cent. of total 1987-88 service expenditure	Estimated savings £000s	Value of contracts awarded as a per cent. of total 1987-88 service expenditure	Estimated savings £000s
Dumfries and Galloway	45	120	23	110
Fife	56	102	29	10
Forth Valley	26	76	Contract not yet awarded	
Grampian	35	284	37	314
Greater Glasgow	27	916	8	371
Highland	32	35	26	67
Lanarkshire	37	264	14	122
Lothian	44	978	25	147
Orkney	Contract not yet awarded		Contract not yet awarded	
Shetland	Contract not yet awarded		Contract not yet awarded	
Tayside	Contract not yet awarded		Contract not yet awarded	
Western Isles	Contract not yet awarded		Contract not yet awarded	

Female Prisoners

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average length of custodial sentence of female prisoners in Scotland in the first six months of the current year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Statistics on court disposals during the current year are not yet available. However, on the basis of prison reception statistics, the average length of sentence of females received into the penal system on direct sentence in the first six months of 1988 was 111 days. Females sentenced to life imprisonment or indeterminate detention are not included in the above calculation.

Terrorist-type Offences

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons in Scotland were charged with terrorist-type offences relating to Northern Ireland in 1986, 1987 and 1988; how many of those charged were released on bail; and what was the average period between remand and trial for prisoners refused bail relating to such charges in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

Terrorist Offences[1]*: Scotland*

	[2]1986	1987	1988 (to date)
Number charged	8	2	0
Number released on bail	0	1	0
Number remanded	7	1	0
Average period of remand (days)	105	21	—

[1] Excludes persons charged with minor offences under prevention of terrorism legislation, but includes breaches of exclusion orders.
[2] Includes, under number charged, one person who was charged then convicted in court the following day.

Paramilitary Activity

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in Scotland in the current year as a result of paramilitary activity; and if he will break down the figures specifying whether the paramilitaries were (i) from western Europe, (ii) from Northern Ireland, (iii) from the Republic of Ireland, (iv) from other parts of the world, and (v) of unknown origin.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: From the information presently available, there were no such deaths or injuries in Scotland in the first 10 months of 1988.

Prisoners (Transfers)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners were transferred from *(a)* Scotland to Northern Ireland and *(b)* Northern Ireland to Scotland in the current year; and under which section of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 such transfers were carried out.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: One inmate has been transferred temporarily from Scotland to Northern Ireland on two separate occasions, once under section (29)1 and again under section (27)1.

"Schools (Scotland) Code"

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will take steps to repeal paragraph 23 of the 1956 "Schools (Scotland) Code."

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The terms of regulations governing education in Scotland are constantly under review in the light of changing circumstances. If there are any proposals to revoke or amend the "Schools (Scotland) Code 1956" there will be full consultation.

Special Education

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of pupils in special education in each region and division who were over statutory school leaving age in *(a)* 1977, *(b)* 1982 and *(c)* 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of pupils aged 16 and over in education authority special schools in each region and division is given in the table.

	1977	1982	1987
Borders	30	10	20
Central	70	60	50
Dumfries and Galloway	10	10	20
Fife	30	70	80
Grampian	100	110	110
Highland	10	30	60
Lothian	90	130	170
Strathclyde	420	610	640
Tayside	40	70	50

	1977	1982	1987
Orkney	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—
Western Isles	10	—	10
Scotland	800	1,090	1,190
Argyll and Bute	—	10	10
Ayr	70	60	40
Dunbarton	40	90	90
Glasgow (City)	190	250	290
Lanark	50	120	120
Renfrew	60	70	90

These figures do not include pupils in primary and secondary schools.

Teachers

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total number of teachers in each region or division who retired as a result of the premature retirement scheme by age and sex; and what were the comparable figures for 1977 and 1982.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not available centrally in the form requested. The table sets out the figures by age and sex for retirals of teachers in Scotland aged 50 or over by reason of redundancy or in the interests of the efficient exercise of the employer's functions for the years ending on 31 March 1978 and 1983 as well as the provisional figures for the year ending on 31 March 1987, the last year for which figures are available.

	1978		1983		1987	
Age	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
50	—	—	3	5	9	10
51	—	—	10	10	6	13
52	—	—	11	11	7	13
53	—	—	12	19	3	13
54	—	—	12	26	9	17
55	—	1	16	24	18	24
56	—	—	24	75	22	41
57	—	—	24	79	16	48
58	—	—	29	85	30	46
59	—	—	24	115	23	55
60	—	—	26	71	26	31
61	—	—	39	48	44	11
62	—	—	31	23	29	6
63	—	—	31	11	27	18
64	—	—	10	12	13	12
Total	—	1	302	614	282	358

"Birds, Bogs and Forestry"

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what regard was had to the needs of agriculture and forestry and to the economic and social interests of rural areas by the Nature Conservancy Council, in making the proposals contained in its report "Birds, Bogs and Forestry", pursuant to section 37 of the Countryside Act 1968; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Nature Conservancy Council is an independent statutory body. Its report "Birds, Bogs and Forestry" sought "to present the conservation case" for the peatlands of Caithness and Sutherland. I suggest that the hon. Member should ask the Nature Conservancy Council what regard it had in preparing the report to the duty imposed by section 37 of the Countryside Act 1968 "to have due regard to the needs of agriculture and forestry and to the economic and social needs of rural areas".

My right hon. and learned Friend's views were set out in a statement on 25 January. He awaits the report of Highland regional council's joint working group, which is expected soon, before making any further statement.

Fishing Ports (Aid)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will extend the time limit beyond the end of October for applications for aid for fishing ports (EC ref. 4028/86), notified by his Department to regional councils, harbour authorities and producer organisations in Scotland on 14 October; and if he will seek to ensure that future advice on such matters is made available in Scotland at the same time as it is issued in other countries.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* Consideration will be given to replies lodged with the Department after 31 October 1988 and prior to a bid being lodged with the Commission. Where it is within the control of the Department every effort is made to provide such advice at the earliest opportunity.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support Rules

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many FB 23, "New Income Support Rules for People Under Eighteen", leaflets have been printed by his Department; and what was the cost of printing them;

(2) if he will now withdraw leaflet FB 23, "New Income Support Rules for People Under Eighteen"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: One million copies of the leaflet "New Income Support Rules for People Under Eighteen" were printed at a cost of £14,920. The leaflet, which was a temporary supplement to leaflet FB 23, has now been superseded by an October 1988 edition of that leaflet, "Young people's guide to Social Security".

Widows' Benefits

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will change those parts in his Department's leaflet NI196 concerning widows' benefits which misleadingly suggest that those under 45 years who receive widows' allowance would receive benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are currently considering the contents of this leaflet, which is due to be reprinted in April 1989.

Benefits (Fraud)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much benefit was fraudulently claimed during each of the last five years; and how much benefit was left unclaimed by persons entitled to it.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that it is not possible to ascertain the total amounts of social security benefits fraudulently claimed or left unclaimed, and no reliable estimates of them are available.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state by year since 1980 to date the number of fraud investigators employed by his Department in the following sections, by region: claimant investigators, sector fraud teams, area fraud teams, special investigators and benefit fraud teams.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that information cannot be provided in the precise form requested. The Department does not employ claimant investigators, sector fraud teams or area fraud teams.

The following information relates to the number of posts allocated on the first of April each year, to local social security office fraud officers, board and lodging control teams, special investigators and benefit fraud teams.[1] No regional breakdown is available before 1983-84.

The number of staff allocated is as follows:

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Special Investigator						
North East	92	96	98	107	118	123
Midlands	68	116	128	114	135	138
London North	62	76	89	74	76	73
London South	67	82	91	90	91	87
Wales and South West	90	106	116	120	122	127
North West	88	96	105	103	108	116
Scotland	54	68	71	61	61	61
Total allocated	521	640	698	669	711	725

[1] Known as Specialist Claims Control until 1986-87.

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Benefit Fraud Teams						
North East	28	32	32	68	68	68
Midlands	22	33	33	68	68	68
London North	21	27	27	80	80	80
London South	20	23	23	80	80	80
Wales and South West	33	22	22	65	65	65
North West	37	30	30	68	68	68
Scotland	14	22	22	80	80	80
Total allocated	175	189	189	509	509	509

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Fraud Officers						
North East	194	212	183	244	248	273
Midlands	291	248	197	231	281	302
London North	233	270	225	279	326	349
London South	245	302	258	323	423	331
Wales and South West	203	225	166	198	213	228
North West	205	224	185	239	258	255
Scotland	149	178	148	189	170	183
Total allocated	1,520	1,659	1,362	1,703	1,919	1,921

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Board and Lodging Control Staff			
North East	12	12	12
Midlands	18	18	18
London North	38	38	38
London South	46	46	46
Wales and South West	24	24	24
North West	21	21	21
Scotland	21	21	21
Total allocated	180	180	180

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether fraud investigators in his Department are given targets to reach; how they liaise with the police, particularly in respect of obtaining details of vehicle owners; whether any further confidential information is sought from the police by his investigators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department sets an overall annual target of benefit savings to be achieved as a result of fraud investigations. There are no formal arrangements for fraud investigators to liaise with the police in benefit fraud cases involving potential offences under social security legislation. In some cases, however, particularly those involving possible offences under general criminal law, the police may be requested to investigate. Local officers do not obtain information about claimants from police records. On occasions it may be necessary during an investigation for details of the keepership of a vehicle to be obtained from the vehicle licensing centre. Routine clerical arrangements are made for that purpose.

Child Benefit

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in respect of how many children child benefit is being paid; how many reside in households with an income in excess of £20,000 per annum; and how many reside in households with an income below £10,000 per annum.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of children in respect of whom child benefit was in payment at 31 December 1987 is 12,015,000. A breakdown showing estimates of the distribution of gross incomes of recipient families in 1988-89 was given in the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) on 17 June 1988 at columns *371-72*.

Pneumoconiosis

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what basis is used for the determination of industrial injury benefit due to pneumoconiosis; and if there are any plans to change this in the near future.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 27 May at column *418*. Disablement benefit in respect of pneumoconiosis is payable according to the assessed percentage disablement. Assessments of disablement between 1 and 10 per cent. are paid at the 10 per cent. benefit rate, and those between 11 and 20 per cent. at the 20 per cent. benefit rate. Thereafter, benefit is paid in further steps of 10 per cent. up to the 100 per cent. rate, with assessments ending in the figure 5 or above being rounded up to the next step and the remainder being rounded down. We have no plans to change this in the near future.

Benefits

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people receiving benefits from his Department's office in Chesterfield have failed to qualify for the transitional payments scheme by failing to sign the required declaration when requested to.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret the information requested is not available.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing the values of *(a)* child benefit and *(b)* child benefit plus the long-term national insurance benefit additions for the children of widows and invalidity pensioners in each year since 1979 (i) at current prices, (ii) at constant 1988 prices and (iii) as percentages of average male manual earnings.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as set out in the table:

Uprating dates	*(1) Child benefit*	*(2) Column (1) expressed at April 1988 prices*[1]	*(3) Widow/IVB child dependants*	*(4) Column (1) + column (3)*	*(5) Column (4) expressed at April 1988 prices*[1]	*Male manual earnings married couple Column (1) expressed as a percentage of net*[2]	*Male manual earnings married couple Column (4) expressed as a percentage of net*[2]
	£	£	£	£	£	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
April 1979	4·00	7·79	5·35	9·35	18·22	6·0	13·9
November 1979	4·00	7·02	7·10	11·10	19·49	5·2	14·4
November 1980	4·75	7·23	7·50	12·25	18·65	5·4	14·0
November 1981	5·25	7·14	7·70	12·95	17·61	5·6	13·9
November 1982	5·85	7·49	7·95	13·80	17·66	5·9	14·0
November 1983	6·50	7·93	7·60	14·10	17·21	6·1	13·3
November 1984	6·85	7·97	7·65	14·50	16·87	5·9	12·6
November 1985	7·00	7·72	8·05	15·05	16·60	5·7	12·3
July 1986	7·10	7·70	8·05	15·15	16·44	5·5	11·7
April 1987	7·25	7·53	8·05	15·30	15·90	5·2	11·1
April 1988	7·25	7·25	8·40	15·65	15·65	4·8	10·3

[1] Based on the movements in the Retail Price Index between the uprating dates shown to April 1988.
[2] Net average earnings are the estimates of gross weekly earnings less tax and National Insurance contributions at the non-contracted out rate.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing each of the main national insurance benefits, for single people and married couples, at current prices, at constant 1988 prices, and as percentages of *(a)* gross and *(b)* net average male manual earnings in 1958, 1968, 1978 and each year thereafter.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my right hon. Friend to sections 5 and 6 of the "Abstract of Statistics for Index of Retail Prices, Average Earnings, Social Security Benefits and Contributions" (August 1988) published by this Deparment, a copy of which is held in the Library.

Severe Disability Premium

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will reconsider the rules concerning the severe disability premium so as to ensure that people are not deterred merely on the basis that they do not live alone.

Mr. Scott: There are already exceptions to the "living alone" rule for the severe disability premium. For example, the presence of a resident carer who is engaged by a charitable or voluntary body (other than a public or local authority) which charges the claimant for the carer's services would not preclude the award of this premium. We have promised to look at the detail of the premium structure in the light of the OPCS surveys on disabilities. Meanwhile, people who need to pay for domestic help or personal care, whether or not they qualify for the severe disability premium, can apply to the independent living fund for help with the cost.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what day of what month he expects all backdated payments of transitional housing benefit to have been made.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since all successful applications, whenever they are received, continue to be backdated to April 1988, it is not possible to specify a date by when all backdated payments will have been made. Clearance of applications depends upon the time taken for local authorities to return inquiry forms to the transitional payments unit. Currently 105,000 inquiries are with authorities and as they are returned applications are processed and payments made without delay.

Hospital Services (Privatisation)

Mr. Dobson To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give details of all new contracts awarded by 30 September by each district health authority, by hospital special health authority, for *(a)* portering, *(b)* catering, *(c)* laundry, *(d)* cleaning and *(e)* other ancillary work; and if he will give the estimated annual saving for each contract awarded;

(2) if he will give the latest figures, as a percentage of services put out to tender by each district health authority, for *(a)* catering, *(b)* domestic services and *(c)* laundry; and if he will give the estimated annual savings.

Mr. Mellor: As at 30 September 1988 tenders had been sought for 98, 97 and 78 per cent. of laundry, domestic and catering services respectively. Estimated annual savings of £109·1 million had been generated from contracts awarded. A total of £28·5 million has come from contracts awarded to private contractors and £80·6 million from tenders secured by in-house organisations.

Tables giving the detailed information requested have been placed in the Library. Information on any contracts let for portering and other ancillary services is not collected centrally.

Social Fund

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for *(a)* loans and *(b)* grants from the social fund have been received by his Department's Woolwich office at the most recent convenient date; how many of these have been approved; and at what cost.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on social fund loans and grants received, processed and awarded, listed by local office is in the Library.

Mobility Allowance

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals were received by his Department in each of the past five years against decisions by the mobility allowance unit not to grant mobility allowance to applicants; and what percentage of the appeals were successful.

Mr. Scott: The available information is as follows. It relates to decisions given in the relevant years, not to appeals received in those years.

Year	*Number decided*	*Decisions in favour of claimant (per cent.)*
1. Appeals and references decided by social security appeal tribunals		
1983	255	3·1
1984	409	3·7
1985	836	2·9
1986	1,644	2·4
1987	1,444	3·2
2. Appeals and references decided by medical boards		
1983	12,970	30
1984	14,750	33
1985	16,800	32
1986	20,370	34
1987	21,208	30
3. Appeals decided by medical appeal tribunals		
1983	3,070	33
1984	3,933	28
1985	4,316	20
1986	5,382	23
1987	5,753	27

Attendance Allowance

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals were received by his Department in each of the past five years against decisions by the attendance allowance unit not to grant attendance allowance to applicants; and what percentage of the appeals were successful.

Mr. Scott: Applications for review of whether the medical criteria for attendance allowance are satisfied in individual cases are decided by the independent Attendance Allowance Board and medical practitioners delegated to act on their behalf. Information about review applications decided in each of the past five years is in the table.

Table
Attendance Allowance: Decisions on applications for review 1983 to 1987

[1] Year	*[2] Number of Review Applications Decided*[1]	*[3] Number of Successful Review Applications*[2]	*[4] Column [3] as a percentage of column [2]*
1987	58,273	44,104	75·7
1986	42,648	30,492	71·5
1985	41,995	30,252	72·0
1984	33,374	23,184	69·5
1983	29,843	19,819	66·4

Notes:

[1] Includes applications from claimants dissatisfied with the original decision in their case and applications from claimants who believe their attendance needs have increased since their claim was decided.

[2] Successful reviews include those where an allowance is awarded for the first time, those where an allowance is increased from the lower rate to the higher rate and those where the period covered by a certificate of attendance needs is increased.

NHS (Review)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has yet completed his review of national insurance contributions for 1989-90.

Mr. Moore: I have completed the annual review under section 120 of the Social Security Act 1987. The proposals will take effect from April 6 1989.

Employers and Employees

As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his statement earlier today, I do not propose to change the standard rates of contributions for either employees or employers, which remain at 9 per cent. and 10·45 per cent. respectively.

In line with the Social Security Pensions Act 1975, the lower earnings limit for class 1 contributions is to be raised to £43 a week, which is just below the basic retirement pension rate for a single person, which I announced to the House on October 27. The upper earnings limit is to be raised to £325 a week, which is slightly less than seven and a half times the new basic pension rate. The new earnings limits will replace the current ones of £41 and £305 respectively.

The reduced contribution rates for the lower paid will continue unchanged. The reduced rates of 5 per cent. and 7 per cent. for employees and 5 per cent., 7 per cent. and 9 per cent. for employers will be extended further; they will now apply to weekly earnings which fall below the ceilings of £75, £115, and for employers only, £165 (the previous ceilings were £70, £105 and £155 respectively).

Not contracted-out employees and their employers

Neither the employee nor his employer will have to pay any contributions if earninga are less than £43 a week. For people earning between £43 and £305 (the former upper earnings limit) there will be no increase for either the employee or his employer. In fact, owing to the increase in the earnings ceilings for the reduced contribution rates, some lower-paid employees will pay a slightly smaller contribution, as will their employers. For those employees with earnings above £305 a week, the maximum possible increase will be £1·80 a week. There will be no corresponding increase for employers since there is no upper earnings limit for their contributions.

Contracted-out employees and their employers

Some lower-paid contracted-out employees, and their employers, will have their contributions reduced because the earnings ceilings for the reduced contribution rates will have been increased. Some contracted-out employees and their employers will pay slightly more. Where earnings are less than the former upper earnings limit of £305 a week, the increase will be very small reflecting the fact that the raised lower earnings limit increases the band of earnings on which the higher non-contracted out contribution rates are paid.

Contracted-out employees with earnings above the old upper earnings limit (£305) will pay a maximum of £1·44 a week extra. Their employers will pay slightly less since the raised upper earnings limit will extend the contracted-out rebate to employers contributions in respect of earnings between £305 and £325 a week.

Self-employed people

The flat-rate class 2 contribution will be raised by 20p to £4·25 a week.

The rate of class 4 contributions, currently 6·3 per cent. will not be increased. The annual limits of profits between which class 4 contributions are paid will be raised to £5,050 and £16,900 from £4,750 and £15,860 respectively. Self-employed people who pay only class 2 contributions will pay an extra £10·40 a year in 1989-90.

For those self-employed people with profits between £5,050 and £15,860 (the former upper profits limit) class 4 contributions will be reduced by £18·90 per year in 1989-90, assuming an unaltered level of profits. For those self-employed people with profits at or above the proposed upper profits limit of £16,900 in 1989-90, the annual charge for class 4 contributions will be £46·62 higher.

Class 3 (voluntary) contributions

The rate of class 3 contributions will be raised to £4·15 a week.

Treasury supplement

The Government propose to introduce legislation as soon as possible to abolish from 1989-90 the Treasury supplement to the national insurance fund which currently stands at 5 per cent. of gross contributions. Abolition will not require any changes to contribution rates and will mean that national insurance benefits are fully financed by the national insurance contributions which earn entitlement to these benefits.

Employment protection allocation

There will be no employment protection allocation for 1989-90.

National Health Service allocation

The allocation to the National Health Service, currently 0·95 per cent. from employees and 0·8 per cent. from employers, will be increased to 1·05 per cent. and 0·9 per cent. respectively from April 1989.

The draft orders, together with a report by the Government Actuary, will be laid before Parliament shortly.

City of London Office

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the new local office serving the City of London will begin dealing with income support and social fund claims.

Mr. Scott: The new City of London office, which has existed since January 1988, is expected to assume responsibility for administering income support and the social fund from 1 November. It will cover some areas previously served by the local offices in Bloomsbury and Westminster. Accordingly the social fund budget allocations to these other offices have been reduced proportionately and the money reallocated to the City. The new allocations are:

	Grants budget £	*Loans budget* £	*Period of allocation*
Bloomsbury	92,343	208,526	11 April 1988 to 31 March 1989
City	27,206	73,746	1 November 1988 to 31 March 1989
Westminster	71,429	169,017	11 April 1988 to 31 March 1989

NORTHERN IRELAND

Murders (Statistics)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many murders arising from acts of terrorism in the district council area of Armagh still remain unresolved.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Details of murders prior to 1983 are not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Since 1 January 1983, 19 persons have been murdered in 16 separate incidents in the Armagh district council area by persons suspected of being members of, or of having links with, paramilitary organisations. Five persons have been convicted in respect of two of these incidents and they are currently serving life sentences.

Anglo-Irish Conference

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the meetings of the Anglo-Irish Conference which have taken place since 15 November 1985 with their dates and venues.

Mr. Tom King: The information is as follows:

Date	*Venue*
11 December 1985	Belfast
30 December 1985	London
10 January 1986	London
13 February 1986 (Ministerial sub-group)	London
11 March 1986	Belfast
9 May 1986	London
17 June 1986	Belfast
29 July 1986	London
6 October 1986	Dublin
31 October 1986 (Ministerial sub-group)	London
8 December 1986	Belfast
22 April 1987	Belfast
16 July 1987	London
21 October 1987	Belfast
16 November 1987	Dublin
2 February 1988	Belfast
16 February 1988	Belfast
24 February 1988	Dublin
25 March 1988	London
4 May 1988	Dublin
17 June 1988	Belfast
27 July 1988	London
13 September 1988	Dublin

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of all new contracts awarded by 30 September by each health board, by hospital, for *(a)* portering, *(b)* catering, *(c)* laundry, *(d)* cleaning and *(e)* other ancilliary work; and if he will give the estimated annual saving for each contract awarded.

Mr. Needham: At 30 September 1988 no contracts had been awarded to outside contractors by any of the health and social service boards.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the latest figures, as a percentage of services put out to tender by each health board for *(a)* catering, *(b)* domestic services and *(c)* laundry; and if he will give the estimated annual savings.

Mr. Needham: The latest figures to 31 March 1988 of services submitted to the tendering process, by health and social services boards, with estimated annual savings, are as follows:

(a) Catering
—Western Board = 7 per cent.: Savings = Nil.
—Southern Board = 4·6 per cent.: Savings = £6,000.

(b) Domestic
—Western Board + 6·8 per cent.: Savings = Nil.
—Northern Board = 6 per cent.: Savings = £15,000.

(c) Laundry
—Northern Board = 100 per cent.: Savings = £254,000.

The remaining services have not been put out to tender by that date.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the number of prisoners in Northern Ireland's prisons as at 30 September, detailing the numbers by sex, in prison and in young offenders centres separately.

Mr. Ian Stewart: On 30 September 1988 there were 1,848 inmates in Northern Ireland prison establishments of whom 1,822 were males and 26 were females; 1,693 were in prisons and 155 in young offenders' centres.

Custodial Remand

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average period of custodial remand for female custodial remand prisoners in Northern Ireland for the first six months of the current year.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The average length of time spent on custodial remand by female prisoners who were tried in the first six months of 1988 and who were in custody at time of trial was 67 days.

Terrorism

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the average period between remand and trial for prisoners refused bail and charged with scheduled offences in Northern Ireland in 1987 and the first half of the current year.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The average length of time spent on custodial remand for persons who were charged with scheduled offences and in custody at time of trial was 178 days for persons tried in 1987 and 164 days for persons tried in the first six months of 1988.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications for bail, by those held on remand for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, and both together, were refused bail in the first six months of the current year.

Mr. Ian Stewart: In the first six months of 1988 there was a total of 638 applications for bail in the High Court in Northern Ireland by those held on remand for scheduled offences. A total of 280 of these applications were refused. In addition, there were 193 applications in respect of persons on remand for non-scheduled offences; 107 of which were refused. Information is not available in relation to unsuccessful applications in respect of non-scheduled offences in the magistrates' courts.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of prisoners on custodial remand for scheduled and non-scheduled offences respectively, were *(a)* given a non-custodial sentence, *(b)* given a custodial sentence and *(c)* found not guilty or not proceeded against in the first six months of the current year.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information is as follows:

Disposal	*Scheduled offences Per cent.*	*Non-scheduled offences Per cent.*
Non-custodial sentence	16·9	21·1
Custodial sentence	68·6	62·4
Found not guilty or not proceeded against	14·5	16·5

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases concerning scheduled offences were referred to the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal in 1988; and in how many of these referred cases as the original conviction been quashed and upheld.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The outcome of appeals disposed of in the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal following conviction for scheduled offences in the period 1 January 1988 to 30 September 1988 is as follows:

	Appeal abandoned	*Appeal dismissed*	*Conviction quashed*	*Sentence varied*	*Refused*	*Total number disposed of*
1st Quarter	6	7	0	4	0	17
2nd Quarter	5	20	3	4	0	32
3rd Quarter	1	4	0	0	[1]1	6

[1]This was an application for an extension of time to allow an appeal to be lodged.

Security Forces (Convictions)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many members of the security forces convicted of offences in Northern Ireland and sentenced to custodial sentences have been allowed to return to Great Britain to serve their sentence for humanitarian reasons in the current year; and how many members of the security forces secured early release from their sentences in the current year.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There have been no transfers of sentenced members of the security forces to Great Britain in the current year, nor has any such person been released in Northern Ireland except under normal release procedures.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the manpower strength of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and its reserve, as between *(a)* full-time, *(b)* part-time, *(c)* male and *(d)* female operatives as at 30 September.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information is as follows:

Strength of the RUC and RUC Reserve as at 30 September 1988

	Male	*Female*	*Total*
RUC	7,598	654	8,252
RUC Reserve (Full-time)	2,990	30	3,020
RUC Reserve (Part-time)	1,314	341	1,655

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the estimated cost of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will show separately figures for *(a)* salary and benefits, *(b)* transport and communication, *(c)* new construction, *(d)* other costs, *(e)* total gross expenditure and *(f)* total net expenditure after deduction of receipts.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information requested is contained in the Police Authority for Northern Ireland annual statement of account which is published and presented to the House each year. The cost of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88 is set out in the table.

		1 April 1986-31 March 1987 £ million	*1 April 1987-31 March 1988 £ million*
A	Salary and Benefits	270·14	302·85
B	Transport and Communications	17·09	15·28
C	New Construction	10·06	22·24
D	Other Costs	41·94	41·85
E	Total Gross Expenditure	339·23	382·22
F	Total Net Expenditure After Deduction of Receipts	318·45	364·83

Subventions

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the amount of the direct subvention by the British Exchequer to Northern Ireland in each financial year since 1985; and what amounts are budgeted for in future periods.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information requested is as follows:

	£ million
1984-85	1,489
1985-86	1,536
1986-87	1,593
1987-88	1,570
[1]1988-89	1,623

[1] Estimate.
Figures are not available for future years.

Discrimination

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of individual discrimination have been found by the Fair Employment

Agency in 1986, 1987 and in the first six months of 1988; and how many of these were against (i) Catholics and (ii) Protestants.

Mr. Viggers: During the period 1 January 1986 to 30 June 1988 the agency found that unlawful discrimination had been committed against 16 complainants, all of whom were Catholics.

Prison Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the size of the present prison population in Northern Ireland, divided into terrorist-type offenders and other offenders, categorised by age and by sex in the following groups: under 18 years old, 18 to 25 years, 25 to 30 years, 30 to 40 years, 40 to 50 years, 50 to 60 years and over 60 years; and if he will give a breakdown of the length of sentence being served by each age group under the headings (i) up to three months, (ii) over three months and up to six months, (iii) over six months and under 12 months, (iv) over 12 months and under 18 months, (v) over 18 months and up to four years, (vi) over four years and up to eight years, (vii) over eight years, and (viii) life; and if he will give a breakdown, divided into terrorist-type offenders and other offenders, under the same sentence headings of the numbers as a percentage of the total prison population.

Mr. Ian Stewart: On 30 September 1988 there were 1,848 sentenced inmates in Northern Ireland prison establishments. This includes those detained in the young offenders' centres. The requested breakdowns of the population are set out in the tables.

Table A

Northern Ireland sentenced prison population 30 September 1988 for male prisoners

Sentence length	*Age of prisoners*							*Total*
	Under 18 years of age	*18 to 25 years of age*	*25 to 30 years of age*	*30 to 40 years of age*	*40 to 50 years of age*	*50 to 60 years of age*	*Over 60 years*	
Up to 3 months								
Scheduled	1	9	2	1	—	—	—	13
Non-scheduled	2	31	18	10	3	2	—	66
3 months to 6 months								
Scheduled	—	5	—	3	—	—	—	8
Non-scheduled	7	33	17	7	1	2	—	67
6 months to 12 months								
Scheduled	6	11	3	3	—	—	—	23
Non-scheduled	5	51	16	7	4	2	—	85
12 months to 18 months								
Scheduled	—	15	4	1	1	—	—	21
Non-scheduled	3	12	6	4	2	1	—	28
18 months to 4 years								
Scheduled	3	70	36	21	5	—	—	135
Non-scheduled	3	58	32	29	15	5	1	143
4 years to 8 years								
Scheduled	—	75	54	33	7	1	1	171
Non-scheduled	—	17	17	15	12	4	1	66
8 years excluding life								
Scheduled	—	60	108	68	9	—	—	245
Non-scheduled	—	3	11	4	4	2	1	25
Life								
Scheduled	2	22	91	261	47	7	1	431
Non-scheduled	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
Total	32	472	415	467	111	26	5	1,528

Notes:

1. Age refers to age of prisoner on 30 September 1988.
2. Percentage = per cent. of total sentenced prison population (1,548).
3. Life includes those detained at the pleasure of the Secretary of State.

Table B

Northern Ireland sentenced prison population 30 September 1988 for female prisoners

Sentence length	*Age of prisoner*					*Total*
	Under 16 years of age	*16 to 25 years of age*	*25 to 30 years of age*	*30 to 40 years of age*	*40 to 50 years of age*	
Up to 3 months						
Scheduled	—	—	—	—	—	0
Non-scheduled	1	—	—	—	1	2
3 months to 6 months						
Scheduled	—	—	—	—	—	0

Sentence length	Age of prisoner: Under 16 years of age	16 to 25 years of age	25 to 30 years of age	30 to 40 years of age	40 to 50 years of age	Total
Non-scheduled	—	1	—	—	—	1
6 months to 12 months						
Scheduled	—	—	—	—	—	0
Non-scheduled	—	—	1	1	—	2
12 months to 4 years						
Scheduled	—	3	1	2	—	6
Non-scheduled	—	—	—	—	—	0
4 years to 8 years						
Scheduled	—	1	—	—	—	1
Non-scheduled	—	—	—	—	—	0
8 years excluding life						
Scheduled	—	1	1	—	—	2
Non-scheduled	—	—	—	—	—	0
Life						
Scheduled	—	1	2	1	2	6
Non-scheduled	—	—	—	—	—	0
	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	1	7	5	4	3	20

Notes:
1. Age refers to age of prisoner on 30 September 1988.
2. Percentage = per cent. of total sentenced prison population (1548).
3. Life includes those detained at the pleasure of the Secretary of State.
4. No females aged over 50 in custody on 1 October.

Table C
Scheduled and non-scheduled offenders, by sentence length, as a percentage of the total sentenced prison population

	Type of offence: scheduled count per cent.	non-scheduled count per cent.	Total count per cent.
Total	68·6	31·4	100·0
Sentence length			
Up to 3 months	·8	4·4	5·2
3 months to 6 months	·5	4·4	4·9
6 months to 12 months	1·5	5·6	7·1
12 months to 18 months	1·4	1·8	3·2
18 months to 4 years	9·1	9·2	18·3
4 years to 8 years	11·1	4·3	15·4
8 years excluding life	16·0	1·6	17·6
Life (including SOSP)	28·2	·1	28·3

Note:
Percentage = per cent. of total sentenced prison population (1548).

Labour Statistics

Mr. Mallon To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many people living in Craigavon are at present employed; and what percentage of people employed in Northern Ireland this constitutes;

(2) how many people living in Newry are at present employed; and what percentage of people employed in Northern Ireland this constitutes;

(3) how many people living in Armagh City are at present employed; and what percentage of the total of people employed in Northern Ireland this constitutes;

(4) how many people living in the Belfast City area are at present employed; and what percentage of the total of people employed in Northern Ireland this constitutes.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* Information in the form requested on the numbers of persons employed and living in each of the areas referred to can only be obtained from the census of population. The most recent information available from this source relates to April 1981 and is as follows:

Area	Number in employment at April 1981	Number in employment in area as percentage of number in employment in Northern Ireland at April 1981 Per cent.
Craigavon District Council Area	26,328	5
Newry and Mourne District Council Area	19,624	4
Armagh City[1]	4,236	1
Belfast District Council Area	108,404	21
Northern Ireland	524,294	100

[1]Armagh city has been taken as the following electoral wards (existing at April 1981) of Armagh District Council Area: Demesne, Downs, Lisanally, Lurgyvallen, and the Mall.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 2 November 1988

PRIME MINISTER

"Spycatcher"

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Prime Minister how many copies of the book "Spycatcher" by Peter Wright have been ordered for official use by Ministers and senior civil servants.

The Prime Minister: So far as I am aware, only those copies necessary for the purposes of legal proceedings and for considering issues raised by the book.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Prime Minister if, in respect of each meeting of the European Council of Ministers over the last 12 months, she will state which Departments were represented and at what ministerial and official level and if she will specify separately at which meetings both the Scottish Office and other Departments were represented.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom delegation to meetings of the European Council represents the Government of the United Kingdom as a whole.

Merchant Shipyards

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Prime Minister when she last visited a merchant shipyard in Britain.

The Prime Minister: In September 1986.

TRANSPORT

Hazardous Waste

90. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he intends to take within the responsibility of his Department to improve the safety of transport of toxic wastes, especially the transport by passenger aircraft of polychlorinated biphenols that on incineration can form dioxins and dibenzofurans.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Matters of aviation safety are the responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority. We are advised that toxic wastes are regarded as dangerous goods for carriage by air. Regulations are contained in the International Civil Aviation Organisation's technical instructions which are based on the recommendations of the United Nations committee of experts for the transport of dangerous goods. They are designed to ensure that the safety of an aircraft and its occupants is not compromised. There is no evidence to suggest the present transport requirements are inadequate.

London Underground

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the chairman of London Underground concerning the easing of congestion on the Underground, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have regular discussions with the chairman of London Underground about the relief of congestion on the Underground and in particular on the progress of the central London rail study which is addressing this problem.

Meanwhile we have approved the renewal of the Central line at a cost of over £700 million as well as other measures to relieve congestion, costing over £100 million.

Central London

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has of the growth of passenger movements in central London in each of the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The likely range of growth in passenger movements in the central area of London over the next five years and beyond is being considered in the central London rail study.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive a copy of the central London rail study; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: We hope to receive and announce the main findings of the central London rail study towards the end of the year.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total number of representations his Department has so far received about the proposed high-speed rail link to the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: About 300, mainly from people who are concerned that they might be affected by one of the proposed routes. We are encouraging British Rail to narrow down the options as quickly as possible.

Vehicle and Components Approvals Division

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the latest annual report of the vehicle and components approvals division; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The certification work carried out by VCA staff makes an important contribution to road safety through checks on vehicle and equipment design and quality standards.

During the year covered by the report, further steps were taken to move to a businesslike footing with the development of unit cost controls and performance targets.

The VCA is a candidate for executive agency status, geared to providing a cost-effective service for motor vehicle and component manufacturers.

Copies of the report for 1987-88 have been laid in the Library.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Governors

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the number of parents coming forward as governors of schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information available so far suggests that a large number of parents have shown an interest in becoming school governors.

Schools (Local History)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to encourage schools situated in the geographical county of Middlesex to provide suitable books on local history to enable pupils to become better informed about the county in which they live.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is for schools to decide what books should be made available in their libraries and for teaching. My right hon. Friend has no powers to prescribe particular books or materials for use in schools.

Higher Education

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the funding of higher education institutions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend receives many representations concerning the funding of higher education. His announcement on 1 November dealt with higher education funding in the years 1989-90 to 1991-92.

Universities (Restructuring)

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many universities in England and Wales have adopted academic plans in order to achieve a targeted programme of restructuring.

Mr. Jackson: Subject to the resolution of some minor points of detail in a few cases, the University Grants Committee has approved the plans proposed by all universities in Great Britain.

Enterprise and Education (Bolton)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken to ensure that, following the launch of the enterprise and education initiative on 28 September, co-ordination is being achieved at local level in Bolton between Government Departments, local government departments and the private sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The local implementation of the enterprise and education initiative, in Bolton as elsewhere, is primarily a matter for the Department of Trade and Industry, which will fund the appointment of at least one adviser in each local education authority area to encourage the development of links between local employers and schools. The initiative itself is the product of co-operation between my Department and the Departments of Trade and Industry and of Employment, which are all agreed on the value of its aims.

Students (Discretionary Awards)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance he offers to local education authorities on the criteria for the making of discretionary awards to students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: None. It is for local education authorities to determine their own criteria.

Education (Kent)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next expects to meet the chairman of the education committee of Kent county council to discuss education in Kent.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has plans to meet the chairman of the Kent education committee.

Open University

Mr. Benyon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the funding of the Open University.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In the light of advice I have received from the Open University visiting committee I am prepared to make available to the university an extra £12·9 million over the three financial years 1989-90 to 1991-92, beginning with an addition of £4·2 million in 1989-90. This is equivalent to an extra £3·5 million in the1989 academic year. The increase will be confirmed when I am satisfied that the university is taking the necessary action to make good deficiencies in its financial and managerial systems. The additions in later years will be contingent on satisfactory progress having been made.

I am grateful to the visiting committee for its thorough analysis of the university's financial position. My decision takes full account of their recommendations on funding and of their observations on financial and managerial control. A copy of the committee's report has been placed in the library.

HEALTH

Cyclotron (St. Thomas's Hospital)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what procedures were followed in assessing the application for a grant for the St. Thomas's hospital cyclotron.

Mrs. Currie: The application was the subject of meetings and correspondence with representatives of the cyclotron trust, and was considered in the light of our overall objectives and priorities for the National Health Service.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the organisations and individuals, other than his officials, from whom he received expert advice in respect of the St. Thomas's hospital cyclotron.

Mrs. Currie: No external expert advice was received before the decision was taken to contribute to the funds of the cyclotron trust. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has since received correspondence from the chairman of the United Kingdom co-ordinating committee on cancer research, and my right hon. Friend the then

Secretary of State for Social Services received comments from the chairman of that committee's collaborative group for head and neck cancer.

NHS (Costs)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the annual cost of the National Health Service, and if he will average this sum out over *(a)* each person in work, *(b)* each person in work or in receipt of an occupational pension, and *(c)* each citizen over the age of 18 years.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 1 November 1988]*: The available information is as follows:

	England
	1987/88 (£ million)
Total gross expenditure on the NHS	17,575
NHS expenditure for each person in work	833
NHS expenditure for each resident person over the age of 18 years	483

DEFENCE

Private Security Companies

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list which private companies have been employed by his Department to provide security guarding services since 1983; and which military establishments are normally guarded in this way.

Mr. Sainsbury: The list of private companies which have been employed by the Department since 1983 to provide security guarding services is as follows:

Airwork Ltd.
Burns International Security Services (UK) Ltd.
Care Security Services Ltd.
Centuryan Security Ltd.
Custodian Security Guards Ltd.
Medway (Chatham) Dock Co. Ltd.
Pritchard Security Services Ltd.
Reliance Security Services Ltd.
Royal British Legion Attendants Co. Ltd.
Securiguard Services Ltd.
Securicor Ltd.
Serco Ltd.
Thorn EMI Electronics Ltd.
UK Security Ltd.

Security guards from these companies are employed at 18 military establishments. It would prejudice the security of these establishments to reveal their locations.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Seamount Ltd.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning the recent collapse of Seamount Ltd.

Mr. Eggar: Seamount Ltd, a joint venture between Seaboard Offshore Ltd. of Aberdeen and Stanley Fisheries Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Falkland Islands Development Corporation, was incorporated in the Falkland Islands in November 1987. The company purchased and converted two stern trawlers to operate in the south-west Atlantic. The Falkland Islands Government have appointed financial and legal consultants to advise on a controlled rundown of the company, and have instituted a formal inquiry into the matter.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being taken in connection with the recent collapse of Seamount Ltd. and what is the current position in relation to the boats and personnel involved.

Mr. Eggar: The Falkland Islands Government have set up a formal enquiry into Seamount Ltd. The MV Mount Challenger and the MV Mount Kent are at present in Falmouth and Port Stanley respectively. Seaboard Offshore Ltd, which is responsible for crewing and management of the vessels, is running them on a care and maintenance basis until their future is decided.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much the collapse of Seamount Ltd. will cost the British Exchequer; and under which heading the initial finance of the company was guaranteed.

Mr. Eggar: The majority of the initial finance came from a bank loan of £4·8 million guaranteed by the Export Credits Guarantee Department. This could have implications for the ECGD. No other British Exchequer funds are involved.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Housing Benefit

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what the capital is judged to be of those residents in sheltered accommodation who have no other capital for the purposes of housing benefit other than their homes which they have leased to housing authorities in exchange for sheltered accommodation;

(2) what is the position of leasehold dwellings where the lease has been granted in exchange for sheltered accommodation for the purposes of calculating housing benefit, where the individual has no other capital asset.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since these properties remain at the disposal of the claimant at all times, they must be regarded as a capital asset, capable of being assigned a market value for the purposes of determining housing benefit. Where this value is below the capital cut-off of £8,000, the housing benefit entitlement will be assessed in the normal way, the actual rental income received being disregarded.

Rating Reform

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to publish details of the community charge rebate scheme that is to be implemented in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Housing Benefit (Community Charge Rebates) (Scotland) Regulations 1988 have been laid before Parliament today. These provide for the making of community charge rebates by local authorities in Scotland during the year April 1989 to March 1990. The community charge rebate scheme will provide rebates of up to 80 per cent. People who are getting income support or have an

income that is equal to or lower than their income support level will receive the maximum rebate. People whose incomes are higher may still be entitled to a rebate; for each £1 that their income rises, their rebate will be reduced by 15p. Everybody in Scotland who is liable to pay a full personal community charge or collective community charge contributions will be able to apply for a rebate, and their needs and resources will be assessed in the same way that claims for housing benefit are assessed now. There will be the same arrangements for taking capital into account, so people with capital over £8,000 will be expected to pay their full charge. In the case of couples, only one partner will need to claim rebate on behalf of both partners, but the rebate will be paid to both partners individually.

J Code

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will deposit a copy of the J code in the Library.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. It is not the Department's policy to disclose information relating to the security and control of instruments of payment.

Benefits

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has plans to extend the amounts of income that are disregarded for the calculation of housing benefit purposes in connection with war disablement and war widows' pensions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. War disablement and war widow's pensions already receive special treatment with a statutory disregard of £5 per week in all the income-related benefits. For housing benefit local authorities have the same discretion now as they had under the old scheme to disregard further amounts of these pensions.

Alcoholics (Benefits)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he has taken to evaluate *(a)* the adequacy of the level of benefit payments given to people who have been evicted from their homes as a result of falling into arrears with rent following alcohol abuse and *(b)* the effectiveness of advice given to such people by officers of his Department at benefit offices in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None. Information is not available about people evicted from their homes in such circumstances. Should the hon. Member wish me to investigate a specific instance perhaps he would let me have fuller details.

Social Fund

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the amount allocated from the social fund as a sum per head of the claimants registered with the Department of Social Security at July 1987.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The amount allocated for social fund loans and grants is equivalent to the sum of £39·37 per head of the supplementary benefit liveload on 29 July 1987.

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the amount allocated to the social fund as a proportion of the expenditure on single payments in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The amount allocated for social fund loans and grants in 1988-89 represents 94·9 per cent. of single payments expenditure in 1987-88, the last year of that scheme.

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the amount allocated for the social fund to Department of Social Security offices as a proportion of single payment expenditure for 1986-87.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The amount allocated for social fund loans and grants in 1988-89 represents 61·5 per cent. of single payments expenditure in 1986-87.

Family Credit

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing the proposed family credit ceilings in 1989-90 for each of *(a)* a married couple with one child under five years, *(b)* a married couple with two children under 11 years and two over 11 years, *(c)* a married couple with three children under 11 years and three children over 11 years and *(d)* a married couple with two children under 11 years and two children over 11 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

	Maximum family credit[1] *at proposed April 1989 rates* (£)	*Level of gross earnings*[2] *at which entitlement to family credit runs out* (£ *per week*[3])
(a) Married couple with one child under 5	40·90	138
(b) Married couple with two children under 11 and two aged between 11 and 15	74·00	210
(c) Married couple with three children under 11 and three aged between 11 and 15	94·20	254

[1] Maximum family credit would be payable where net income was £54·80 or less.
[2] Assumes an inflation-related increase in tax and national insurance contributions thresholds from April 1989.
[3] Approximate.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of families with children who will be above the entitlement ceilings for 1989-90 family credit, but whose net resources defined as in "Low Income Families" are within *(a)* 140 per cent. and *(b)* 200 per cent. of their income support levels.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The low income families statistics, which used the concept of relative net resources, have been discontinued and the alternative measures of net income before and after housing costs have been introduced. Figures on this alternative basis covering the years 1981, 1983 and 1985 can be found in "Households Below Average Income", copies of which are in the Library.

Claims Processing (Outstation Work)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what discussions he has had with union representatives regarding outstationing work on processing claims to new social security offices outside London;

(2) if he will make a statement on the implications of outstationing work on processing claims for the future of the Lewisham inner London office and the Greenwich park inner London office.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are making detailed plans to implement the proposal, made in the "Business of Service" report published in June 1988, that work not requiring face-to-face contact with the public should be relocated from some hard-presed London offices. Officials have fully consulted trade union side representatives at all stages. We hope to be making an announcement setting out our plans in the reasonably near future.

Office Manpower

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the staffing levels designated by his Department for the Lewisham inner London office and the Greenwich park inner London office for the years 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91, respectively; and how many staff were in post at 1 October in each office.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Complements for the years 1989-90 and 1990-91 have yet to be determined. The present complement and the number of staff in post at 1 October 1988 are as follows:

	Complement	*Staff in Post*
Lewisham ILO	171	177
Greenwich Park ILO	170	172·5

Abbreviation: ILO—Integrated Local Office

Appeals Tribunals, Bradford

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by name and nominating organisation all persons who belong to the Bradford panel for social security appeal tribunals.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The appointment of chairmen and members of social security appeal tribunals is the responsibility of the president of these tribunals, His Honour Judge Byrt QC, and the hon. Member may care to contact him direct.

Occupational Sick Pay Schemes

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest information he has of the coverage and characteristics of occupational sick pay schemes.

Mr. Scott: The Department has today published a report commissioned from IFF Research Ltd. on occupational sick pay provision by employers.

The report, based on a survey of both private and public sector establishments carried out in February 1988, contains detailed and valuable information about the scope and nature of sick pay cover. It shows significant growth in coverage since the last official survey in 1974. It also reports on employers attitudes to sick pay schemes and to statutory sick pay (SSP).

The survey found that 91 per cent. of the work force are now covered by an occupational sick pay (OSP) scheme. This compares with 80 per cent. in 1974. The increase has come particularly amongst manual grades, where 88 per cent. have OSP cover compared to less than two thirds in 1974. Coverage between men and women is 90 and 92 per cent. respectively.

Employees with OSP cover work for 56 per cent. of all employers. The remaining 44 per cent. of employers who do not provide OSP are predominantly small or very small employers.

The majority of schemes (83 per cent. private and 74 per cent. public sector) top up SSP to full basic pay. Payments for short-term cover are usually made either for a fixed period of up to six months or vary depending on the length of service.

The report shows that many employers now also extend sick pay cover well after SSP ends. A total 58 per cent. of all employees work for employers who provide some form of long-term sick pay. Typically such schemes have either a time limit or continue until retirement age. A number of schemes operate early retirement arrangements. The level of payment is either a percentage of salary or a flat rate payment.

I have arranged for copies of the report, which is entitled "Occupational Sick Pay Schemes", to be placed in the Library. It is also available for purchase from the Department's offices at Canons Park, Stanmore. An article about the report appears in the current issue of the *Employment Gazette*.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Football-related Incidents

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many exclusion orders have been issued for football-related incidents since August 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since 1 August 1987 the Football Association has recorded 1,089 exclusion orders.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many attendance orders have been issued for football-related incidents *(a)* between August 1986 and 1987 and *(b)* since August 1987.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not collected centrally on convictions and sentencing for football-related offences. The number of attendance centre orders made in the 12 months ended 31 August 1987 was 10,518; in the four months from 1 September to 31 December that year it was 2,983. Figures for 1988 are not yet available. Because sessions are usually held on Saturday afternoons, the attendance centre order continues to be a useful penalty for some football hooligans.

Benefit Fraud

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on co-ordination between the police and the Departments of Employment and Social Security in tracking down people to be arrested or interviewed, in connection with alleged benefit fraud; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No formal arrangements exist for liaison with the police in cases involving benefit fraud,

where the usual course of action is for the Departments of Employment and of Social Security to investigate and, where appropriate, to proceed by means of a summons.

Prison Service (Directors General)

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the directors general of the prison service during the last 10 years had previously served as prison governors.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Neither of the holders of the post of director general over the last 10 years had previously served as a prison governor. However, the post of deputy director general has been held by former governors since its establishment in 1980.

Motorway Police

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review motorway policing and assess the case for a national motorway police squad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans at present for such a review.

Airlines (Unpaid Fines)

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will estimate the amount of unpaid fines by airlines fined under the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act for allowing passengers to enter the United Kingdom on bogus papers; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what measures he proposes to take to ensure payment of fines by airlines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The total amount incurred by airlines under the Act at 27 October was £6·061 million. Payments totalling £3·264 million had been received by that date, leaving £2·797 million outstanding. The Treasury Solicitor has been instructed to institute civil recovery proceedings against four airlines with a poor payment record, and he is currently in discussion with the solicitors acting on their behalf. We will not hesitate to institute similar proceedings against other carriers who fail to remit prompt payments.

A separate record is not maintained of those payments which relate to the carriage of passengers holding forged documents. However, of the total of 8,502 notices of liability issued to all carriers up to 30 September, which include those cases where a subsequent demand for payment was either not issued or withdrawn, only 42—0·5 per cent.—arose because the passenger held forged documents, the falsity of which was reasonably apparent.

Firearms

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish the details collected in the survey of shop prices of new guns before 22 September 1987 on which he is basing his firearms compensation scheme;

(2) if he will publish the details collected in the survey of auction prices of guns before 22 September 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The formula for payments under the Government's buy-in scheme which I announced by way of a written answer on 17 May 1988 in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) was based on a study of trade buying-in prices which included information from a leading auction house and retail prices obtained from various trade publications.

Drink-driving

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were banned from driving because of alcohol-related offences in the Bolton area in 1987 and in 1988 to date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest available information relates to 1986, when 389 disqualifications were imposed at courts in the petty sessional division of Bolton and at the Bolton Crown Court for offences of driving and so on after consuming alcohol or taking drugs.

Broadcasting

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that, following deregulation, licences will not be granted to any radio station or consortium containing persons who have been convicted of broadcasting illegally during the 10 years prior to such a licence application being made.

Mr. Hurd: There is a good case for a disqualification of this kind. Unlawful broadcasting causes interference to other users of the radio spectrum, including safety of life services, creates unfair competition to authorised broadcasters and imposes unnecessary additional costs on the industry. I have today announced, in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey), my intention to make additional frequencies available to the IBA for community radio in advance of broadcasting legislation. It will be open to anyone previously but no longer involved in unlawful broadcasting to apply for such a contract. But it is not acceptable, especially when new broadcasting opportunities are being opened up, for those continuing to act outside the law to be able to compete in due course on equal terms for Radio Authority licences with those who have respected the law.

I accordingly propose to include in the legislative proposals I outlined on 19 January at columns *647-49* a provision making it a condition of all Radio Authority licences that the licensee neither has a conviction after 1 January 1989 for any offence under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 or the Marine and Broadcasting (Offences) Act 1967 connected with the operation or running of an unlicensed broadcasting station within five years of the date of an application for such a licence nor employs such a person in the activities covered by the licence.

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has yet reached any conclusion on the Independent Broadcasting Authority's proposals to establish 20 community radio stations under the Broadcasting Act 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The IBA's proposals are a positive step towards the new radio arrangements which I outlined on 19 January at columns *647-49*. They provide a way, in advance of new legislation, of broadening the choice available to radio listeners. I am therefore glad to make

frequencies available, and have asked the IBA to begin detailed planning, in consultation with my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry, for the introduction as soon as practicable of additional services.

Competition between the new community radio stations and the IBA's present contractors must be fair within the constraints of the Broadcasting Act 1981. In advertising additional contracts, the IBA will accordingly make clear its willingness to consider applications from existing contractors proposing to sub-contract or otherwise work in association with new entrant groups. This form of co-operation may provide useful experience for certain kinds of broadcasting under the supervision of the Radio Authority when it is established. Where additional services are established they will be expected to make a realistic contribution to regulatory costs with a corresponding reduction in present ILR rentals. The IBA will also take account of the programme output of additional services in considering the requirements on its present contractors.

With these safeguards I believe that the IBA's proposals will benefit the radio industry as a whole, provide valuable new broadcasting opportunities for minority communities and enhance listener choice as far as is practicable in advance of the major changes needing legislation which I outlined on 19 January.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sole (Irish Sea)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking against the French Government to seek compensation following their over-fishing in excess of their quota of sole in the Irish sea; and if he will make a statement on how any such compensation will be allocated to Welsh fishermen who have been stopped from fishing for sole in the Irish sea until the end of the year.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The early closure of the Irish sea sole fishery was due to overfishing by the Irish and Belgian fleets rather than the French. The United Kingdom and France will consequently receive compensation from Ireland and Belgium, in accordance with the procedures set out in the compensation regulation of 99 tonnes and 3 tonnes respectively. We shall consider with the area VII industry advisory committee how best to manage the fishing next year to provide additional fishing opportunities for the sectors directly disadvantaged by the early closure.

EEC (UK Expenditure)

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the amount of United Kingdom expenditure on the EEC as a percentage of United Kingdom gross domestic product; and what equivalent information he has about such expenditure by other EEC countries in relation to their respective gross domestic products.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

Based on member states' gross contributions (after abatement) in the 1988 budget (as amended), expenditure as a percentage of estimated GNP for each country is as follows:

Member states	*Percentage GNP*
Belgium	1·47
Denmark	1·11
Germany	1·16
Greece	0·98
Spain	1·17
France	1·20
Ireland	1·43
Italy	0·99
Luxembourg	1·09
Netherlands	1·47
Portugal	1·34
United Kingdom	0·80

Source: European Commission documents.

The autum statement contains an estimate of our net payments to Community institutions in 1988-89 of £950 million. This is around 0·2 per cent. of United Kingdom GNP. Information on other member states' net contributions is not readily available.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Extraditions

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many successful extradition requests from the Irish Republic to the United Kingdom there were in the three years prior to 15 November 1985; and how many there have been since.

Mr. Ian Stewart: On the basis of figures provided by the RUC, the total number of extraditions from the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland each year since 1983 is as follows:

Year	*Requests granted*
1983	12
1984	2
1985	5
1986	1
1987	1
1988 (so far)	3

Figures for England and Wales and for Scotland are matters for my right hon. Friends the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Home Helps

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of home helps, whole-time equivalents, in Northern Ireland in each of the years 1984 to 1988.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

As at 30 September	*Number*	*Whole-time equivalents*
1984	12,607	3,311·40
1985	12,330	3,311·56
1986	11,795	3,100·40
1987	11,481	3,026·25
1988	11,021	2,851·57

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the average weekly hours of home helps in Northern Ireland in each of the years 1984 to 1988.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

As at 30 September	*Average weekly hours*
1984	135,142
1985	135,513
1986	130,188
1987	129,650
1988	128,103

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of home helps employed by each of the four health and social services boards in Northern Ireland in each of the years 1984 to 1988.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

	EHSSB	*NHSSB*	*SHSSB*	*WHSSB*
As at 30 September				
1984	4,913	2,658	3,008	2,028
1985	4,734	2,678	2,910	2,008
1986	4,599	2,429	2,873	1,894
1987	4,563	2,260	2,814	1,844
1988	4,497	2,109	2,723	1,692

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of recipients of the home help service in Northern Ireland in each year from 1984 to 1988.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Year ended 31 December	*Number of[1] Recipients*
1984	28,318
1985	29,602
1986	29,897
1987	29,495
1988	n/a

n/a = Not available.
[1] Refers to the total number of recipients during the year.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many areas of special scientific interest have been declared in Northern Ireland under the terms of the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

Mr. Needham: To date, 20.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for what reasons the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland excluded the area known as BP1 when confirming the Inner Belfast Lough area of special scientific interest.

Mr. Needham: When the Inner Belfast Lough area of special scientific interest was confirmed on 28 April 1988 the pool known as BP1, which had been very largely infilled prior to the declaration, was removed from the ASSI since, in addition to the area being heavily altered, the pressures for development were such as to mitigate against its value as part of the ASSI. The area concerned is prime development land and likely to be required for port-related facilities by the Belfast harbour commissioners. In the circumstances the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland had to consider the conflicting interests of important commercial development and the conservation of this relatively small part of the ASSI.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if non-scientific criteria were taken into account during consideration of the confirmation on the Inner Belfast Lough area of special scientific interest.

Mr. Needham: Yes.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland has any plans to designate additional areas of special scientific interest within Belfast Lough.

Mr. Needham: No, however the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland is considering the declaration of further areas of special scientific interest on the north and south shores of Belfast Lough.

Planning Applications (Single Dwellings)

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many planning applications for single dwellings in rural areas were received by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland during 1987.

Mr. Needham: A total of 4,114 were lodged in this period.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many planning applications for single dwellings within the area of special control were lodged in Northern Ireland during 1987; and how many of these received permission.

Mr. Needham: A total of 1,482. Of these, 866 were approved.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many appeals were received by the Planning Appeals Commission in Northern Ireland during 1987; and how many of these were upheld.

Mr. Needham: A total of 378 appeals were received during 1987; however, only 269 appeals were heard and, of these, 82 were upheld.

Vehicle Tests

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish details of the average waiting time between an application for an MOT test and the test itself, at each of the approved test centres in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The information as at 21 October 1988 is as follows:

	No. of weeks
Armagh	4½
Ballymena	4½
Belfast	12
Coleraine	2½
Cookstown	8½
Craigavon	9

	No. of weeks
Downpatrick	7½
Enniskillen	7½
Larne	5½
Lisburn	6½
Londonderry	4
Mallusk	6½
Newry	8½
Newtownards	9
Omagh	4½

The average waiting time over all the centres was six to seven weeks.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons are registered as disabled in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: At 30 September 1988, a total of 7,667 persons were registered as disabled.

Civil Servants (Department of the Environment)

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of people employed by the Northern Ireland Civil Service who work in the Department of the Environment at and above principal officer level.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* A total of 298, including general service, professional and technical and other specialist group staff.

Snaith Report

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what decisions have been made to date by the Department of the Environment in response to the Snaith report.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* The Department of the Environment has made the following decisions in response to the Snaith report.

(1) To introduce a series of improved engineering procedures for the assessment and treatment of the structural condition of roads.
(2) To investigate the implications of adopting a positive abandonment policy in respect of lowly trafficked rural routes.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he intends to publish the Snaith report.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* This report was commissioned by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland as an internal document and is not being released.

Roads (Abandonment Notices)

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, in circumstances where an abandonment notice has been served on land and property owners in relation to the proposed abandonment of a road, a clear statement of the relevant procedures has been issued to each land and property owner; and if he will publish this notice of procedures in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* There is no statutory requirement for the Department of Environment for Northern Ireland to serve notice of its intention to abandon a road on land or property owners, but it is required to publish such a notice in the local press. However, in addition to fulfilling this statutory requirement, departmental officials consult land and property owners on an informal basis prior to the publication of the notice and advise them of their statutory rights of objection.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many abandonment notices have been served in respect of roads in each of the 26 district council areas in the period since 1 January.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* The information is as follows:

Notices of intention to make an abandonment order published since 1 January 1988

	Number
Belfast CC	30
Antrim BC	3
Ards BC	2
Ballymena BC	1
Banbridge DC	1
Carrickfergus BC	1
Craigavon BC	2
Down DC	2
Fermanagh DC	1
Larne BC	1
North Down BC	1
Newtownabbey BC	2

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many roads in each Northern Ireland constituency the Department of the Environment proposes to abandon.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* The distribution in relation to Northern Ireland constituencies is not readily available. The numbers of roads in each of the 26 district council areas which would be affected by the Department's proposals at 31 October 1988 are:

	Numbers
Belfast City Council	6
Antrim BC	9
Ards BC	1
Armagh DC	23
Ballymene BC	1
Banbridge DC	9
Carrickfergus BC	3
Castlereagh BC	1
Coleraine BC	3
Craigavon BC	4
Dungannon DC	2
Fermanagh DC	3
Lisburn BC	2
North Down DC	4
Omagh DC	2
Limavady DC	2
Down DC	1

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will state the road number and name of each road in the constituency of Newry and Armagh which the Department of the Environment proposes to abandon.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* The road number and name of each road in the constituency of Newry and Armagh which would be affected by a proposed abandonment are as follows:

Title	Route number
Lislea Road, Keady	DR 8277
Cormeen Road, Tynan	DR 8674
Cooey Road, Tynan	DR 8736
Lisglynn Road, Tynan	DR 8694
Bondville Road, Tynan	DR 8716
Brootally, Tynan	DR 8696
Bullock Lane, Darkley	DR 8438
Ballymacauley Road, Markethill	DR 8032
Cavandoogan Road, Middletown	DR 8718
Drumnachee Road, Markethill	Old A28
Ballyards Road, Armagh	Unclassified
Address Road, Portadown	B 28
Lisnagally Road, Tynan	DR 8687
Ballynamenta Road, Killylea	DR 8686
Killyreavey Road, Keady	DR 8362
Balleer Road, Armagh	DR 8204
Lisdrumbroghas Road, Tynan	DR 8657
Ballyindarragh Road, Markethill	DR 8031
Newry Road, County Armagh	B 30
Tiveracree Road, Derrynoose	DR 8554
Cashel Road, Keady	DR 8268
Mullabrack Road, Markethill	Unclassified
Farranamucklagh Road, Keady	DR 8288

Armagh-Portadown Road (Business Signs)

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many business signs are in place adjacent to the main Armagh to Portadown Road for which planning permission has not been granted.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* Eight.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are presently employed in *(a)* the Northern Ireland Civil Service and *(b)* the home Civil Service in the whole of Northern Ireland; and how many of these jobs are located in the Belfast city area.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* The number of people presently employed in the Northern Ireland Civil Service in the whole of Northern Ireland is 28,893; 14,635 of these jobs are located in the Belfast city council area. The number and distribution of home Civil Service jobs is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister responsible for the Civil Service.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are employed in *(a)* Northern Ireland Civil Service and *(b)* home Civil Service jobs which are located in Newry.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* The number of people employed in Northern Ireland Civil Service jobs in the Newry and Mourne district council area is 650.

The number and distribution of home Civil Service jobs is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister responsible for the Civil Service.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are employed in *(a)* Northern Ireland Civil Service and *(b)* home Civil Service jobs which are located in Craigavon.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* The number of people employed in Northern Ireland Civil Service jobs which are located in Craigavon borough district council area is 1,073. The number and distribution of home Civil Service jobs is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister responsible for the Civil Service.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are employed in *(a)* Northern Ireland Civil Service and *(b)* Home Civil Service jobs which are located in Armagh city.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* Figures are not readily available for Armagh city, but the number of people employed in Northern Ireland Civil Service jobs which are located in the Armagh district council area is 947.

The number and distribution of home Civil Service jobs is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister responsible for the Civil Service.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in how many cases attendance allowance at *(a)* the higher rate and *(b)* the lower rate has been withdrawn in Northern Ireland since 1 January 1987; and if he will provide a breakdown of the reasons for which such allowances have been withdrawn.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 1 November 1988]:* The information is as follows:

	Number
Higher rate	127
Lower rate	358

These allowances were withdrawn because it was decided by the attendance allowance board or one of its delegated medical officers that the medical conditions were no longer satisfied.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide a breakdown by sex and standard age cohorts of recipients of attendance allowance in Northern Ireland at *(a)* the higher rate and *(b)* the lower rate, during 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 1 November 1988]:* The available information is as follows:

	Men		Women		
	Higher rate	Lower rate	Higher rate	Lower rate	Totals
1986					
Age 2 to 15	789	753	521	557	2,620
Over 16	3,924	3,588	6,323	5,425	19,260
	4,713	4,341	6,844	5,982	21,880
1987					
Age 2 to 15	831	788	569	567	2,755

	Men		Women		
	Higher rate	Lower rate	Higher rate	Lower rate	Totals
Over 16	4,269	3,939	6,901	6,059	21,168
	5,100	4,727	7,470	6,626	23,923
1988					
Age 2 to 15	879	832	597	603	2,911
Over 16	4,769	4,584	7,663	7,015	24,031
	5,648	5,416	8,260	7,618	26,942

Benefits

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give *(a)* the total number of applications in Northern Ireland for mobility allowance in 1986, 1987 and to date in 1988 and *(b)* the number which were unsuccessful in those periods.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 1 November 1988]:* The information is as follows:

	Applications	
Year	Received	Disallowed
1986	5,427	2,597
1987	6,382	2,770
[1]1988	4,946	2,537

[1] To 7 October.
Note: Disallowed figures relate to decisions made in the relevant years and do not necessarily reflect claims received in these years.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide a breakdown by sex and standard age cohorts of recipients of mobility allowance in Northern Ireland at the last date for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 1 November 1988]:* At 30 September 1988 the position was as follows:

Age at 31 December 1987	Male	Female	Total
Under 5	27	15	42
5–9	216	153	369
10–14	202	153	355
15–19	279	205	484
20–24	281	196	477
25–29	251	242	493
30–34	261	244	505
35–39	281	273	554
40–44	345	400	745
45–49	452	483	935
50–54	560	613	1,173
55–59	875	908	1,783
60–64	1,155	1,131	2,286
65+	1,105	1,037	2,142
	6,290	6,053	12,343

SCOTLAND

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether there are any people from ethnic minorities in unified grade I, unified grade II, unified grade III, unified grade IV, unified grade V, unified grade VI or unified grade VII, respectively, in his Department.

Mr. Rifkind: None of the staff in unified grades 1 to 7 who responded to my Department's survey of the ethnic origins of staff described themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what sex is the equal opportunities officer appointed by his Department; and if he or she is a member of an ethnic minority;

(2) whether the equal opportunities officer appointed in 1984 is still holding that office; and whether that person is *(a)* male or female or *(b)* a member of an ethnic minority.

Mr. Rifkind: The equal opportunities officer appointed in my Department in 1984 was female as is her successor. Neither is a member of an ethnic minority.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has now completed the evaluation of the voluntary survey of the ethnic origins of staff carried out by his Department; and whether he will make it his policy to place a copy of the results of the survey and of his evaluation in the Library.

Mr. Rifkind: The results of the voluntary survey carried out on a nationwide basis will be published by the Cabinet Office and a copy of the report will be placed in the House of Commons Library. That report will include figures for my Department. The evaluation was informal; there is no evaluation report.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether ethnic monitoring has now been introduced in the recruitment procedures of his Department.

Mr. Rifkind: Most of my Department's recruitment is done on its behalf by the Civil Service Commission and the Inland Revenue, and that is all subject to ethnic monitoring. Monitoring of recruitment carried out by the Department itself will now begin in January 1989. It had been planned for autumn 1988, but this has not proved possible.

Teachers (First Aid)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what provision is made for teaching first aid to schoolteachers who have the responsibility for supervising schoolchildren engaged in sporting activities as part of the school curriculum;

(2) what arrangements he has made for the recording of accidents to schoolchildren while engaged in sporting activities as part of the school curriculum;

(3) what was the number of accidents occurring to schoolchildren while engaged in sporting activities as part of the school curriculum for the last five years for which information is available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: All physical education students undertake a course in sports medicine which is largely training in first aid. The majority of training courses for primary teachers also include instruction in first aid. It is the responsibility of education authorities to ensure that teachers continue to be adequately trained and to consider how best to record accidents to schoolchildren engaged in sporting activities as part of the school curriculum. I regret that information on the number of such accidents is not held centrally.

Trunk Road Improvements

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total expenditure in Scotland in each of the past 10 years on trunk road improvement; and what has been the level of grant in each year from the European regional development fund.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

Financial year	*Expenditure £ million new construction and improvement*	*Receipts £ million from European Regional Development Fund*
1978-79	58·6	Nil
1979-80	68·0	2·3
1980-81	72·2	2·5
1981-82	72·3	3·5
1982-83	81·3	2·2
1983-84	71·8	1·9
1984-85	84·7	6·0
1985-86	87·8	3·3
1986-87	79·2	2·2
1987-88	94·6	1·3

Council of Ministers

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will (i) give details of each meeting of the European Council of Ministers attended by his Department over the last 12 months, (ii) state the issues dealt with at these meetings and (iii) list the names and status of ministers and the grades of officials who attended these meetings.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The United Kingdom delegations to meetings of the European Council—which deal with a range of issues—represent the United Kingdom as a whole.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current size of the client group for employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: All people aged 18 to 59 inclusive who have been unemployed and available for work for six months or longer are eligible to join employment training. In addition, some other people who have been out of work for shorter periods are also eligible to join. At 14 July 1988, some 1,250,000 18 to 59-year-olds had been registered as unemployed for six months or longer. All these people, together with some others, will be eligible for employment training.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce regulations to ensure that local authorities and other agencies administering the employment training scheme recruit only tutors and supervisors who can demonstrate an appropriate qualification or relevant experience in the subject in the teaching of which they are involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: It is vital that the people who organise and deliver employment training have the necessary skills and competence to do so. To that end, training agents and training managers will need to meet stringent criteria in this area as part of the process of obtaining approved training agent or training manager status—without which they will not be able to continue with employment training. At the same time, considerable help is being given to assist training agents and managers to develop the skills of their staff. For the remainder of this year, over £6 million is available for that purpose, with some £11·5 million in 1989-90.

I am satisfied that these measures will help ensure that training agents and training managers to develop their staff so that the necessary standards are met.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total cost, to date *(a)* of establishing ET in the Bradford travel-to-work area and *(b)* of promoting and publicising ET in the area; and what is the estimated total of both costs over the next six months in Bradford.

Mr. Nicholls: It is estimated that expenditure on employment training in the Bradford travel-to-work area up to the end of October is some £480,000. This figure excludes the cost of income support and training agency administrative costs. The estimated expenditure over the next six months is likely to be in the region of £2 million. A budget of around £36,000 has been allocated for marketing employment training in the Bradford area until the end of this financial year. In addition, the area will continue to benefit from national advertising campaigns and from nationally produced publicity materials.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons, to date, living in the Bradford travel-to-work area, have accepted places on ET; how many ET places in Bradford are now vacant; and if he will list under broad headings the type of training available in vacant ET places.

Mr. Lee: Information based on the residence of trainees is not available. However, in the Bradford travel-to-work area at 28 October 1988, some 880 people had completed action plans with training agents and some 770 people were in training with training managers. A further 750 training places are available to trainees covering a wide range of occupations and including opportunities in construction, retailing, hotels and catering and office skills.

YTS

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if a young person in receipt of the YTS bridging allowance may undertake voluntary work while they are awaiting a placement on YTS.

Mr. Cope: Yes, provided a young person is available for interviews when required and is prepared to start on a YTS course at any time.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the latest results from the 100 per cent. follow up survey of YTS leavers, giving the young people's full responses to the question of "what are you doing now?"

Mr. Cope: The latest results from the 100 per cent. follow-up survey of YTS leavers in the period May 1986 to April 1988 are as follows:

	Per cent.
In a job	60·3
of which	
with same employer	25·2
with a different employer	31·6
part time job	3·5
Unemployed	21·3
On another YTS scheme	11·3
On a full time course	3·3
Doing something else	3·2
Not answered	0·5

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether young people who register for the YTS bridging allowance are required to be available for work; and whether they have to complete the UB671 form and satisfy all the availability for work conditions applied to unemployed adults.

Mr. Cope: No. Young people who apply for the YTS bridging allowance are required to complete form BA1 undertaking that they are prepared to accept an offer of a place on YTS. They are free to look for work while receiving the allowance.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many YTS places are currently vacant in the Bradford travel-to-work area; and what action is being taken to provide YTS places in the most popular training areas, such as electronics, vehicle repair and the caring professions.

Mr. Cope: On 13 October, there were 866 YTS places vacant in the Bradford travel-to-work area. There are currently two information technology centres based in Bradford and Shipley. There are three large schemes which specifically cover vehicle maintenance. There is also sufficient provision available to meet different demands in the caring professions, including child care and care of the elderly.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people, aged 16 and 17 years, who left school in Bradford in the current year, he estimates *(a)* have accepted a YTS place and *(b)* obtained employment.

Mr. Cope: At 13 October, it is provisionally estimated that approximately 1,900 school leavers in Bradford have entered YTS in 1988 and 1,800 have gained employment.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people, aged 16 and 17 years, who left school in Bradford in the current year, who have not obtained a YTS place or employment, are not in receipt of benefit or other income.

Mr. Cope: This information is not available.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish the expected on cost of YTS trainee allowances for 16 and 17-year-olds in the current financial year.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer Tuesday 1 November]:* Grants of public funds to YTS managing agents are intended as a contribution to the overall costs of running YTS schemes. Employers and work experience providers also contribute to the costs of the scheme. It is therefore not possible to answer the question in this form. The current YTS allowances are £29·50 for first-year trainees and £35 for second-year trainees.

Community Programme

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many entrants there were to the community programme in the 12 months to April, in the 12 months to July and in the final six months of the programme; and what proportion were (i) to full time places, (ii) men, (iii) single, (iv) aged over 25 years, (v) unemployed for over 12 months and (vi) formerly benefit claimants.

Mr. Nicholls: In the 12 months to April 1988 there were 266,996 entrants to the community programme. In the 12 months to July 1988, there were 247,034 entrants. Their characteristics were as follows:

	April *per cent.*	*July* *per cent.*
Full time	11·4	11·2
Male	74·3	74·1
Single	70·2	68·1
Over 25	47·3	50·4
Unemployed over 12 months	87·1	88·4
Former benefit claimants	96·1	95·7

In the final six months of the programme (March—August 1988), there were 106,356 entrants. Characteristics for these entrants are not available separately.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many individuals, previously employed as supervisors and key workers in the community programme, have been made redundant since January 1988; how many claims for help with redundancy payments by CP agencies and sponsors the Training Commission/Training Agency have paid out in that same period; and what is the total amount that the TC/TA has paid out in redundancy compensation for the community programme since January.

Mr. Nicholls: £494,807·28 was reimbursed to community programme agents and sponsors for redundancy payments during the period January 1988 to September 1988. The remaining information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many community programme workers have transferred to employment training benefit plus arrangements; whether they are counted as new entrants to the employment training scheme; and how many people have started on and left the employment training training allowance since September.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on the number of community programme participants who have transferred to employment training and the number of people that have started on and left the programme is not yet available.

Community programme workers who transfer to employment training are not counted as new entrants.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has plans to extend the community programme to applicants who fail to qualify for unemployment benefit or income support.

Mr. Nicholls: The community programme has been superseded by employment training which started on 5 September and represents a major investment in improving the work skills of long-term unemployed people. Receipt of unemployment benefit or income support is not a requirement for entry to employment training, although entrants will normally need to have been unemployed and available for work for 26 weeks or more.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further proposals he has to deal with the unemployment among young people in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer Monday 31 October]:* The economic growth flowing from the Government's economic policies has had a dramatic impact on youth unemployment. Unemployment amongst the under-25s has fallen by 37 per cent. in the last two years and is now at its lowest level for more than five years. All unemployed people under 18 have the guarantee of an offer of a YTS place. In addition, those people aged 18 to 24 who have been out of work for six to 12 months have a guarantee of an offer of help back into work. These measures provide the most comprehensive support ever available for unemployed young people in this country.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further proposals he has to deal with unemployment in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer Monday 31 October]:* We will continue to give priority to the sound economic policies which have encouraged economic growth and reduced unemployment by 934,000 since July 1986. On 5 September, employment training was launched to provide long-term unemployed people with the skills training they need to compete effectively for the many job vacancies which exist across the country.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Public Record Office

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Attorney-General why the Public Record Office no longer provides photocopies of documents to postal inquirers.

The Attorney-General: The Public Record Office provides photocopies of documents in accordance with sections 2(4)(d) and 5(3) of the Public Records Act 1958. In the face of increasing demand, the office's search department places most emphasis on assisting visitors in person to the office and on work which benefits numbers of readers rather than individuals. It is therefore unable to undertake lengthy searches on behalf of postal inquirers, but it will identify documents for photocopying provided full references are supplied and no more than three items are involved. Where these conditions are not met, the inquirer is referred to the services of record agents, or advised to visit the Public Record Office.

Trials

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list by year for each of the past 10 years and for the current year to the most convenient date, the number of cases where a defendant has introduced a new line of defence during a trial not previously mentioned to the police in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* Northern Ireland distinguishing where possible between those offences which were terrorist-related or scheduled offences and otherwise, showing those which were terrorist or scheduled offences associated with the current disturbances in Northern Ireland.

The Attorney-General: Records necessary to provide information in the form requested by the hon. Gentleman are not maintained.

WALES

Regional Assistance

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each Welsh district the number of applications for regional selective assistance received, the number granted and total value awarded since 1 April.

Mr. Peter Walker: The following table gives by Welsh local authority districts, wholly or partly within assisted areas, the number of regional selective assistance applications received and the number and value of offers made between 1 April and 28 October 1988. The total level of applications and offers shows an encouraging increase over the same period in 1987, an indication that the expected additional uptake of RSA following the ending of the regional development grant scheme is taking place.

Local Authority Districts	*Number of Applications*	*Offers*	
		Number	*Value £000s*
Afan	2	2	1,030
Alyn and Deeside	5	5	1,730
Blaenau Gwent	8	4	583
Cardiff	30	21	5,492
Ceredigion	1	3	747
Cynon Valley	3	2	320
Dinefwr	2	—	—
Dwyfor	2	—	—
Islwyn	3	2	895
Lliw Valley	3	2	37
Merthyr Tydfil	4	4	710
Monmouth	3	3	2,070
Neath	6	5	5,245
Newport	12	11	2,907
Ogwr	9	8	2,747
Preseli	2	3	54
Rhondda	1	2	1,800
Rhymney Valley	6	4	372
South Pembrokeshire	2	2	628
Swansea	13	10	1,252
Torfaen	9	5	235
Vale of Glamorgan	3	4	[1]26,390
Wrexham Maelor	4	3	1,490

Local Authority Districts	Number of Applications	Offers	
		Number	Value £000s
Ynys Mon	3	3	638
Delyn	1	1	[2]112
Llanelli	2	1	
Taff Ely	3	1	

[1] Includes the recently announced Ford offer of £26 million. The project relates to both the Bridgend and Swansea plants but the offer value is allocated to Bridgend only as the main project location.

[2] In order to protect confidentiality on individual projects the values of these offers have been amalgamated.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by each Welsh district the number of applications received for regional development grants, the number granted and the total value of regional development grants in each year since 1984.

Mr. Peter Walker: The following tables give by Welsh local authority districts, partly or wholly within the development areas, the number of applications received and the number and value of offers made under the revised regional development grant scheme (RDG II) from its introduction in November 1984 until 28 October 1988.

Records of the original development grant scheme (RDG I) are not available by local authority district. Total payments for Wales under the scheme for the financial years 1984-85 to 1987-88 were: £92·7 million (1984-85); £80·3 million (1985-86); £68 million (1986-87) and £22·8 million (1987-88).

RDG II—Applications received[1]

Local authority district	1985	1986	1987	[2]1988
Afan	33	90	144	125
Alyn and Deeside	61	127	188	166
Blaenau Gwent	66	131	168	186
Brecknock	3	8	6	15
Carmarthen	11	23	25	30
Ceredigion	37	77	153	76
Colwyn	10	16	28	16
Cynon Valley	27	63	60	84
Delyn	61	120	130	135
Glyndwr	7	16	21	16
Islwyn	29	39	48	54
Merthyr Tydfil	31	65	67	87
Monmouth	16	20	27	27
Neath	42	76	135	98
Preseli	4	11	22	8
Rhondda	29	46	54	63
Rhuddlan	40	72	79	58
Rhymney Valley	25	58	98	72
South Pembrokeshire	30	52	103	83
Taff Ely	60	120	172	182
Wrexham Maelor	100	180	233	250
Ynys Môn	10	35	79	57

[1] No applications were received in 1984.

[2] 1 January–31 March. The scheme closed to new applications on 31 March 1988.

RDG II—Offers made[1]

Local authority district	1985		1986		1987		1988	
	Number	Value £000	Number	Value £000	Number	Value £000	Number	Value £000
Afan	21	896	57	3,190	103	3,863	88	6,109
Alyn and Deeside	33	849	92	4,571	149	8,118	127	10,346
Blaenau Gwent	30	1,255	94	5,289	121	6,567	131	7,051
Brecknock	2	35	4	107	5	78	8	225
Carmarthen	4	108	21	379	16	152	32	375
Ceredigion	17	108	58	644	106	1,236	82	760
Colwyn	5	42	11	653	21	570	11	125
Cynon Valley	18	2,231	47	2,635	39	3,129	62	2,398
Delyn	27	2,204	84	4,847	95	5,876	87	4,206
Glyndwr	3	21	12	171	12	513	15	218
Islwyn	18	1,296	30	2,088	34	1,759	40	3,022
Merthyr Tydfil	19	1,341	40	1,412	53	4,819	56	3,717
Monmouth	6	49	19	475	14	165	22	773
Neath	23	517	60	1,512	84	1,817	87	3,695
Preseli	2	57	8	106	13	96	6	33
Rhondda	16	762	38	2,343	52	2,322	49	1,612
Rhuddlan	13	921	51	1,020	63	1,500	45	1,087
Rymney Valley	17	1,202	47	2,541	60	4,038	59	2,923
South Pembrokeshire	17	1,267	36	1,218	65	942	72	1,580
Taff Ely	34	3,312	92	4,946	134	8,135	136	12,831
Wrexham Maelor	50	2,531	135	6,790	184	15,886	201	13,906
Ynys Môn	2	357	22	403	49	1,385	51	1,563

[1] No offers were made in 1984.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the amount of grant aid provided to companies in *(a)* Milford Haven, *(b)* Pembroke dock and *(c)* Haverfordwest from national and European funds in each year since 1984 and the number of companies assisted in each case.

Mr. Peter Walker: The principal forms of Government grant aid from which companies in the area benefit are regional selective assistance, regional development grants and regional enterprise grants (the latter two grant schemes are available in development areas only). Grant aid offered under the regional selective assistance and revised regional development grant (RDG II) schemes since 1984 to companies in the Haverfordwest and South Pembrokeshire travel to work areas is as follows:

TTWA

£ thousand

	Haverfordwest (RSA)	*South Pembrokeshire (RSA and RDG II)*
1984		
Offer value	125	75
Number of companies	4	1
1985		
Offer value	468	1,567
Number of companies	2	18
1986		
Offer value	120	1,218
Number of companies	4	35
1987		
Offer value	27	943
Number of companies	2	65
1988 (to 28 October)		
Offer value	29	2,208
Number of companies	2	72

Notes:

1. Figures for RSA and RDG are not recorded on the basis of individual towns.
2. The Haverfordwest TTWA includes Milford Haven and Haverfordwest. The South Pembrokeshire TTWA includes Pembroke Dock.
3. No offers of Regional Enterprise Grant have yet been made in the South Pembrokeshire TTWA.
4. The above figures exclude payments to companies under the original Regional Development Grant Scheme (RDG I) which are recorded by former Employment Office Areas (EOA). RDG I payments in the relevant EOAs were as follows:—

£ thousand

EOA	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*[1]1988*
Milford Haven	1,210	446	50	121	282
Pembroke Dock	784	8,462	2,069	281	189
Haverfordwest	122	1,510	398	185	—

[1] To 30 September.

In addition, the area benefits from other forms of Government assistance, including the urban policy initiatives and schemes of national assistance administered by the Department of Trade and Industry, and from the activities of the Welsh Development Agency by way of factory building, land reclamation, rural grant schemes and the new consultancy grant schemes available under the Enterprise Initiative.

Grants from the European regional development fund towards industrial investments represent a partial reimbursement for assistance already awarded to companies under the United Kingdom's regional aid schemes and are not therefore passed on to individual companies.

Road Accidents (A5)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many road traffic accidents there were on the A5 between Chirk and Llangollen in each of the last five years; how many resulted in death or injury to pedestrians; and how many resulted in subsequent prosecution.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The numbers of accidents involving personal injury on the A5 between (but not including) Chirk and Llangollen, were as follows:

Accidents involving personal injury on the A5 between Chirk and Llangollen

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Number of Accidents	14	10	11	8	15
Severity of injury to pedestrians involved in the above accidents	1 fatal 1 slight	no pedestrians injured	1 serious	no pedestrians injured	2 serious

Information is not collected centrally for prosecutions following road accidents, or for accidents where there is no personal injury.

Mentally Handicapped Persons

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total amount of grant given to Clwyd health authority for services for the mentally handicapped since the inception of the all-Wales strategy.

Mr. Ian Grist: Between 1 April 1983 and 31 March 1988, £389,592 has been given in grant aid to Clwyd health authority for the development of services under the all-Wales mental handicap strategy.

Administrative Posts (Funding)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of grants given to Clwyd county council under the all-Wales strategy has been used to fund administrative posts.

Mr. Grist: Between 1 April 1983 and 31 March 1988, £157,042 (5·7 per cent.) of the £2,774,372 given in grant aid to Clwyd county council for the development of services under the all-Wales mental handicap strategy was used to support the provision of administrative posts in support of these services.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total amount of grant given to Clwyd county council for services for the mentally handicapped in that county since the inception of the all-Wales strategy.

Mr. Grist: Between 1 April 1983 and 31 March 1988, £2,774,372 has been given in grant aid to Clwyd county council for the development of services under the all-Wales mental handicap strategy.

Housing

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the local authorities in Wales which are allocated funds or loan sanction for this financial year to enable them to purchase houses from the private sector in their areas, where such houses might otherwise be

purchased from outside the area, in order to let them to local people seeking rented accomodation; and if he will indicate the resources available this year to each such authority.

Mr. Grist: The figures are as follows

	£ million
Dwyfor	0·3
Arfon	0·2

A44, Cardiganshire

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if there are any plans to improve the A44 trunk road between the post office and Argoed Penllwyn, Cardiganshire, during the next three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Proposals are in hand for the improvement of the junction by Capel Bangor post office at Penllwyn. It is hoped that a start can be made within three years but this will depend on the completion of statutory procedures and the availability of finance.

Under-fives

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the total number of children under five years, by education authority at *(a)* nursery schools and *(b)* primary schools for each year since 1983; and if he will list the number of children attending a registered bilingual Welsh/English and Welsh only nursery school or primary school.

Mr. Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 28 October 1988]:* The number of pupils under five years of age in nursery and primary schools and those in designated bilingual primary schools in English-speaking areas are given in the following tables. The numbers of pupils attending Welsh-only nursery and primary schools and bilingual schools in mainly Welsh-speaking areas cannot be separately identified.

Table (a): Total number of pupils under 5 years[1] in nursery schools[2]

Welsh counties	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Clwyd	307	420	428	431	372	264
Dyfed	268	252	261	258	256	252
Gwent	1,331	1,289	1,242	1,103	1,124	1,182
Gwynedd	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mid Glamorgan	1,314	1,339	1,231	1,191	1,241	1,249
Powys	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	866	895	719	701	767	773
West Glamorgan	237	227	240	233	233	235

Table (b): Total number of pupils under 5 years[1] in primary schools[2]

Welsh counties	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Clwyd	5,980	6,648	7,100	7,024	6,988	7,085
Dyfed	4,683	5,017	4,998	4,889	4,976	4,949
Gwent	5,356	6,119	6,434	6,302	6,301	6,338
Gwynedd	3,332	3,492	3,282	3,007	2,680	2,660
Mid Glamorgan	8,772	9,562	9,891	9,530	9,434	9,710
Powys	1,532	1,582	1,616	1,316	1,316	1,321
South Glamorgan	4,364	4,646	4,945	5,011	5,039	5,196
West Glamorgan	7,526	7,897	7,901	7,589	7,714	7,716

Table (c): Total number of pupils under 5 years[3] in designated bilingual primary schools in predominantly English speaking areas[2]

Welsh counties	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Clwyd	625	684	709	698	742	730
Dyfed	314	340	356	334	349	365
Gwent	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gwynedd	89	78	99	81	69	91
Mid Glamorgan	948	1,026	969	996	1,056	1,072
Powys	36	40	42	37	38	45
South Glamorgan	267	290	311	361	378	370
West Glamorgan	520	559	549	543	621	699

[1] Age as at 31 December.
[2] At January each year.
[3] Age as at 31 August.

THE ARTS

Libraries

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many representations he has received on the Government's Green Paper on libraries.

Mr. Luce: I have received about 7,100 responses, including ones from 103 library authorities.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tax and National Income

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of gross income was represented by the amount of income tax and employees' national insurance contributions payable on incomes *(a)* twice average earnings, *(b)* three times average earnings

and *(c)* five times average earnings in the financial years 1963-64, 1973-74, 1983-84 and 1988-89, using the latest data on average earnings for 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is in the tables.

Income tax and income tax & NIC as percentages of gross earnings

	Multiples of average earnings[1]		
	2	*3*	*5*
Single person			
1963-64 Tax	23·8	25·9	28·3
Tax + NIC	26·3	27·6	29·3
1973-74 Tax	26·0	29·2	38·7
Tax + NIC	29·4	31·5	40·0
1983-84 Tax	27·8	33·9	42·6
Tax + NIC	34·0	38·0	45·1
1988-89[2] Tax	25·1	30·0	34·0
Tax + NIC	30·5	33·7	36·2
Married[3] *couple*			
1963-64 Tax	21·3	24·3	27·3
Tax + NIC	23·9	26·0	28·3
1973-74 Tax	24·9	28·0	37·7
Tax + NIC	28·2	30·3	39·1
1983-84 Tax	25·5	32·0	41·3
Tax + NIC	31·7	36·1	43·7
1988-89[2] Tax	22·8	28·5	33·1
Tax + NIC	28·2	32·1	35·3

[1] Earnings are average earnings of full-time adult males working a full week on adult rates in all occupations.
[2] Provisional.
[3] Assumes wife not in paid employment.

Value Added Tax

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many countries of the EEC place tourist industries in the lowest band of value added tax.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* According to the latest information available, five EC member states apply their lowest rate of VAT to certain tourist services. The member states concerned are Belgium, Ireland the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he has received any representations about the effect on the travel industry of the imposition of value added tax on transport and hotels, respectively; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has received any representations about the present imposition of value added tax on accommodation and meals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* There have been no recent representations to Treasury Ministers about value added tax on the goods and services which are the main components of tourism and travel.

Third World

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make representations in January 1989 to the new United States Administration to encourage it to provide grant aid to Third world nations in place of loans.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have been asked to reply.

The United States already provides most of its bilateral aid in grant form. So do we.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make representation to enable the European Council of Ministers to adopt a policy of converting past loans to Third world nations into grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have been asked to reply.

Most European Community aid to the poorest countries is in grant form. Those loans which are provided are generally to the better-off developing countries and on generous terms.

Repayments on past loans provided under the European development funds for the poorest ACP countries have recently been recycled as a contribution to the Community's special programme in favour of low-income, debt-distressed countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make representations to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to adopt the six guidelines for standard adjustment programmes agreed by Ministers at the development assistance committee meeting in December 1987.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have been asked to reply.

As the guidelines agreed at the development assistance committee propose, the IMF and the World Bank are paying increasing attention to designing structural adjustment programmes with safeguards to protect the poor. The World Bank is increasing support for special compensatory lending programmes in a number of countries in order to preserve basic social services during periods of adjustment. We welcome these developments, but the decisions on how to implement adjustment programmes, and how to protect vulnerable groups, must ultimately be for the Government of the country concerned.

ENERGY

Petroleum Engineering Directorate

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many improvement notices and prohibition notices have been issued by petroleum engineering directorate inspectors during each year from 1980 to 1988, inclusive.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Six improvement notices were served in 1980 and one prohibition notice was served in 1981. In addition to the power to serve these notices under the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974, my inspectors have additional powers under the Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971. These powers which have been used on many occasions require the owner or manager or any person on board or near to an offshore installation to do or refrain from doing any act which could cause a casualty (whether the danger is imminent or not). These powers are more appropriate to offshore installations having been designed specifically for their operations and management and have proved to be highly effective. My inspectors usually exercise these powers but will use improvement or prohibition notices where that route is likely to be more effective in order to secure the health, safety and welfare of the offshore work force.

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many times petroleum engineering directorate inspectors have exercised their right to seize helicopter

seats, to visit offshore installations other than by prior arrangement, in each year from 1980 to 1987 inclusive, and whether he intends that inspectors should exercise this right more frequently in the future.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Operating companies have complied with all requests for immediate seating on helicopter flights, so there has been no need for my inspectors to seize seats.

Health and Safety

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many accidents and dangerous occurrences reportable under offshore health and safety legislation on offshore installations in the Brent field, have been reported to the petroleum engineering directorate during each month of 1988.

Mr. Peter Morrison: One accident and nine dangerous occurrences on offshore installations in the Brent field were reported during the nine months to 30 September 1988. Only one involved an injury to a person.

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he intends to introduce legislation for the extension of the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 to cover those employees working offshore.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No. We intend to issue a consultative document shortly on the making of new regulations, under the Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971, for the election of work force safety representatives and the establishment of safety committees on offshore installations.

British Coal

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Energy Conservation

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list in the *Official Report* the progress since 1983 in attaining the Government's energy conservation objectives.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The programmes of the Energy Efficiency Office have achieved some significant successes since 1983. For example, over 500,000 homes have been treated under community insulation projects; savings of £75 million a year are being made through the monitoring and targeting programme; savings of £190 million a year have been achieved through the energy efficiency demonstration scheme and savings identified through the former energy efficiency survey scheme total over £200 million a year.

An indication of good progress on energy efficiency can also be obtained from statistics on energy intensity (ie the amount of energy used in the United Kingdom for each pound of real gross domestic product). Between 1983 and 1987, energy intensity in the United Kingdom fell by some 7 per cent.

The international evidence is also encouraging. A European Commission paper shows that in the period 1973-82 the United Kingdom came seventh out of the then 10 Community countries in terms of improvement in energy intensity, whereas a more recent Commission paper indicates that the United Kingdom is now fifth out of 12 member states. The United Kingdom rate of improvement is now over twice the Community average.

Health and Safety

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many prosecutions have been taken against offshore installation operators for contravention of health and safety legislation during each year from 1980 to 1988 inclusive; how many of these prosecutions have arisen out of serious breaches of health and safety legislation which have not involved a fatality of injury; and how many have been prosecuted under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows:

	Prosecutions against companies	*Cases not involving fatality or injury*	*Prosecutions under the HSWA 1974*
1980	11	—	8
1981	2	—	1
1982	11	3	6
1983	4	—	3
1984	7	1	5
1985	10	—	6
1986	—	—	—
1987	3	1	1
1988	1	—	1
TOTAL	49	5	31

Onshore Oil Licences

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many new applications have been received for onshore oil licences; and how many have been granted for the last 12 months.

Mr. Peter Morrison: During the past 12 months, my Department received 78 applications in response to the announcement of the second onshore round, and awarded 60 new exploration licences. For further details, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given on 3 March at columns 650-51. One appraisal licence was also awarded. On 28 July, a further conversion opportunity for holders of old-style exploration licences was announced at column 487. Six applications have been received and are currently being considered.

British Coal

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department has estimated the likely effect on the productive capacity of the coal industry of the privatisation of British Coal.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Regardless of whether or not the industry is publicly or privately owned, viable mines will have a future and non-viable mines will not.

Coal-Fired Power Stations

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on

replacing the older generation of coal-fired power stations with the latest fluidised-bed and clean burn coal-fired stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The replacement of older coal-fired generating stations is a matter for the ESI. My Department has supported the development of clean coal burning power generation but exploiting these technologies is a matter for the industry, taking account of the established policy on reducing atmospheric pollution from large boiler plant.

Fissile Materials

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many kilos of fissile materials under safeguards have been credited by the United Kingdom to the European Community, under articles 88 and 89 of the Euratom treaty, since the United Kingdom joined the European Economic Community.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am advised that articles 88 and 89 of the Euratom treaty, which relate to the provision of financial information, have not been implemented by the Community.

Fast Breeder Reactors

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received on the subject of the fast breeder reactor programme.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Since the statement made in the House by my right hon. Friend on 21 July 1988, column 1288, we have received a small number of representations about the fast reactor programme.

ENVIRONMENT

Plymouth Marine Laboratory of the Natural Environment

16. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the total expenditure by his Department on research at the Plymouth marine laboratory of the natural environment in the year 1988-89, and by how much the planned expenditure has been reduced since 27 September.

Mr. Ridley: The Plymouth marine laboratory is a valued and competitive contractor. Planned contracts for research for my Department on a range of environmental issues are likely to exceed £650,000 in 1988-89. This figure has not been subject to any recent reductions.

Empty Council Properties

17. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further proposals he has for ensuring that empty council properties are brought into use.

Mr. Ridley: Before formulating any further proposals, I am seeking additional up-to-date information about the type of dwellings empty and the reasons why they are empty.

Privatisation

18. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the progress being made by local authorities in putting services out to tender.

Mr. Gummer: Authorities are now fully engaged in implementing the competition provisions of the Local Government Act 1988. Detailed implementation regulations were made in July and the first round of contracts have to be let by 1 August 1989.

Cambridgeshire Structure Plan

19. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his revised proposals for the Cambridgeshire structure plan following the consultation period.

Mr. Howard: Early in the new year.

Tree Planting

20. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new trees have been planted under the special programme announced in the aftermath of the October 1987 hurricane; and how much of the budgeted allocation has been spent.

Mr. Ridley: Last winter an estimated half million amenity trees were planted under the task force trees programme and grants totalling £3 million were taken up. Assistance was also forthcoming from English Heritage, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Forestry Commission.

Amusement Arcades

21. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline the considerations he applies when overturning local authorities' refusals for planning applications for amusement arcades.

Mr. Howard: All appeals are determined taking into account any material provisions of the development plan and any other material considerations. The main issues arising in relation to amusement centre proposals are likely to be location, noise and disturbance arising from their use, and physical appearance.

Local Authority Housing Stock

22. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to guarantee that tenants of local authorities attempting to transfer their housing stock to another owner will receive full details of financial and other implications of the transaction.

Mr. Trippier: It is the responsibility of the local authority, as part of its statutory duties under schedule 3A to the Housing Act 1985, to ensure that the tenant is properly informed about the likely consequences of any proposed transfer.

32. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his most recent estimate of the cost of renovation and repairs for local authority housing stock in England and Wales.

Mr. Trippier: It is hoped that the 1986 English house condition survey will be published later this month. This will provide up-to-date information on the extent of disrepair in council properties in England.

Similar data for Wales are provided by the Welsh house condition survey, which was published on 9 May.

Housing Bill (Tenants' Rights)

23. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on council housing tenants' ability to opt out of local authority control as contained within the Housing Bill.

Mr. Trippier: We have received numerous representations, mainly in the form of letters from tenants, and local authorities and others, about our proposals in part IV of the Housing Bill—"Tenants' Choice".

Water Discharges

24. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to place a duty on water authorities in England and Wales to make publicly available details of discharges within 28 days of the date of sampling.

Mr. Moynihan: We propose that regulations to be made under forthcoming water legislation should require that the time limit for placing details of effluent samples on public registers should run from the taking of the sample rather than, as at present, from the completion of the analysis.

Private House Starts

25. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the level of private house starts at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: It is provisionally estimated that in the first eight months of 1988 there were 131,000 private sector housebuilding starts in England, 16 per cent. more than in 1987; starts this year have been running at their highest levels since 1973.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act

26. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue guidance to local authorities reminding them of the requirements of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act and the Public Bodies Admissions to Meetings Act.

Mr. Gummer: My Department did so on 27 February 1986.

Nuclear Waste

27. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met Nirex to discuss the disposal of intermediate level waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I met the chairman of Nirex on 4 July. We are waiting for Nirex to submit proposals to the Government in the light of responses to the company's consultation exercise and technical studies.

54. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress being made by Nirex in identifying a site for the disposal of low and intermediate level waste.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that Nirex is evaluating the results of its technical studies and replies to the company's discussion document. When these are completed Nirex intends to submit proposals to the Government, which we expect to be early next year.

Sports Council

28. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many meeting have been held since 13 June by *(a)* the Sports Council, *(b)* the policy groups of the Sports Council and *(c)* the governing body aid panel.

Mr. Moynihan: Since 13 June the Sports Council has met once, on 31 October. The council has held two policy group meetings, the participation policy group on 21 June and the national centres board on 20 June. There is no governing body aid panel, but the council's grant assessment panel has met on eight occasions since 13 June.

61. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Sports Council.

Mr. Moynihan: I regularly meet the chairman of the Sports Council. The next occasion will be on 10 November.

81. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of the members of the Sports Council who resigned in 1988, giving the date of their resignations.

Mr. Moynihan: There have been 14 resignations from the Sports Council in 1988. These are as follows:

Trevor Brooking (Resigned 31 July)
Jim Cochrane (Resigned 31 July)
Cass Edwards (Resigned 1 August)
Richard Faulkner (Resigned 31 July)
Ian Gibson (Resigned 31 July)
Peter Heatly (Resigned 31 July)
G. C. Lamb (Resigned 10 October)
Bert Moore (Resigned 11 August)
Ken Ohlson (Resigned 31 July)
Mary Peters (Resigned 31 July
—Reappointed from 28 October)
Richard Sharp (Resigned 31 July)
Ossie Wheatley (Resigned 31 July)
Peter Yarranton (Resigned 31 July
—Reappointed from 28 October)
John Humphries (Resigned 27 October)

88. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names of the current members of the Sports Council.

Mr. Moynihan: The Sports Council currently has 14 members as follows:

John Smith *(Chairman)*
Sebastian Coe *(Vice-Chairman)*
J. Allan Patmore *(Vice-Chairman)*
Ron Emes
Richard Fox
Margaret Hohmann
Norman Jacobs
Timothy Marshall
Raymond Miquel
Charles Palmer
Mary Peters
John Powell
David Simon
Peter Yarranton

Housing (East Anglia)

29. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received regarding the shortage of low-priced housing in East Anglia for first-time buyers.

Mr. Trippier: None.

Sewage Disposal

30. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution intends to publish the draft guidelines for sewage disposal in the marine environment recently agreed with the Water Authorities Association.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I shall arrange for a copy of the inspectorate's letter of 15 September, which incorporated the guidelines, to be placed in the Library.

Water Industry Privatisation

31. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the effects on the community of a privatised water industry.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend has received representations covering a wide range of opinions since the privatisation proposals were published. There was a general welcome for the proposals to establish a National Rivers Authority, which will protect environmental standards, and a Director-General of Water Services to oversee the interests of consumers.

33. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish the Bill to sell off the water authorities.

48. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now intends to introduce legislation to sell the water authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. Moynihan: Subject to the Gracious Speech, early in the coming Session.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

34. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the latest figures for households in bed-and-breakfast accommodation *(a)* in Greater London and *(b)* in England and Wales as a whole.

Mr. Trippier: The latest estimates of households temporarily placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation by English local authorities appear in table 4(A) of "Local authorities, action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Statistics for the second quarter of 1988, Supplementary Tables", which is available in the Library.

For Welsh figures I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Green Belt Policy

35. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further representations he has received on his green belt policy.

Mr. Chope: We continue to receive frequent representations on various aspects of green belt policy, to which we remain firmly committed.

67. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he uses for judging whether to add land to the green belt.

Mr. Chope: Guidance on the designation of green belts and the alteration of their boundaries is given in planning policy guidance note 2. This states that established green belt boundaries should be altered only in exceptional circumstances and that, if an alteration is proposed to the general extent of a green belt approved in a structure plan, the Secretary of State will wish to be satisfied that the opportunities for development within the urban areas contained by and beyond the green belt have been carefully considered.

Rating Reform

36. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his assessment of the expected effect of the introduction of the unified business rate in the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

Mr. Gummer: A uniform rate at the present average level of 239·5p would require reductions of up to 31 per cent. for businesses in all authorities in Yorkshire and Humberside, except York. Detailed figures were placed in the Library on 23 June by my right hon. Friend, pursuant to a written answer to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) at column *713*.

37. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional funds he proposes to make available to the Oxford city council to meet the administrative costs of poll tax collection.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend announced on 21 October that half the provision of £110 million included in the 1989-90 RSG settlement for the current costs of preparing for the community charge will be met through a specific grant. Oxford city council's share of that £55 million has been estimated to be £156,000. The remaining half of the expenditure will be supported by rate support grant. Expenditure incurred by authorities on collection of the community charge in 1990-91 and subsequent years will be supported through revenue support grant.

My right hon. Friend also announced on 21 October that capital allocations for 1989-90 will include a specific allocation of £135 million for the capital costs of preparation for the community charge. Allocations to individual authorities will be announced as soon as possible following discussions with the local authority associations. These allocations will be additional to the £25 million made for 1989-90 of which Oxford city's share was £62,073.

73. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his latest estimates of the cost of the introduction of the poll tax and the annual cost of its collection.

Mr. Gummer: The Government commissioned Price Waterhouse to undertake a study of the costs likely to be incurred by charging authorities in administering the community charge. In their report, published on 23 June, the consultants estimated the preparation costs in 1989-90 in England and Wales to be between £99 million and £122 million for current expenditure, and between £125 million and £175 million for capital expenditure. The community

charge will be paid by almost all adults in order to increase democratic accountability. In contrast, only about 50 per cent. paid rates. The cost of billing over twice as many people will therefore be almost twice as great as the old system. Price Waterhouse estimated that the annual cost of collecting the community charge would be between £379 million and £435 million, compared to the £200 million a year it now costs to collect rates.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will construct a table in the same form as figure F3 on page 106 of Cmnd. 9714, "Paying for Local Government" showing the relationship in England of rateable values to net household income separately for *(a)* single pensioner households, *(b)* other single adult households, *(c)* two adult households and *(d)* three adult households.

Mr. Gummer: Estimates of the relationship between local taxes and income were published on 13 January 1988 and copies are in the Library. We are preparing a revision of these figures and I will write to the hon. Member when revised estimates are available.

Thames Water Authority

38. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the capital expenditure plans submitted by the Thames water authority will be finalised before his Department makes a decision about compliance with the PAH standard in the European Community directive relating to the quality of drinking water.

Mr. Moynihan: If any need for capital expenditure to achieve compliance with the PAH standard in the EC directive were identified, it would be incorporated in the capital expenditure plans of the Thames water authority or its successor utility company.

Council House Rent Arrears

39. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the level of council house rent arears in England at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: As my hon. Friend the then Minister for Housing and Planning, the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) announced on 20 January, rent arrears owing to all English local authorities amounted to almost £196 million at 1 April 1987, the latest date for which information is at present available.

Housing Action Trusts

40. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of reports commissioned by his Department from consultants, concerning the housing action trust areas.

Mr. Trippier: The costs of these consultancy studies, which are still under way, are commercially confidential.

Water Quality

41. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the condition of the water in *(a)* the Thames estuary and *(b)* the Rhine.

Mr. Moynihan: As a result of a major scheme started in the 1950s to rebuild and extend London's main sewage treatment facilities, virtually the whole of the Thames estuary is now classified as being of "good" or "fair" quality—within the top two categories of the national classification scheme. Some £200 million in current prices has so far been spent on improvements. More than 100 different species of fish have been found in the tidal Thames since the early 1970s. The Thames is now the cleanest metropolitan estuary in the world.

In contrast, the Rhine has suffered from serious pollution along much of its length for many years from the heavy concentration of industry and population along its banks. In addition, the river has suffered in recent years from pollution caused by agricultural activities and from accidental spillages. Although there have been improvements in some aspects of water quality in the Rhine, Ministers of the Rhine states have recently agreed on the need for a major clean-up programme. One of its aims is the return of salmon and other aquatic life to the river.

London Dockland Development Corporation

42. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement concerning the current policy of the London Dockland Development Corporation in respect of land south of the Royal Victoria dock.

Mr. Trippier: The LDDC has decided to proceed with development plans for the Royal Victoria dock (southside) based on an urban design framework prepared by the corporation. Individual sites will be put out to tender next year to a wide range of developers.

Competitive Tendering (Bristol)

43. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will pay an official visit to Bristol to discuss the effect of competitive tendering in local government.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to do so.

Special Waste

44. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the level of special waste imported during the last three months for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures for the corresponding period in the previous year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information on imports of special waste is collected by waste disposal authorities. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution obtains summary figures annually from the authorities. During 1986, such imports totalled 53,000 tonnes. Figures for 1987 are not complete but the total is estimated to be 80,000 tonnes. This constitutes about 5 per cent. of special waste generated in the United Kingdom.

New Towns Commission Property, Basildon

45. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of New Towns Commission property in Basildon.

Mr. Trippier: The Commission for the New Towns is in the process of disposing of its holdings of land and

commercial and industrial property in Basildon. It is also making arrangements for the transfer of community-related assets to appropriate successor bodies. The Government's proposals for the transfer of new town housing to new landlords, including properties owned by the Commission for the New Towns in Basildon, are set out in the consultation paper "New Town Housing Transfer" issued by my Department on 23 August.

Bradford City Council

46. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account he proposes to take, in setting the rate support grant for Bradford city council for 1989-90, of the number of residential homes for the elderly in the city; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State intends to issue a consultation paper on his proposals for the 1989-90 rate support grant settlement shortly.

Seal Virus (Research)

47. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations his Department has received to fund research in connection with the seal virus.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department of the Environment has received a number of representations about research on the disease affecting seals in the North sea. The Department has had detailed discussions with the seal mammal research unit and other scientific institutes on further research in this area. New seals research projects were announced on 24 August and 15 September.

Green Belt Development

49. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning applications for development on existing green belt land have, on appeal, been *(a)* upheld and *(b)* rejected by his Department for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. The annual report of the chief planning inspector identifies numbers of appeals received and allowed by development type; a copy is in the Library.

Chlorofluorocarbons

50. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further measures he is taking to encourage the implementation of the Montreal protocol concerning the reduction of chlorofluorocarbons in the environment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 25 October at column *147*.

72. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further plans he has to reduce the use of chlorofluorocarbon gases.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 25 October to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Ongar, (Mr. McCrindle) at column *147*.

Bathing Water

51. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress towards full implementation of the European Economic Community directive on the quality of bathing water.

Mr. Moynihan: We are making good progress towards full implementation of the EEC bathing water directive. We have identified almost 400 coastal bathing waters under the terms of the directive, and some 60 per cent. now meet the directive's mandatory bacteriological requirements. A major capital expenditure programme is under way to bring the remainder up to standard and we have recently asked water authorities in England and Wales to review the scope for accelerating existing programmes with a view to bringing all remaining waters up to EEC standards by 1995.

Home Ownership

52. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of home ownership in England; and what equivalent information he has for the United States of America, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: At the end of March 1988 an estimated 66·5 per cent. of dwellings in England were owner-occupied. In the United States of America the proportion in the first quarter of 1988 was 63·7 per cent.

Homelessness (Local Authorities)

53. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he proposes to give to local authorities which have no housing stock about their fulfilment of their statutory duty to house the homeless.

Mr. Trippier: In June of this year, the Department issued guidelines on "Large Scale Voluntary Transfers of Local Authority Housing to Private Bodies". This makes it clear that local authorities must make adequate arrangements to continue to meet their statutory obligations in relation to housing the homeless under part III of the Housing Act 1985. In deciding whether to give consent to large-scale disposals, the Secretary of State will need to be satisfied that such arrangements have been made.

Household Statistics

56. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest figure he has for the number of married couples who are living in a household headed by another person, in *(a)* Greater London and *(b)* England.

Mr. Trippier: The Department's latest household estimates relate to 1986 when 22,000 married couples were estimated to be living in Greater London in a household headed by another person. The corresponding estimate for England as a whole is 94,000.

Football Club Membership Card Schemes

57. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will next meet representatives of the football authorities to discuss membership card schemes.

86. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to meet representatives from the Football Association and the Football League to discuss crowd control.

Mr. Moynihan: I have no present plans for further meetings with representatives of the football authorities. I have discussed the proposed national membership scheme for football supporters with the football authorities at meetings of the working party established under my chairmanship to examine the details of the scheme. The working party's report will be available soon.

Rate Support Grant, Bradford

59. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from ratepayers in Bradford about the level of the rate support grant in 1988-89 and about the likely settlement for 1989-90.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend received one representation from Bradford ratepayers about the level of rate support grant for 1988-89 and as yet none about 1989-90.

Local Authority Services (Tendering)

60. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what have been the savings to ratepayers in England from the introduction of competitive tendering for the provision of local authority services, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Gummer: Information is not available in the form requested, but authorities which have contracted out services voluntarily commonly report savings amounting to 20 to 30 per cent. of previous costs.

Football Supporters Association

63. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives of the Football Supporters Association.

Mr. Moynihan: I last met representatives of the Football Supporters Association on 18 January. A further meeting with the association is being arranged.

Water Metering Trials

55. **Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of the 10 water metering trials.

64. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what draft schemes for compulsory water metering trials he has received from water undertakings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State so far has received and approved proposals for 11 water metering trials under section 4 of the Public utility Transfers and Water Charges Act 1988:

Isle of Wight	(Southern Water)
Chandlers Ford	(Southern Water)
Bristol	(Bristol Waterworks Company)
Haling Park	(Thames Water)
Chorleywood	(Rickmansworth Water Company)
Brookmans Park	(Lee Valley Water Company)

Bromsgrove	(East Worcestershire Waterworks Company)
Turlin Moor	(Wessex Water)
Camberley	(Mid Southern Water Company)
Broadstone	(Wessex Water)
Hutton Rudby	(Northumbrian Water)

Association of County Councils

65. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the officers of the Association of County Councils; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend met them on 11 July 1988, at a meeting of the consultative council on local government finance. The meeting discussed my right hon. Friend's statement of 7 July.

Homeless Families

68. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any new proposals for housing homeless families.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to my reply earlier today to the Hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott).

Football Violence

69. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new measures he proposes to combat the effect of hooliganism and violence at football matches.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 20 July at column *692*.

Large Combustion Plant Directive

70. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many retrofits will need to be installed to meet the target outlined by the large combustion plant directive; and if he will provide his estimate of the cost of complying with the directive.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The question of retrofits will fall to be discussed between the electricity generating industry and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. It is too soon to guage how many will be needed. The cost of complying with the directive will depend on the means by which emissions are reduced. It will be substantial.

Rating Reform

71. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimate of the number of adults living in dwellings who will gain and lose upon the introduction of the poll tax in England.

Mr. Gummer: Estimates of the effects of the community charges on the lines requested were published on 13 January 1988 and copies are in the Library. We are preparing a revision of these figures.

Litter

74. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes any further action to combat litter.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Tidy Britain Group reports good progress on the programme of experimental projects launched by the Prime Minister earlier this year. The projects incorporate before and after studies to measure their effectiveness. We shall consider what further action is desirable in the light of lessons drawn from the programme in a review at the end of the year.

Local Authority Housing (Document)

75. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many replies he has received to his consultation document, "A New Financial Regime for Local Authority Housing in England and Wales."

Mr. Trippier: As at 1 November, a total of 275 responses to the consultation paper had been received in my Department.

Bradford

76. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will pay an official visit to Bradford to discuss arrangements for local government.

Mr. Ridley: I visited Bradford on 21 October but not in my official capacity. I see no need for a further visit.

Local Revenue-raising

77. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department is taking to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of methods of raising local revenue proposed as alternatives to the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) considered a number of possible local taxes. We have subsequently published figures showing the impact of local income tax and of rates based on the capital values of homes.

I wrote to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 28 October with detailed questions about the Labour party's proposals for capital value rates plus local income tax. Once we have the answers to those questions, it will be possible to carry out a proper evaluation of the impact of its proposals.

Tenants' Choice (Booklet)

78. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will withdraw the Department of the Environment booklet "Government Proposals for Housing: Tenants' Choice".

Mr. Trippier: No.

Marine Pollution

79. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current level of investment in measures to combat marine pollution; and if he will make a statement.

58. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current level of investment in measures to combat marine pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Investment to combat marine pollution is undertaken by a very wide range of public

agencies, private businesses and individuals such as farmers and landowners. There is no central record bringing together all this expenditure.

Rivers are usually the most important source of contaminants entering the sea. Expenditure by water authorities and their equivalents, and by industry, on improving treatment processes and achieving stricter discharge limits have brought major improvements to water quality. For example expenditure by water authorities on improved sewerate and sewage treatment facilities on the major rivers and estuaries discharging into the North sea will total £600 million by 1990. For the Mersey basin, a £4,000 million campaign was set up in 1983 spread over 25 years, of which £2,500 million will be spent on improving water quality.

Other examples include expenditure by industry, with the advice of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, on reducing dangerous substances in emissions to air, and in finding alternatives to the dumping of waste at sea.

Drinking Water

80. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress made towards full implementation of EEC directives on drinking water standards.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 20 April 1988 at column *480*. I assure her that good progress continues to be made towards full compliance with the EC drinking water directive.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act and Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act

82. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue guidance to local authorities reminding them of the requirements of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act and the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department did so on 27 February 1986.

North Sea Pollution

83. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the steps he is taking to reduce pollution in the North sea.

89. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he proposes to take to clean up the North sea.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At last year's North sea conference in London, chaired by my right hon. Friend, we agreed a wide ranging programme of measures to protect further and improve the quality of the North sea and all our coastal waters. The most important measures relevant to the United Kingdom include:

1. A substantial reduction of the order of 50 per cent. of inputs to rivers and estuaries of substances which are persistent toxic and bio-accumulative;
2. An end to the dumping of industrial waste at sea by the end of 1989 except for materials of natural origin, or internationally accepted as causing no harm to the marine environment and for which there is no suitable land based alternative;
3. A 65 per cent. reduction in the total of waste incinerated at sea by 1991 and its termination in 1994;
4. The establishment of an international North sea scientific task force, to co-ordinate research and monitoring by all the North sea states.

Other measures include action on nutrient (phosphorus and nitrogen) inputs in areas where they are likely to cause pollution, tighter controls on operational discharges from ships and other offshore installations and increased aerial surveillance. The United Kingdom is strongly committed to implementing these measures and indicated how this would be done in a guidance note on the conference declaration published last February a copy of which is in the Library of the House. We are confident of achieving all these targets, and progress in doing so will be reviewed by the third North sea conference to be held in the Hague on 7 and 8 March 1990.

Jockey Club

84. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met officials from the Jockey Club.

Mr. Moynihan: I met the senior steward and other stewards of the Jockey Club at Newmarket races on Saturday 15 October.

Fylde (Sewage)

85. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set up an independent inquiry into North West water's sea pipeline proposal and alternative inland disposal arrangements to solve the Fylde's sewage problems.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend will consider the need for an inquiry when he has received and considered the water authority's applications for discharge consents under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, together with any representations that may be made when these applications are advertised.

Hazardous Waste

87. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to seek to increase the powers and number of inspectors available to him to enable him to control the importation of hazardous wastes into the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As I announced on 28 July, *Official Report* column *444*, we are considering whether further controls on the import of waste are necessary. This review covers all types of imported wastes.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to control the disposal of hazardous waste; if he has recently had discussions with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution about the disposal of hazardous waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: We announced our intention to strengthen legislation on waste disposal on 29 June, and plan a further consultation paper shortly. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is part of the Department of the Environment and advises on waste management issues.

PSA Block B, Cambridge

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much rainwater has seeped into the

working areas of the Property Services Agency's block B at Cambridge during recent months; to what extent this puts computer equipment at risk; whether he is satisfied with the conditions under which staff are working in this building; and if he will take steps to remedy these and other problems by allowing the private sector to redevelop the entire site and by redeploying at least some part of its staff to the Property Services Agency's accommodation in Newmarket.

Mr. Chope: This building has recently suffered some relatively minor water penetration caused by blocked gutters. No computer equipment has been damaged. Working conditions for staff remain satisfactory, but I will continue to keep the long-term use of the site under review including options involving partial or total redevelopment.

Caravan Rallies

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from exempt organisations seeking to change the limits on rallies allowed under the present provisions of the Caravan Sites Act 1980; what proposals he had made to interested parties; what responses he has received; and what is his policy on the length of time that rallies or similar congregations of persons and vehicles should be permitted to take place without planning consent, and on the controls that are applied to such events.

Mr. Trippier: I have received one application from an exempt organisation for a certificate which would enable them to hold rallies lasting longer than five days. The Department has sought the views of interested parties and will determine the application shortly. Responses from the ADC, the ACC, the British Holiday and Home Parks Association, the National Caravan Council, the Caravan Club and the Camping and Caravanning Club have been considered.

Under paragraph 6 of schedule 1 to the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960, organisations with a certificate of exemption may hold rallies for up to five days, without the need for a site licence or planning consent. I have no intention of altering that provision at present. Exempt organisations are required to abide by a code of conduct approved by my Department controlling their rallying activities and certificates can be withdrawn in the event of non-compliance.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reply to the submissions made by the National Caravan Council and the British Holiday and Home Park Association in May in response to his Department's proposals to extend the time limits during which exempt organisations may hold rallies.

Mr. Trippier: My officials are in correspondence with the exempt organisation concerned and we should be in a position to announce the outcome shortly.

Multi-occupation Housing

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish his response to the consultation paper on houses in multiple occupation.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Bernley (Mr. Pike) on 28 October at column 426.

Radioactive Waste (Disposal)

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further statement on his policy for disposal of low and intermediate-level radioactive waste.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As I made clear in the debate in the House on 28 October, at column 596, the Government believe that safe disposal routes for low and intermediate-level radioactive waste can be developed in the United Kingdom, and that early disposal is the right answer.

The Government remain of the view that low-level waste can be and is being disposed of safely using present authorised sites, but intermediate-level waste needs to be disposed of deep underground or under the seabed. The Government are keeping open the sea disposal option for large items arising from decommissioning operations.

In implementing this policy, the Government welcome Nirex's intention to dispose of both low and intermediate-level waste in a single deep facility. The Government look forward to receiving detailed proposals so that rapid progress can be made.

Salt Properties Ltd

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the implications for Her Majesty's Government's policy towards leasehold reform of the activities of Salt Properties Limited.

66. **Mr. Goodlad:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the implications for Her Majesty's Government's policy towards leasehold reform of the activities of Salt Properties Ltd.

Mr. Trippier: We have received a number of representations from hon. Members on behalf of their constituents and a few further ones from other interested parties.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that all companies which receive imported toxic wastes possess adequate capacity to deal with such waste; and what control he exercises over companies which do not possess high temperature incinerators with respect to the import of polychlorinated biphenyls.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Imported wastes, like wastes originating in this country, may be disposed of only at facilities suitably licensed by waste disposal authorities. Licence conditions should specify the types and quantities of waste permitted. Waste disposal authorities have the necessary powers to ensure that polychlorinated biphenyls, whether from United Kingdom or overseas sources, are dealt with only by high temperature incineration.

Housing

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the provision made by local authorities in England for emergency housing for people who *(a)* suffer from alcohol abuse, or *(b)* are released from prisons or detention centres.

Mr. Trippier: The responsibility to assess such need rests with local housing authorities (in conjunction where necessary with health and social services authorities); appropriate provision is made by authorities, housing associations and voluntary groups, with various forms of Government financial support.

Water (Nitrate)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the mean annual nitrate concentration in the River Thames, at Walton, since 1975.

Mr. Moynihan: The mean annual concentrations of total oxidised nitrogen in the river Thames at Walton are as follows:

Milligram per litre as NO

Year	
1975	26·8
1976	33·2
1977	34·2
1978	31·5
1979	33·2
1980	28·8
1981	31·1
1982	30·0
1983	29·7
1984	31·3
1985	34·4
1986	30·2
1987	30·0
[1]1988	30·0

[1] January to September.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department takes to ensure that the lowest possible methanol residual in denitrified water, is achieved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Denitrification processes which use methanol are still at an experimental stage. One of the aims of these experiments, which are being partly funded by the Department, is to limit methanol residual in the denitrified water.

Brent Moor (Planning Inquiry)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why the public planning inquiry, originally scheduled for 8 and 9 November, into the proposed residential development at Brent moor, South Brent, Devon, was cancelled at short notice.

Mr. Ridley: The appeal inquiry was postponed at the request of the local planning authority and the appellants.

Environmental Research

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision he intends to make for environmental research in 1989-90 and later years.

62. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has made for increased research into the environment since 27 September.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The public expenditure plans which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced yesterday include additional provision of £2·6 million for the Department's environmental research programme in 1989-90 and 1990-91, raising the level of this programme to £35·8 million and £36 million respectively. In 1991-92 it is planned to maintain the level of expenditure at £36 million.

The environmental research programme covers radioactive wastes, air pollution, land wastes, toxic substances, countryside, water, planning, natural resources and local government. The additional provision for 1989-90 includes £1·23 million in support of trials of water metering. It will also allow expenditure on research into the North sea marine environment, waste disposal and climatic change to be increased by £0·5 million, £0·5 million and £0·25 million respectively.

Water Industry

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of the British water industry has been purchased by French companies.

Mr. Howard: French water companies have majority shareholdings in two British water companies, East Anglian and Essex, which together serve 3·2 per cent. of the population of England and Wales.

Local Plans

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the recommendations contained in his draft planning policy guidance note, published in June, that a five-year supply of land exists as the basis for approving local plans.

Mr. Chope: We have received many comments on the draft planning policy guidance note on local plans, and these are being considered. The draft PPG did not however suggest that the existence of a five-year supply of land should form the basis for approving local plans. Advice is given in planning policy guidance note No. 3 on the use of the five-year land requirement, derived from the development plan, as the test of the adequacy of land availability for housing.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

"Accounting for Special Purpose Transactions"

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he is yet able to announce the definition of a subsidiary company in the context of draft 42, "Accounting for Special Purpose Transactions".

Mr. Maude: I announced on 16 August proposals to change the definition of a subsidiary for the purposes of preparing consolidated accounts. The main proposals are (i) to replace the test based on equity share capital with one based on voting rights and (ii) to require consolidation where one company has a certain interest in the shares of another and the first company actually exercises a dominant influence over the other. The changes will be included in legislation to be introduced at a suitable opportunity.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether, pursuant to his reply to the hon.

Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 19 October, *Official Report*, column *953*, he will give the capital expenditure data for manufacturing industry in each standard region in current prices, constant 1980 prices, and as an index taking 1980 as 100 for each year from 1978.

Mr. Forth: The requested information is shown in the tables:

Net capital expenditure in manufacturing industry[1] by standard region of the United Kingdom at current prices

£ million

Region	*1978*	*1979*
North	681	683
Yorkshire and Humberside	595	634
East Midlands	382	466
East Anglia	169	207
South East	1,357	1,698
South West	290	349
West Midlands	606	702
North West	787	990
Wales	331	495
Scotland	551	597
Northern Ireland	94	124

[1] Orders III to XIX, Standard Industrial Classification, revised 1968.

Region	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
North	613	492	358	343	393	522	630	585
Yorkshire and Humberside	625	557	453	442	499	605	680	852
East Midlands	478	454	398	432	455	557	680	681
East Anglia	210	199	167	216	226	255	302	297
South East	1,581	1,561	1,355	1,394	1,627	2,013	2,231	2,349
South West	377	367	342	360	435	541	600	594
West Midlands	705	704	532	564	598	842	893	865
North West	971	995	766	758	838	976	1,095	1,000
Wales	472	380	371	338	353	471	563	524
Scotland	589	654	617	542	491	623	866	777
Northern Ireland	127	144	134	124	146	185	202	182

Note: Divisions 2-4, Standard Industrial Classification, revised 1980.

Net capital expenditure in manufacturing industry[1] by standard region of the United Kingdom at constant 1980 prices

£ million

Region	*1978*	*1979*
North	874	786
Yorkshire and Humberside	764	730
East Midlands	490	536
East Anglia	217	238
South East	1,742	1,954
South West	372	402
West Midlands	778	808
North West	1,010	1,139
Wales	425	570
Scotland	707	687
Northern Ireland	121	143

[1] Orders III to XIX, Standard Industrial Classification, revised 1968.

£ million

Region	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
North	706	493	327	294	321	408	464	408
Yorkshire and Humberside	719	557	415	380	407	474	500	594
East Midlands	550	454	364	371	371	436	500	475
East Anglia	242	199	153	186	185	200	222	207
South East	1,819	1,561	1,240	1,197	1,328	1,576	1,640	1,638
South West	434	367	313	309	355	424	442	414
West Midlands	812	705	487	484	489	660	656	603
North West	1,118	995	701	651	684	764	805	698
Wales	543	380	339	290	288	369	414	365
Scotland	678	654	565	465	401	488	637	542
Northern Ireland	146	144	122	106	119	145	149	127

[1] Divisions 2-4, Standard Industrial Classification, revised 1980.

Indices of net capital expenditure in manufacturing industry[1] by standard region of the United Kingdom at constant 1980 prices

1980 = 100

Region	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
North	139	143	100	66	60	65	83	94	83
Yorkshire	135	129	100	75	68	73	85	90	107
East Midlands	111	121	100	80	82	82	96	110	105
East Anglia	111	122	100	77	93	93	101	112	104
South East	104	117	100	79	77	85	101	105	105
South West	109	118	100	85	84	97	116	120	113
West Midlands	111	115	100	69	69	69	94	93	86
North West	99	112	100	70	65	69	77	81	70
Wales	107	143	100	89	76	76	97	109	96
Scotland	107	104	100	86	71	61	75	97	83
Northern Ireland	85	101	100	85	74	83	101	103	88

[1]For 1978, Orders III to XIX, Standard Industrial Classification, revised 1968. For 1979-86, Divisions 2-4, Standard Industrial Classification, revised 1980.
Sources: Annual Census of Production and United Kingdom National Accounts.

Finance Companies (Loan Interest Rates)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further steps his Department intends to take to protect consumers from finance companies who provide loans at exorbitant interest rates.

Mr. Maude: I am proposing to amend the Consumer Credit Act 1974 to allow a court to reopen an extortionate credit agreement of its own motion. This will provide additional protection for the customers of moneylenders who are unaware of their right to apply to the court for this purpose and are not represented during any legal proceedings for debt by a lender. I am also proposing to provide more effective protection against credit businesses which operate in an unacceptable manner. Under proposals circulated last week by my Department businesses involved in lending or hiring will need to be licensed by the Office of Fair Trading every three years, instead of every 15 years as at present. I propose also that the Office of Fair Trading should have additional powers to enable them to take swift and effective action against unacceptable business practices, including the power to prohibit a business from trading with immediate effect where necessary.

Greek Radio Station, London

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the Greek language radio station currently operating unlawfully in London was last prosecuted; and what further proceedings are planned or pending.

Mr. Forth: There are currently three unlicensed broadcasters operating in London and transmitting in the Greek language. They have been raided on 56 occasions so far this year.

The last occasion that individuals or companies associated with the stations were convicted was on 4 July 1988 when fines of £13,900 were imposed and costs of £11,194 awarded to the Department. Unlicensed broadcasters cause interference to authorised radio services and whilst there are no proceedings currently pending, all three stations are under continued investigation by the radio investigation service. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to catch individuals: transmitter sites are usually unmanned.

Tied House System

Mr. Morley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made on Sir Gordon Borrie's recommendation that the tied house system within the brewing industry be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Maude: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission is to report by 3 February 1989.

Second-hand Cookers

Mr. Alton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action he intends to take against retailers who sell faulty second-hand gas cookers; and if he will introduce amendments to existing legislation to make them liable to prosecution.

Mr. Forth: Public consultation has already taken place on draft regulations which will ensure that suppliers of both new and second-hand gas cookers meet proper standards of safety. These regulations will be laid before the House shortly, to come into force early in 1989. They will, of course, empower the courts to impose suitable penalties on retailers and others who contravene these regulations.

NESL Shipyards

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consultations he has had with the Cuban state shipping line, Mambisa on possible orders for NESL shipyards, the timing of the orders and the possibility of intervention funding.

Mr. Newton: My predecessor made clear to the House on 21 July that DTI officials had established that Empressa Navigacion Mambisa had authority to purchase a series of general cargo ships. My Department has since kept in touch with Mambisa both directly and through its financial advisers in London. Mambisa has been advised that intervention fund support would be considered for any order taken by North East Shipbuilders Ltd., provided the yard had at that time been returned to the private sector. Mambisa has not set any firm deadline for an order to be placed but has said it would like to receive an early letter of intent.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his estimate of *(a)* the number of jobs dependent on the NESL shipbulding yards both directly and indirectly and *(b)* the spending power granted by the yards and its contract and its demand for services.

Mr. Newton: The number of jobs dependent on the NESL shipbuilding yards, both directly and indirectly, depends on the extent to which the yards are able to build ships at a price, to a time scale and of a standard which enables them to compete with other yards, particularly overseas. At present, although British Shipbulders still employs some 2,000 people at NESL, 600 are now laid off out of a total of 1,000 impending lay-offs announced in August. The number of jobs that depend indirectly on the BS yards has been reduced because the ferry programme has collapsed.

The weekly gross wage bill is presently around £400,000. The overall value of contracts and services to the yard has also been adversely affected by the state of the ferry programme.

Merchant Shipping Construction

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his estimate of the potential new orders for merchant shipping construction in 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Newton: Worldwide new orders for merchant shipbuilding in 1987 are likely to have been some 10 million compensated gross tonnes. The widely respected Association of Western European Shipbuilders has just revised its forecast for world demand for the period 1990-95 from an annual average of 19 to 12·5 million cgt.

I expect a modest and probably quite gradual improvement in overall demand along these lines between 1987 and 1991. However, since this level of demand is well within world capacity competition is likely to remain intense.

Zircon and Ilmenite

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, in the light of his recent reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, he will give a table setting out the leading world producers of zircon for zirconium and ilmenite for titanium dioxide; and if he will indicate the quantity controlled by the Anglo-American Corporation and Consolidated Goldfields, respectively.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* Tables covering the world production of zirconium minerals and titanium minerals, including ilmenite, are given in "World Mineral Statistics 1982-86", compiled by the British Geological Survey. This publication is available in the Library of the House. The possible effects on competition in certain high value minerals and metals including, inter alia, zircon and titanium will be considered by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The annual report and accounts of the Anglo American Corporation and Consolidated Gold Fields may be obtained from their London offices, and in the case of Consolidated Gold Fields from Companies House.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 3 November 1988

THE ARTS

Funding

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will announce details of the rolling forward of the three-year settlement for the funding of the arts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I announced a year ago a three-year settlement of the arts budget for the years 1988-89 to 1990-91. My aim was to give arts bodies a firm basis on which to plan their future activities and to encourage greater self-reliance and diversification in their sources of funding.

I am glad to announce today the rolling-forward of this settlement to a fourth year, 1991-92. As before, the three-year programme covers the whole of my central Government arts expenditure, except the heritage items which are jointly funded with the Department of the Environment and the British Library capital project at St. Pancras which will continue to be reviewed annually.

In order to get this new approach off to a good start, last year's settlement provided an increase of 10 per cent. in my programme for 1988-89. The three-year strategy introduced new measures, notably incentive funding schemes for the performing arts and for the libraries sector, and major increases in funding for the buildings and maintenance programmes of the museums and galleries. I am very glad to report that the three-year funding strategy has been a success and that arts organisations have responded vigorously to this approach. They are planning ahead on firm three-year figures and are actively seeking to increase their other sources of income.

The arts budget for 1991-92 builds on the foundations laid last year. Including adjustments for transfers to museums and galleries which I announced last year, and for VAT on new construction, the three-year funding programme will rise from £339 million in 1987-88 to £430 million in 1991-92, an increase of 27 per cent. over the first four years. The central Government programme as a whole, including the heritage items and the British Library's capital needs, will rise to £483 million over the same period, an increase of 31 per cent. Both figures represent increases of over 6 per cent. on the corresponding totals for 1990-91.

Table A summarises the main allocations. The Arts Council's grant will rise from £160 million in 1990-91 to £168 million in 1991-92, an increase of 5 per cent. From this increase, I shall expect the Arts Council to apply £3 million for additional incentive funding purposes. The precise nature of the incentive scheme and the targets for its achievement will be discussed later. The grant to the British Film Institute will rise from £12 million in 1990-91 to £12·8 million in 1991-92, an increase of 6·6 per cent. The grant to the National Film and Television School will rise by nearly 6 per cent. to £1·8 million. The Crafts Council's grant will rise by 6·25 per cent. to £2·55 million.

The Arts Council's grant for 1989-90 now includes £0·25 million for the second tranche of my contribution to Glasgow's year as European city of culture. I have also increased the grant-in-aid to the British Film Institute next year by £0·3 million for the refurbishment of the National Film Theatre.

The provision for the business sponsorship incentive scheme will continue at £3 million in 1991-92.

The total provision for museums and galleries will rise from £161 million in 1990-91 to £174 million in 1991-92, an increase of 8·2 per cent. Half the £13 million increase will go to a further strengthening of the building and maintenance programme of the national institutions. This brings the size of the building programme to £55 million in 1991-92, an increase of 53 per cent. over 1987-88. I have also increased my provision for this building programme by some £3·5 million in both 1989-90 and 1990-91. The increase includes provision for the liability to VAT on new construction and £1 million of new money in each year. The allocations set out in table B will make possible some major refurbishments and improvements to, for example, the British museum, the National gallery, the Science museum and the Victoria and Albert museum. I congratulate these institutions and others which have been successful in securing additional sources of income to support their plans.

I also attach importance to the management of our national collections, including their conservation, storage and documentation. I have discussed this with each of the national institutions in the context of its corporate plan, and have commissioned research studies into aspects of collections management. Recent reports of the Museums and Galleries Commission and the National Audit Office have also raised this subject. The allocations set out in table B are intended to help the national institutions in tackling their priority concerns in the management of their collections. I am increasing the grant-in-aid to the Musuems and Galleries Commission by 7 per cent to £7·3 million in 1991-92 in order to help the commission and the area museum councils to support other museums and galleries in this task. I am also increasing by £0·175 million the commission's provision for 1989-90 to help the commission and the area museums councils to promote the touring of exhibitions, and to support initiatives in training for museums management.

The grant-in-aid for running costs to the National gallery includes in 1991-92 provision of over £1 million to take account of the opening of the Sainsbury wing in April 1991.

The needs already described must continue to have priority over purchase grants, which will therefore remain at their present cash levels for the time being. I intend to review the overall provision for purchase grants, how they are best used to stimulate other funding and how they are best allocated. I shall make a further announcement about this in due course.

Provision for the running costs of the British Library will rise to £56·5 million in 1991-92, an increase of 4·6 per cent. over the previous year. I am also increasing the grant for 1989-90 by £0·7 million to help meet the cost of an early retirement scheme and preparations for the move to St. Pancras.

The sums for British Library capital in table A represent planned expenditure on phase 1A of the St. Pancras building. They will also cover preliminary design work on the completion phase, on which I am making a separate announcement today. Further expenditure on the completion phase will be provided for in next year's survey.

The provision for public lending right will be increased by £0·75 million to £4·25 million in 1991-92.

Table A
Table of Main Allocations

£ million

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Performing Arts				
Arts Council	150·00	155·25	160·00	168·00
British Film Institute	11·30	11·80	12·00	12·80
National Film and TV School	1·60	1·65	1·70	1·80
Crafts Council	2·25	2·35	2·40	2·55
Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme	3·00	3·00	3·00	3·00
Research and Supporting Services	0·67	0·75	0·67	0·67
Museums and Galleries				
Museums and Galleries Total of which	153·58	157·80	160·80	174·04
National Institutions	142·10	145·06	148·66	161·16
Museums and Galleries Commission	6·48	6·85	6·86	7·34
Research and Supporting Services	0·47	0·50	0·50	0·50
Heritage				
National Heritage Memorial Fund (OAL share)	1·50	1·50	1·50	1·50
Acceptance in Lieu (OAL share)	2·30	1·00	1·00	1·00
Libraries				
British Library Current Grant	52·18	53·50	54·03	56·50
British Library Capital	33·09	43·35	45·24	50·00
Public Lending Right Scheme	3·50	3·50	3·50	4·25
Public Library Development Scheme	0·25	0·25	0·25	0·09

Table B: Museums and galleries *£ million*

	1989-90	*1990-91*[1]	*1991-92*[2]
British Museum:			
Running costs	15·593	16·042	17·154
Building programme	7·250	7·270	7·900
Purchase grant	1·400	1·400	1·400
Sub total	24·243	24·712	26·454
British Museum (Natural History):			
Running costs	15·230	15·686	16·478
Building programme	6·260	5·870	6·400
Purchase grant	0·190	0·190	0·190
Sub total	21·680	21·746	23·068
Imperial War Museum:			
Running costs	6·327	5·936	6·335
Building programme	3·980	2·570	2·800
Purchase grant	0·100	0·100	0·100
Sub total	10·407	8·606	9·235
National Gallery:			
Running costs	5·285	6·083	6·985
Building programme	4·390	3·800	4·400
Purchase grant	2·750	2·750	2·750
Sub total	12·425	12·633	14·135
National Maritime Museum:			
Running costs	5·535	5·644	6·035
Building programme	3·450	2·770	3·200
Purchase grant	0·205	0·205	0·205
Sub total	9·190	8·619	9·440
National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside:			
Running costs	6·996	7·169	7·608
Building programme	3·060	2·670	2·800
Purchase grant	0·750	0·750	0·750
Sub total	10,806	10·589	11·158
National Portrait Gallery:			
Running costs	1·976	2·027	2·157
Building programme	1·530	1·550	1·800
Purchase grant	0·310	0·310	0·310
Sub total	3·816	3·887	4·267
Science Museum:			
Running costs	10·999	11·267	12·009
Building programme	5·310	5·130	4·900
Purchase grant	0·375	0·375	0·375
Sub Total	16·684	16·772	17·284
Tate Gallery:			
Running costs	6·432	6·608	7·003
Building programme	4·200	3·910	4·700
Purchase grant	1·815	1·815	1·815
Sub Total	12·447	12·333	13·518
Victoria and Albert Museum:			
Running costs	12·933	13·326	14·269
Building programme	7·660	7·670	8·500
Purchase grant	1·145	1·145	1·145
Sub Total	21·738	22·141	23·914
Wallace Collection:			
Running costs	1·144	1·175	1·204
Building programme	0·482	0·447	0·483
Purchase grant	—	—	—
Sub Total	1·626	1·622	1·687
To be allocated later for building and maintenance work	—	5·000	7·000
National Museums and Galleries: Total	145·062	148·660	161·160
Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry	1·516	1·552	1·616
Museum of London	2·855	2·923	3·096
Sir John Soane's Museum	0·295	0·305	0·323
Sub Total	4·666	4·780	5·035
Museums and Galleries Commission	6·854	6·859	7·345
Research and Support Services	0·500	0·500	0·500
Grand Total	157·082	160·799	174·040

[1] Individual provisions for the building programme in these two years will be increased when the full allocation is made.

British Library

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Arts what proposals he is making for the further construction of the new British Library building at St. Pancras when building work on the present stage is completed in 1993.

Mr. Luce: I reported to the House on 15 December 1987 that I had authorised a feasibility study to examine options for the concluding stage of the British Library project. The study was carried out by the Property Services Agency, the British Library and the design team who designed the first phase of the building, under the sponsorship of the Office of Arts and Libraries.

The Government have carefully considered the results of the study. I am happy to report that a decision has now been made to complete the project, at a cost of £90 million at current prices, in a way which will meet the key requirements of the Library.

The new building at St. Pancras will enable the library to concentrate most of its main reference collections at one location in a controlled pollution free environment. This will allow the British Library to vacate many of the 19 sites around London, where its stock is currently located, and to unite its major services within a single purpose-built building, to provide greatly improved facilities for readers and staff.

I have authorised the immediate start of the design of the additional phase of works required to complete the project by a target date of 1996.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Sale and Supply of Goods (Report)

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the Government's response to the legislative changes proposed in the report by the Law Commission and the Scottish Law Commission on the "Sale and Supply of Goods" (Cmnd. 137).

Mr. Forth: The Government accept the Commissions' proposals, subject to minor clarifying amendments, and will seek an appropriate legislative opportunity to give them effect.

WALES

Unrebated Rent

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the level of average unrebated rent in 1987-88 prices for each year between 1967-68 and the latest date available.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Average weekly net unrebated rents of local authority dwellings

As at	*(£ at 1987-88 prices)*
31 March 1968	11·92
31 March 1969	12·00
31 March 1970	11·76
1 April 1971	12·13
1 April 1972	12·42
1 April 1973	14·27
1 April 1974	12·66
1 April 1975	11·72
1 April 1976	11·54
1 April 1977	11·68
1 April 1978	11·86
1 April 1979	11·10
1 April 1980	11·63
1 April 1981	15·40
1 April 1982	17·52
1 April 1983	17·48
1 April 1984	17·85
1 April 1985	17·95
1 April 1986	18·10
1 April 1987	17·91

Domestic Rates

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the level of average domestic rates in 1987-88 prices for each year between 1967-68 and the latest date available.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is given in the following table.

	Average Domestic Rate Poundage 1987-88 Prices (Pence)	*Average Domestic Rate Bill 1987-88 Prices (Pounds)*
1967-68	450·2	219
1968-69	436·6	215
1969-70	427·4	210
1970-71	416·1	205
1971-72	441·6	223
1972-73	433·7	221
1973-74	155·4[1]	220
1974-75	107·8[2]	125[2]
1975-76	127·1	149
1976-77	131·2	153
1977-78	130·6	154
1978-79	131·6	158
1979-80	141·2	170
1980-81	155·7	188
1981-82	170·5	208
1982-83	187·2	230
1983-84	180·4	222
1984-85	188·7	234
1985-86	193·1	240
1986-87	212·5	266
1987-88	218·1	273
1988-89	228·4	288

[1] Figures for the period 1967-68 to 1972-73 are not compatible with those for later years as they relate to rateable values prior to the revaluation in 1973-74.

[2] In 1974-75 there was an adjustment to rate poundages because of changes in local authority responsibilities, in particular the transfer of water and sewerage services from local authorities to water authorities.

Urban Aid

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what applications he has received for urban aid in the Dwyfor area for 1989-90; whether each of these applications is valid for consideration within the scope of the urban aid scheme; and if he will ensure that the multiple deprivation of this area is duly considered when deciding on such applications.

Mr. Grist: I have received two applications for urban aid for 1989-90 in the Dwyfor area, both of which are valid for consideration within the scope of the urban programme. These are:

(i) Provision of changing facilities and clubhouse at the Traeth sports fields, Porthmadog. £100,000 capital costs.

(ii) Preseli harbour—provision of workshops and harbour master's office. £156,500 capital costs.

I am careful to ensure that the comparative needs of all local authorities are given serious consideration.

Education

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will seek to amend the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 in order to require local education authorities in Wales to provide governing bodies for Welsh language units located on the campus of English medium primary schools, in order to receive the same protection under that Act as is afforded to Welsh language primary schools with regard to governing bodies.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. I do not consider it appropriate for there to be separate governing bodies for units within schools.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consents he has given under section 10 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 for the grouping of primary schools which have a significant difference between them in the use of the Welsh language, for the purposes of establishing governing bodies; and why each was deemed appropriate.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No consents have been given for the grouping of Welsh medium schools with English medium schools. I have given consent for five groups of Gwent schools each of which include a school with a Welsh medium unit. In each case the former governing body had no objection. Moreover, Gwent LEA is in the process of reviewing Welsh medium primary education in the county and hopes to move towards a system of Welsh primary schools rather than units, which, if implemented, will result in separate governing bodies being established for each of the Welsh primary schools. The proposals were, therefore, considered by the LEA to be a short-term measure.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what advice he has given to local education authorities concerning the desirability of Welsh units located on the same campus as English language primary schools, being enabled to have their own governing bodies to reflect their differing education interests and their separate catchment areas.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: General advice on the implementation of the provisions of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 which relate to governing bodies is given in Welsh Office circular 12/87. In this context a Welsh-medium unit is not considered to be a separate school and no specific advice has been given on the treatment of Welsh units located on the same campus as English language primary schools.

Welsh Language Document

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state the date on which the Welsh language document, "Y Rhagleni Rheoli Corfforaethol I'r Gwasanaeth Iechyd yng Nghymru" was published; what was the publication date of the corresponding English language document; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Welsh language document was published on 21 September 1988 and in a translation of the corresponding English document published on June 22 1988. It is not always possible to publish such documents simultaneously.

Emergency Housing

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the provisions made by local authorities in Wales for emergency housing for people who *(a)* suffer from alcohol abuse, or *(b)* are released from prisons or detention centres.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 2 November 1988]*: Local authorities have ample powers to secure emergency housing for all categories of homeless people. Information is not held centrally on the way in which local authorities exercise these powers. No representations have been made to me which would suggest that particular authorities are failing to act responsibly.

ENERGY

Atomic Power Station, London

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if there is any proposal for an atomic power station in the London area.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

Opencast Coal Mines

Mr. Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his current policy on the licensing of opencast coal mines; and whether he is considering any alterations to the present licensing system.

Mr Michael Spicer: The Government are keen to see a thriving private mining sector competing in the market place. They welcome British Coal's agreement to set royalties at a level which will allow efficient operators to be profitable and the royalty reductions that have been made to reflect more difficult market conditions. In the interests of greater transparency, I have asked British Coal to set out, in consultation with the representatives of the licensed operators, a statement of its licensing policy and practice. Changes in the licensing limits would require legislation, the need for which has been overtaken by our plans to privatise the entire coal industry in the next Parliament.

Piper Alpha Platform

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will issue an instruction, under the terms of the Petroleum Act 1987, to the owners of the Piper Alpha platform to remove completely from the seabed all that remains of the platform.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No. My right hon. Friend is considering an abandonment programme for Piper Alpha which has been called for and submitted under section 4 of the Petroleum Act 1987.

Wave Power

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on future funding by his Department to support the wide tank at Edinburgh university for wave energy reseach.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Any proposal from Edinburgh university will be considered on its merits.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when the report and conclusions submitted in 1983 by Rendel Palmer and Tritton concerning the viability of the Salter's Duck wave power project were first submitted in any form to his Department; what alterations in that report or its conclusions were made or recommended by his officials; what representations he has received from Mr. Gordon Senior on the alteration of the report as submitted by him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The report by Rendel, Palmer and Tritton was submitted to the Department in 1983.

Rendel, Palmer and Tritton were contracted to act as independent assessors for all wave energy devices and their conclusions were reached independently based on experience and engineering knowledge. The Department is aware of Mr. Gordon Senior's views on the matter.

West Burton B Power Station

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to announce the final approval for West Burton B coal-fired power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend is considering the representations he has received about the CEGB's application for consent to construct this station. However, I understand that discussions are also continuing between the relevant local planning authorities and the CEGB about some matters concerning the construction and operation of the station. My right hon. Friend will wish to take account of the outcome of these discussions in reaching any decisions on the application.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Parking Fines

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish up-to-date figures recording the number of unpaid parking fines incurred by each diplomatic mission in the first six months of the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested by my hon. Friend is given in the table. The table also includes those international organisations which have incurred unpaid fines. The figures may be reduced by late payment.

The total of 5,838 for the first six months of 1988 is a welcome reduction of 42 per cent. over the same period of 1987. It compares with nearly 67,000 in the first six months of 1984 before publication of the 1985 White Paper. The top 10 missions account for 35 per cent. of the total. We shall be underlining our concern to the heads of these missions with a view of achieving further reductions.

Diplomatic Mission	*January-June 1988*	*January-June 1987*
Egypt	368	426
Soviet Union	324	271
Poland	213	150
Sudan	190	165
Iraq	173	401
UAE	165	326
Spain	158	271
Saudi Arabia	157	542
Cameroon	154	184
Cote d'Ivoire	146	190
Greece	141	132
Malaysia	138	201
China	130	245
Brunei	130	79
Turkey	123	103
Pakistan	120	251
Israel	116	134
Tunisia	113	177
Qatar	104	379
Sierra Leone	101	99
Morocco	100	186
Thailand	93	169
Jordan	85	155
Japan	84	85
Zaire	82	79
Korea	78	88
France	69	576
Nigeria	67	103
Germany (Federal Republic)	66	74
Portugal	62	119
Peru	59	83
Algeria	57	95
Venezuela	57	52
Germany (Democratic Republic)	56	90
Italy	53	187
Ghana	52	155
Tanzania	51	79
Ethiopia	49	48
Yugoslavia	49	51
Bulgaria	47	40
Brazil	42	94
Bangladesh	40	43
India	40	104
Senegal	39	47
Finland	38	52
Sweden	38	30
Kenya	36	99
Norway	36	28
Canada	33	94
Cyprus	32	55
Romania	30	35
Jamaica	29	41
Barbados	28	121
Gambia	28	0
Ecuador	27	15
Liberia	26	42
PDRY	26	31
Belgium	25	36
Iran	24	165
Zambia	24	73
Cuba	23	16
Lebanon	23	30
Hungary	22	38
Burma	21	59
Ireland	21	46
Uruguay	21	47
Fiji	20	23
Zimbabwe	20	156
Oman	19	436
Indonesia	18	55
Malawi	17	3
Somalia	17	21
Czechoslovakia	16	22
Gabon	16	47
Guyana	16	17
Mauritius	16	11

Diplomatic Mission	January-June 1988	January-June 1987
USA	15	62
Paraguay	14	28
Angola	13	4
YAR	13	32
Mexico	12	30
Iceland	11	28
Kuwait	11	61
Nicaragua	10	5
Uganda	10	36
Antigua and Barbuda	9	5
Lesotho	9	4
Philippines	9	29
Colombia	8	13
Seychelles	8	2
Botswana	7	13
Honduras	7	5
Chile	7	50
Panama	7	13
Trinidad and Tobago	7	13
Afghanistan	6	6
Austria	6	13
Netherlands	6	3
Sri Lanka	6	6
Guatemala	5	0
Nepal	5	6
Togo	4	10
Costa Rica	3	20
Dominica	3	1
Luxembourg	3	2
Switzerland	3	4
Australia	2	0
Bahamas	2	6
Bahrain	2	3
Eastern Caribbean	2	6
Mongolia	2	0
Vietnam	2	2
Bolivia	1	3
Denmark	1	0
El Salvador	1	0
South Africa	1	16
Grenada	0	0
Holy See	0	0
Malta	0	0
New Zealand	0	0
Papua New Guinea	0	0
Singapore	0	4
Swaziland	0	3
Tonga	0	0
International organisations		
WEU	32	6
Commonwealth Sec	15	65
Cocoa	9	1
IMO	2	5
United Nations	0	0
EEC	0	0
Coffee	0	0
Immarsat	0	0
Sugar	0	0
Totals	5,838	10,096

NORTHERN IRELAND

Disabled Persons

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he plans to review provisions for employment of disabled persons in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The Department of Economic Development is at present reviewing provisions for the employment of disabled persons in Northern Ireland and as part of this review is participating in a working group with the Northern Ireland Council on Disability. Consideration will also be given to the application in Northern Ireland of any changes which emanate from the review which is currently being undertaken by the Department of Employment in Great Britain.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action has been taken to date to ensure that employers provide work opportunities for the quota of disabled persons.

Mr. Viggers: Under existing legislation, employers with a work force of 20 or more people are required to employ a quota of 3 per cent. of registered disabled people. Only when a firm can satisfy the Department of Economic Development that there is no suitable registered disabled person available is a permit issued allowing the firm to employ a non-disabled worker. In their annual directors' report, all companies employing an average of more than 250 people must include a statement describing their employment policy towards the disabled in the previous financial year. A range of financial schemes are also available to assist employers in training and employing disabled people.

Disablement resettlement officers in the Department of Economic Development maintain close contact with employers to provide advice and encourage the employment of disabled people.

Divis Flats

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made with the demolition of Divis flats in West Belfast and the development of alternative housing provision for the people of Divis.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive who has advised me that since 1984 six of the original 12 deck-access blocks have been demolished in a phased programme of redevelopment, scheduled to take place over a seven to 10-year period. Work on a first phase of 95 new dwellings is expected to start in March 1989.

Sub-standard Houses

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has to bring sub-standard houses in Northern Ireland up to an acceptable standard.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* This is a matter for the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive who has advised me that the Housing Executive proposes to carry out capital improvements principally in relation to space standards, kitchens and heating in 76,500 dwellings in its own stock over a 10-year period. The improvement and repair of qualifying dwellings in the private sector will continue to be assisted by grants under the Housing Executive's renovation grants scheme.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many sub-standard houses owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are situated in the constituency of Newry and Armagh.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* This is a matter for the chairman of the Northern Ireland

Housing Executive who has advised me that the Housing Executive owns 3,340 houses in the constituency of Newry and Armagh which have features below its current new-build standards, principally space, kitchens or heating.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many sub-standard houses owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are situated in rural areas and how many in urban areas.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* This is a matter for the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, who has advised me that the Housing Executive owns 19,120 and 57,380 houses in rural and urban areas respectively which have features below its current new-build standards principally space, kitchens or heating.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many sub-standard houses are owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in the whole of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* This is a matter for the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive who has advised me that the Housing Executive owns 76,500 houses in Northern Ireland which have features below its current new-build standards principally space, kitchens or heating.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many houses owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive which were sub-standard have been brought up to standard in the period between 1 January 1980 and 1 January 1988.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1988]*: This is a matter for the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive who has advised me that improvements were carried out to 58,222 dwellings over the period.

Aid and Job Creation Schemes

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each year since 1982, the total level of Government financial assistance to private industries in the constituency of Newry and Armagh under aid and job creation schemes; and what is his estimate of the total number of jobs created by this assistance.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 1 November 1988]*: The following is the amount of employment-related assistance given by the industrial development agencies in each of the financial years 1982-83 to 1987-88. The statistics for the Industrial Development Board are based on the constituency of Newry and Armagh; those for the Local Enterprise Development Unit are compiled on a local authority basis only and therefore cover the district council areas of Armagh and Newry and Mourne.

	IDB (£'000)	*LEDU (£'000)*
1982-83	160	603
1983-84	1,703	1,208
1984-85	4,013	2,378
1985-86	2,399	2,025
1986-87	2,274	1,678
1987-88	7,914	2,012

Firms in receipt of this assistance have contracted to provide or safeguard the following number of jobs:

	No. of jobs
1982-83	310
1983-84	1,003
1984-85	929
1985-86	557
1986-87	982
1987-88	1,000

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Recycled Stationery

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has received updated information from Her Majesty's Stationery Office on the use of recycled stationery within the House of Commons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: Yes. The Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee reconsidered the possible use of recycled paper in February this year. After discussions with HMSO, the Sub-Committee concluded that paper containing recycled material was unsuitable for use as House of Commons stationery and that the present quality of writing paper and envelopes should be maintained.

Public Bills (Statistics)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will produce a table showing for each Bill introduced in this Parliament the time taken at *(a)* Second Reading, *(b)* Committee stage, in the House of Commons, *(c)* Report stage, *(d)* Third Reading, *(e)* where applicable, guillotine, *(f)* Lords amendments and *(g)* in total.

Mr. Wakeham: A table showing the information requested for each Bill introduced in this Parliament could be provided only with disproportionate cost. The information for Government Bills only, up to and including 1 November 1988, is as follows:

Bill	*(a) Second Reading* Hours Mins	*(b) Committee* Hours Mins	*(c) Report* Hours Mins	*(d) Third Reading* Hours Mins	*(e) Allocation of time* Hours Mins	*(f) Lords Amendments* Hours Mins	*(g) Total* Hours Mins
Duchy of Lancaster Bill	0.01	0.29	1.22	—	—	—	1.52
Local Government	5.29	108.00	12.13	0.25	—	9.07	135.14
Dartford Thurrock Crossing Bill[1]	2.05	0.50	3.21	—	—	0.03	6.19
Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill	4.31	65.20	5.46	0.18	—	0.14	—76.09
Scottish Development Agency Bill[2]	10.11	1.46	—	0.35	—	—	12.32

Bill	(a) Second Reading Hours Mins	(b) Committee Hours Mins	(c) Report Hours Mins	(d) Third Reading Hours Mins	(e) Allocation of time Hours Mins	(f) Lords Amendments Hours Mins	(g) Total Hours Mins
Rate Support Grants	6.44	—	—	—	—	—	6.44
Legal Aid Bill [Lords][1]	3.30	11.18	1.46	—	—	—	10.34
Civil Evidence (Scotland) [Lords][2]	3.00	8.00	—	0.46	—	—	11.46
Road Traffic Bills [Lords][6]	0.05	—	—	—	—	—	0.05
Social Security	6.34	43.30	11.31	0.48	3.19	3.03	69.15
Employment	4.34	55.24	12.41	0.49	—	5.31	78.59
Urban Development Corporations (Financial Limits)	6.13	1.40	1.25	0.47	—	—	10.05
Licencing[1]	5.37	22.43	6.24	—	—	3.15	37.59
Immigration	6.02	50.33	5.05	0.24	—	0.47	62.51
Multilateral Investment Guarantee	2.40	0.20	—	0.26	—	—	3 26
Housing[1]	8.20	102.23	56.45	—	—	—	167.28
Education Reform	6.37	151.15	22.30	2.16	5.25	14.29	184.30
Health and Medicines[1]	6.15	63.30	12.18	—	—	9.25	91.28
Local Government Finance	12.07	128.52	29.08	1.14	4.28	7.09	182.58
Housing (Scotland)[1]	5.32	73.27	10.45	—	—	6.21	96.05
Criminal Justice [Lords]	6.23	79.07	21.28	7.45	—	—	114.43
Firearms (Amendment)[1]	6.39	25.32	14.04	—	1.38	—	47.53
Regional Development Grants (Termination)[2]	5.43	17.03	—	3.02	—	—	25.48
Merchant Shipping [Lords][1]	3.53	16·32	5.30	—	—	—	25.55
Farm Land and Rural Development [Lords][2]	3.18	11.04	—	1.42	—	—	16.04
British Steel	5.27	57.20	10.56	2.05	—	—	75.48
School Boards (Scotland)[1]	6.14	41.00	5.33	—	—	—	52.47
Finance (No. 2)	6.12	20.49	8.58	4.38	—	—	40.37
Copyright Designs and Patents [Lords][1]	5.25	50.00	11.02	—	—	—	66.27
Arms Control and Disarmament[3] (Privileges and Immunities) Bill	5·12	9·04	—	2·44	—	—	17·00
Foreign Marriages (Amendment)[3] Bill	0.13	—	—	—	—	—	0.13
Matrimonial proceedings[5]	0.16	—	—	—	—	—	0.16
Committee of the Whole House							
Finance Bill	6.41	18.25	—	—	—	—	25.06
British Shipbuilders (Borrowing Powers)[3]	2.25	0.39	—	—	—	—	3.04
Coroners Bill [Lords][4]	0.04	—	—	—	—	—	0.04
Court of Session Bill [Lords][3]	0.13	0.17	—	—	—	—	0.30
European Communities (Finance) Bill	5.57	6.24	3.33	—	—	—	15.59
Electricity (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Bill[3]	0.01	3.15	—				3.16
Income and Corporation Taxes [Lords][3]	0.04	0.24	—	—	—	—	0.28
Welsh Development Agency[3]	2.53	1.51	—	—	—	—	4.44

[1] Report Stage includes Third Reading
[2] Third Reading includes Report
[3] Committee Stage includes Report and Third Reading
[4] Bill passed through all stages in one day
[5] Remaining stages agreed without debate or division
[6] Includes Road Traffic Bill; Road Traffic (Consequential Provisions) Bill and Road Traffic (Offenders) Bill.

PRIME MINISTER

Inflation

Q24. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to announce a target for zero inflation within the lifetime of the current Parliament.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

The Government's policy of gradually reducing inflation over a period of years with the ultimate objective of price stability is set out in the medium-term financial strategy, published in the Financial Statement and Budget Report.

West Riding of Yorkshire

Q69. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next intends to pay an official visit to the west riding of Yorkshire.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.
My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so.

Departmental Dispersal

Q120. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if the speech on Government Department dispersal by the Secretary of State for Scotland at the Conservative party conference represents Government policy.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.
The lecture delivered by the Secretary of State for Scotland was an assessment of the desirability of relocation of Government Departments out of London. He also referred to the increasing trend for businesses to relocate their enterprises out of the south-east. Successive Governments have already successfully relocated a major part of the ODA to East Kilbride, the Royal Mint to Wales, the Forestry Commission to Edinburgh, and part of the DSS to Newcastle.

Wales

Q157. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next plans to make an official visit to Wales.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.
My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 November.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 November.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 November.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 November.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 November.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 November.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 November.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.
My right hon. Friend is on an official visit to Poland.

"The Wilson Plot"

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if, in the light of the book, "The Wilson Plot" by David Leigh, she will set up a judicial inquiry into allegations that members of the security services acted improperly towards the Government in the 1970s.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply. No.

President Gorbachev

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she has invited President Gorbachev to the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.
My right hon. Friend invited Mr. Gorbachev to pay an official visit to the United Kingdom during her own visit to the Soviet Union in 1987. We look forward to hearing when he would like to come.

Human Rights

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will discuss next year with the newly-elected President of the United States of America what steps can be actively taken to ensure that basic human rights are enjoyed in all countries which have direct or indirect military pacts or links with the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.
Human rights questions are frequently discussed in our contacts with the United States Administration.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what preconditions have been established by Her Majesty's Government for their participation at any conference on human rights to be held in the Soviet Union.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.
We have made clear that we shall consider attending such a conference only when the Soviet Union has actually implemented its Helsinki commitments.

Solidarity

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what representations she intends to make to the leaders of Solidarity regarding trade union rights when she visits Poland.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.
My right hon. Friend will tell them of her support for free and independent trades unions.

Government Advertising

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list all advertising campaigns commissioned by the Government since 1980 which involved, in whole or in part, the use of television advertising.

Mr. Lawson: I have been asked to reply.
Information on publicity, including television advertising, is not held centrally except where the expenditure incurred was through the Central Office of Information and can be supplied only at disproportionate cost.
Details of departmental expenditure on publicity for the financial years 1979-80 to 1987-88 were supplied by Ministers in response to 55 questions from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and published in the *Official Report*, November-December 1986, July 1987 and November 1987-January 1988.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Repair and Maintenance

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to ensure that sufficient capital funds are available to enable inner London boroughs to bring schools up to adequate repair and maintenance standards.

Mr. Butcher: The following table shows for the financial year 1987-88 ILEA's budget for repairs, alterations and maintenance to its primary and secondary schools, as compared with outer London boroughs, other metropolitan authorities, and the average for England.

£ per pupil (FTE)

	Primary	*Secondary*
ILEA	99·4	133·3
Outer London boroughs	59·6	81·3
Other Metropolitan Authorities	46·8	64·7
England	53·3	71·0

Source: CIPFA Education Statistics 1987-88 Estimates.

These figures show that ILEA spends on a per pupil basis more than half as much again as the outer London boroughs, which in turn spend more than the national average, and significantly more than other metropolitan authorities in England. A very similar relationship prevailed in each of the three previous years.

School leavers

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of school leavers in the Langbaurgh division on leaving school in each of the past 10 years *(a)* went into work, *(b)* entered a training scheme, *(c)* went on to higher or further education, *(d)* became unemployed and *(e)* joined Her Majesty's forces.

Mr. Butcher: Information in the form requested is not available to my Department.

Dyslexia

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will urgently instruct his Department to carry out research into dyslexia and its effect on children.

Mr. Butcher: A considerable level of research into this subject has already been undertaken. Ministers are bound to consider conflicting priorities across the whole range of children with learning difficulties when considering research proposals.

Polytechnics

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his intentions with regard to regulations governing revenue and capital expenditure by incorporated polytechnics.

Mr. Jackson: Revenue and capital expenditure by incorporated polytechnics will be covered, as appropriate, in the financial memoranda which the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC) will conclude with each institution in the polytechnics and colleges funding sector. The PCFC will conclude such memoranda having regard to what is required of it in the financial memorandum governing relations between the council and the Department. The Department is currently consulting interested parties, including the PCFC itself and bodies representative of institutions, about the content of that memorandum.

University Technicians (Pay)

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to implement the recommendations of the independent pay study published in 1987 as part of the 1986 pay settlement for technicians in universities.

Mr. Jackson: The Government are not involved in the pay negotiations of university technicians. It is for universities to negotiate a settlement from within their resources in the light of their overall priorities and having regard to the need to recruit and retain staff of appropriate quality. Comparability with other groups cannot be the main criterion.

Higher Education

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what consideration is being given to setting a ceiling on the overall numbers of students in higher education that Her Majesty's Government are prepared to fund, independently of the level of demand;

(2) what proposals he has regarding the public funding of tuition in higher education institutions;

(3) what plans there are to change the current mechanism of higher education institutional funding;

(4) what plans he has to change the system of higher education funding to one of funding each higher education institution by a system based on the allocation of vouchers to students on the basis of their examination performance;

(5) what plans he has to introduce a system of higher education funding whereby public funding of each particular institution is determined by the pattern of student preference.

Mr. Jackson: There is a vigorous debate in progress on future methods of funding higher education institutions. My right hon. Friend has made clear that we want this debate to mature much further yet. He has also given clear assurances that the Government will not reach a particular view—let alone follow that up with concrete action—without full discussion with the new higher education funding councils and with the leaders of the universities, polytechnics and colleges.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to change the basis of funding of student places in higher education from the modified form of the Robbins principle set out in Cmnd. 9524.

Mr. Jackson: None.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to separate the functions of teaching and research in higher education institutions, for the purposes of determining funding.

Mr. Jackson: As indicated in my right hon. Friend's letter of 31 October giving guidance to the Universities Funding Council, the Government intend that funding for

research in universities should be more clearly distinguished from funding for teaching. Various practical questions have to be settled, in consultation with all those concerned, before such a scheme could be fully implemented, and we are actively pursuing these.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he proposes to restrict the number of publicly-funded places available in higher education institutions for students studying courses leading to qualifications as *(a)* medical doctors, *(b)* dentists, *(c)* veterinary surgeons and *(d)* teachers.

Mr. Jackson: Provision in these areas will continue to reflect expected demand for such graduates.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he has any proposals to encourage higher education institutions to recruit additional home students on a private fee-paying basis;

(2) what is his policy in respect of the public funding of tuition fees in higher education.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has said that he wishes to consider a shift from block grant to fees in the public funding of higher education. The Government have no proposal to require students in receipt of mandatory awards to meet part of their tuition fees. Institutions do not need permission to charge tuition fees higher than those met under the mandatory awards arrangements.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what plans he has to secure increased access to higher education by students without the appropriate qualifications;

(2) what plans he has to encourage higher education institutions to offer places to students without the appropriate formal qualifications.

Mr. Jackson: There is general agreement that higher education should be open to more students with non-traditional qualifications. The Government are funding various related research projects. Actual recruitment of such students is dependent on the policies and decisions of individual institutions.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase the share of gross domestic product directed to the purpose of higher education funding.

Mr. Jackson: Public expenditure on higher education in this country already accounts for a larger proportion of GDP than in our major West European partners, and in Japan. This position is likely to be sustained by the public expenditure settlement announced by my right hon. Friend on 1 November.

School Sporting Activities (Accidents)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements are made for the recording of accidents to school children while engaged in sporting activities as part of the school curriculum.

Mr. Butcher: Schools, as places of employment, are covered by the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR) and are thereby required to provide the Health and Safety Executive with written details of specified major injuries sustained by pupils (as well as employees) for whose activities they are responsible within seven days of an accident occurring.

The regulations are made under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number of accidents occurring to school children while engaged in sporting activities as part of the school curriculum for the last five years for which information is available.

Mr. Butcher: Health and Safety Executive figures show that, in the 12 months from April 1986 to March 1987, one fatality and 4,576 major injuries occurred involving school children while engaged in supervised sporting activities, though not necessarily as part of the school curriculum. Most of the injuries were fractures. Figures for earlier years are not available.

First Aid

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provision is made for teaching first aid to schoolteachers who have the responsibility for supervising schoolchildren engaged in sporting activities as part of the school curriculum.

Mr. Butcher: My Department's criteria for courses of initial teacher training contain no specific requirement for training for the first aid of pupils who may be injured while taking part in school sports. Our long-standing advice to local education authorities is, however, that all teachers should have a basic working knowledge of first aid and that a proportion of the teaching staff in every school should hold a valid first-aid certificate following an approved course of training.

Universities Funding Committee

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the membership and constitution of the Scottish committee of the Universities Funding Committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The composition and membership of the UFC's statutory Scottish committee are for the council itself to determine, though my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be writing to it with guidance on these matters.

Under-fives

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table ranking education authorities by the number of pre-school places they provide per 1,000 of the under-five population.

Mr. Butcher: Information on the number of places is not collected centrally. The number of pupils under five on roll in maintained nursery and primary schools per 1,000 of the estimated three and four-year-old population for each local education authority in England in January 1988, ranked in order, is given in the following table.

Pupils aged under five in maintained nursery and primary schools January 1988

Local education authority	*Number per 1,000 of the population aged 3 and 4*
Walsall	911
Salford	856
North Tyneside	837
Liverpool	830
South Tyneside	827
Sandwell	790
Tameside	750
Manchester	747
Doncaster	737
Cleveland	730
Wolverhampton	722
Newcastle upon Tyne	697
Wakefield	696
Knowsley	693
Hounslow	692
Bolton	683
Haringey	680
Durham	678
Sunderland	675
Barnsley	669
Oldham	652
Birmingham	651
Gateshead	649
Solihull	630
Barking and Dagenham	629
Rochdale	624
St. Helens	621
Sheffield	616
Calderdale	612
Ealing	609
Sefton	607
Newham	593
Brent	592
Wigan	589
Kirklees	587
Merton	587
Rotherham	565
Leeds	560
Bury	554
Northumberland	551
Coventry	551
Bradford	549
Nottinghamshire	545
Cumbria	544
Barnet	541
Kingston upon Thames	541
Derbyshire	532
Cleveland	528
Humberside	528
Waltham Forest	526
Inner London	510
Enfield	510
Northamptonshire	505
Warwickshire	502
Wirral	501
Hillingdon	498
Lancashire	483
Hertfordshire	473
Dudley	470
Avon	460
Stockport	449
Richmond upon Thames	445
Cornwall[1]	441
Staffordshire	440
Harrow	437
North Yorkshire	435
Cambridgeshire	412
Isle of Wight	398
East Sussex	370
Havering	365
Leicestershire	361
Croydon	353
Bedfordshire	352
Dorset	350
Shropshire	333
Somerset	329
Gloucestershire	314
Norfolk	302
Suffolk	285
Lincolnshire	276
Bexley	264
Devon	256
Berkshire	256
Redbridge	243
Surrey	232
Trafford	218
Essex	205
Sutton	204
Hampshire	201
Wiltshire	182
Buckinghamshire	177
Oxfordshire	164
Bromley	162
Hereford and Worcester	157
Kent	117
West Sussex	82

[1] includes Isles of Scilly.

Higher Education (Fees)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what steps the Government are planning to take to encourage higher education institutions to set up their own bursary funds to assist home students to pay any envisaged additional fees which may be charged to students;

(2) if there are plans to set aside funds from the UFC/PCFC allocations to provide a contribution to bursary funds which may be set up by higher education institutions to assist students to pay any envisaged additional fees which may be charged to those students;

(3) what regulatory obstacles exist to prevent higher education institutions from charging private fees to existing home students in addition to current, publicly funded, fees;

(4) what regulatory obstacles exist to prevent higher education institutions from charging fees to new homes students.

Mr. Jackson: While higher education institutions have long been able to charge holders of mandatory awards tuition fees higher than those met under the awards arrangements, it is not the practice to do so and the Government have no plans to require this. The question of bursary funds does not therefore arise.

Expenditure

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the Government's plans for expenditure on education and science over the next three years.

Mr. Kenneth Baker *[pursuant to his reply, 1 November 1988]:* Further to my announcement that I am allocating an extra £14 million for urgently needed equipment for basic science in 1988-89, and subject to parliamentary

approval, extra moneys will be provided in the current year to the research councils, the universities and the Royal Society as follows:

	£ million in 1988-89
AFRC	1·70
MRC	3·00
NERC	1·00
SERC	3·05
Royal Society	0·25
UGC	5·00
TOTAL	14·00

In making these allocations I have had particularly in mind the advice I received last May from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils on the equipment needs of the science base. Their detailed use will be for each body to decide, having regard to the overall purpose of providing equipment to support basic science. I understand that the research councils expect to use the money both in their own establishments and in the universities in such fields as the biological sciences, neurosciences, marine science and computing. The addition for the Royal Society should allow some further 70 to 80 equipment grants to be made to holders of the society's junior research appointments.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Rates

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the average cost per household for water rates in the current year.

Mr. Moynihan: The average cost per household for water rates (English water authorities) in the current year is £105·30.

Dogs

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to implement section 37 of the Local Government Act 1988 to use his powers by regulation to make provision for the establishment and administration of a dog registration scheme by local authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no such plans.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for consultation with local authorities or such other organisations to make provision for the establishment and administration of a dog registration scheme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None.

Lead-free Petrol

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by region the percentage of retail petrol outlets that are selling lead-free petrol; what further measures he intends to take to encourage its sale; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The percentage of petrol stations in the United Kingdom which sell unleaded petrol are as follows:

	per cent.
England and Wales	11·4
Scotland	12·3
Northern Ireland	7·4

Percentage figures are not available on a regional basis, but at 28 October 1988 the numbers of stations were:

	Number
Wales	96
Scotland	190
Northern Ireland	70
England:	
East Midlands	165
Eastern	256
Greater London	192
North West	222
Northern	68
South East	453
South West	221
West Midlands	161
Yorkshire and Humberside	168

The total number is growing rapidly.

The Government are firmly committed to unleaded petrol and are pursuing a number of initiatives to promote greater uptake of the fuel. However, the motor manufacturers and dealers and the oil companies and petrol retailers also have a part to play.

Measures to promote the changeover to unleaded petrol are co-ordinated by the unleaded petrol group, which I chair. The Government are currently participating fully in national lead-free petrol week organised by CLEAR (the Campaign for Lead-Free Air) to encourage greater public awareness about unleaded petrol. Further measures are under consideration.

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the makes and models of cars which are manufactured in Britain so as to run on lead-free petrol.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A complete list of all new cars, indicating whether or not they are capable of running on unleaded petrol, is contained in the Department of Transport's new car fuel consumption guide. A copy of the latest guide has been placed in the Library of the House.

Change of Use

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to announce the alteration in circular S1765/1987 of the General Development Order which accompanied the Use Class Order 1987 regarding the size limitation of space which may be switched from the general industrial and warehouse use class to business use without specific planning permission.

Mr. Chope: The Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 was laid before the House on 31 October and will come into effect on 5 December. It consolidates the 1977 GDO and subsequent amending orders, including SI 765 of 1987. It removes the floorspace limitation on change of use of a building from general industrial to business use. A floorspace limitation is retained for changes from business or general industrial use to use for storage and distribution, and from use for storage and distribution to business use.

Docklands

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the original, and what is the current, estimate for the cost of the docklands highway.

Mr. Trippier: The London Docklands development corporation's programme of major roads has a total estimated cost of £550 million at outturn prices. This includes all associated project costs for items such as land acquisition, replacement housing and noise alleviation works. The scope and content of the programme was finalised only recently, and therefore no comparable earlier estimate is available.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the recent letter to his Department from Eugene Barron, the London Docklands development corporation finance director, on the London Docklands development corporation financial position.

Mr. Trippier: No.

Housing (Consultation Documents)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make available a full summary of the responses, together with a list of those organisations which made responses broken down by those supporting and those disagreeing with the proposals in respect of the consultation papers entitled *(a)* "The Right to Buy: Legislative Proposals", *(b)* "Finance for Housing Associations", *(c)* "Housing Action Trusts: A Consultation Document", *(d)* "The Private Rented Sector", *(e)* "De-Regulation of the Private Rented Sector: Implications for Housing Benefit", *(f)* "Home Improvement Policy", *(g)* "Tenants' Choice", *(h)* "Houses in Multiple Occupation: Consultation Document", *(i)* "Tenants' Guarantee: Guidance for Registered Housing Associations", *(j)* "Tenants' Choice Landlords: Approval, Post-Approval and Revocation Procedures", *(k)* "The Future Funding of Housing Association Hostels and Special Needs Projects", *(l)* "Consultation Paper on New Town Transfer", *(m)* "Capital Expenditure and Finance: A Consultation Paper" and *(n)* "New Financial Regime for Local Authority Housing".

Mr. Ridley: No.

Aluminium

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when his Department last checked each of the water authorities to examine the levels of aluminium in water recorded by each authority;

(2) if he will make a statement on the process used by his Department to monitor levels of aluminium in water for each water authority.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department does not directly carry out monitoring or checking procedures on the levels of aluminium in drinking water supplied by water authorities. It is the responsibility of water authorities to monitor the aluminium levels in the drinking water they supply. This monitoring is carried out regularly in accordance with the requirements of the EC drinking water directive.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, with regard to the proposed water privatisation, he will take steps to ensure that a proportion of shares held in a particular region's water authority is retained by individuals and companies within that region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: No decisions have yet been taken on the details of the offer structure for water privatisation, but there are precedents for employee share offers, continuing employee share schemes and incentives for customers to apply for and hold shares.

Drinking Water (Lead Levels)

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department is working on the revision of lead standards in drinking water.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department continually keeps under review drinking water standards, including the lead standard, in the light of the latest medical advice.

House Prices

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average price of a house in Lancashire between July 1987 and June 1988.

Mr. Trippier: The figures are not available in the form requested. Average prices in the north-west for the four quarters between July 1987 and June 1988 are:

	£
1987	
Q3	30,106
Q4	30,004
1988	
Q1	30,685
Q2	32,914

Unfit Houses

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities by area in which 4·5 per cent. or more of the private sector housing stock is considered unfit.

Mr. Trippier: The following 74 English housing authorities have reported in their 1988 housing investment programme returns that 4·5 per cent. or more of the private sector (owner-occupied and private rented) housing stock in their areas at 1 April 1988 was unfit:

Allerdale
Barnsley
Birmingham
Blackburn
Bolsover
Bolton
Boston
Bradford
Brent
Brighton
Bristol
Burnley
Bury
Camden
Caradon
Chorley
Cleethorpes
Dudley
Durham
Ealing
East Hertfordshire
Fenland
Gateshead
Gedling
Great Grimsby
Hackney
Hammersmith and Fulham
Haringey
Hastings
Hillingdon
Hyndburn
Islington
Kensington and Chelsea
Kingston upon Hull
Lambeth
Leeds

Leicester
Lewisham
Macclesfield
Maidstone
Malvern Hills
Mendip
Mid Suffolk
Newcastle upon Tyne
Newham
Oswestry
Oxford
Pendle
Penwith
Peterborough
Plymouth
Preston
Reading
Richmond upon Thames
Rochdale
Rossendale
Rugby
Salford
Sandwell
South Herefordshire
Southwark
St. Helens
Stoke-on-Trent
Sutton
Tameside
Taunton Deane
Thurrock
Torridge
Tower Hamlets
Walsall
Waltham Forest
Wandsworth
West Wiltshire
Wolverhampton

Twenty-one authorities have not provided estimates.

Homelessness

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the report currently in his Department's hands by Miss Pat Niner, of Birmingham university, on homelessness and local authority housing will *(a)* be sent to the printer and *(b)* be released; and how much the report cost his Department.

Mr. Trippier: The report held by my Department is a draft. A final version which takes account of comments of participating local authorities and relevant Government Departments is currently being discussed with the author Miss Pat Niner. A precise publication date cannot therefore be given at this stage but it is hoped that it will be as soon as possible. The cost of the research on which the report is based is approximately £25,000.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the criteria adopted by his Department in selecting each of the housing action trusts so far designated.

Mr. Trippier: No housing action trusts have yet been designated. My hon. Friend the then Minister for Housing and Planning announced on 11 July proposals to set up housing action trusts in six areas. Among the matters to which the Secretary of State may have regard in deciding whether to include a particular area of land in an order designating a housing action trust area are those listed in clause 60 of the Housing Bill.

Mr. Tony Banks To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the amounts spent on maintenance and refurbishment by the local authorities in each of the estates designated a housing action trust in each of the past three years.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of today to his earlier question. It is for local authorities to publish information about individual estates.

Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the level of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in London's drinking water.

Mr. Moynihan: We are aware that drinking water samples taken within the London area have occasionally exceeded the standard set for polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) in the EC drinking water directive. Thames water is investigating. Our medical advisers consider that there is unlikely to be any significant health risk from drinking water which occasionaly exceeds the standards.

Council House Sales

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish figures showing numbers of council houses sold and subsequently repossessed both in numercial terms and as a proportion of all council houses sold for each of the years 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not available.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the current exceptions requiring local authorities to exercise the right to buy for their tenants.

Mr. Trippier: Schedule 5 to the Housing Act 1985, as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 1986, sets out exceptions to the right to buy. In addition, tenants whose tenancies are not secure by reason of the exceptions to security of tenure in schedule 1 to the Act will not have the right to buy.

Empty Properties

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities which estimated 5·1 per cent. or more of the private sector housing stock in their areas as being vacant at 1 April.

Mr. Trippier: The following 57 English housing authorities have estimated, in their housing investment programme returns, that 5·1 per cent. or more of the private sector housing stock (owner-occupied and private rented) in their areas was empty at 1 April 1988.

Allerdale
Babergh
Blackburn
Boothferry
Breckland
Brent
Brighton
Burnley
Calderdale
Camden
Carlisle
Cheltenham
Copeland
Cotswold
Derby
Derwentside
East Lindsey
East Staffordshire
Greenwich
Hackney
Halton
Hammersmith and Fulham
Haringey
Hastings
Holderness
Hove
Hyndburn
Islington
Kennet
Kensington and Chelsea
Kingston upon Hull
Lambeth
Leicester
Lewisham
Liverpool
New Forest
North West Leicestershire
Norwich
Nottingham
Oswestry
Pendle
Peterborough
Preston
Richmond upon Thames
Rossendale
South Derbyshire
South Herefordshire
South Kesteven
South Shropshire
Southend-on-Sea
Southwark
Stoke-on-Trent
Surrey Heath
Tower Hamlets
West Lindsey
Westminster
Winchester

Sixty-Eight authorities have not provided estimates.

Domestic Rates

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the level of average domestic rates in 1987-88 prices for each year between 1967-68 and the latest date available.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* The table requested is as shown:

Average domestic rate bill[1] England—1987-88 prices[3]

Year	£
1967-68	267
1968-69	261
1969-70	259
1970-71	259
1971-72	273
1972-73	289
1973-74	290
[2]1974-75	290
1975-76	292
1976-77	268
1977-78	265
1978-79	270
1979-80	291
1980-81	307
1981-82	336
1982-83	354
1983-84	366
1984-85	371
1985-86	377
1986-87	418
1987-88	429
1988-89	451

[1] Derived from average domestic rate poundages levied by local authorities and average domestic rateable values per hereditament.
[2] Due to local government reorganisation, figures from 1974-75 exclude water and sewerage.
[3] Figures are revalued using the retail prices index at April.

Local Government Legislation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all legislation introduced since 1979 that has had a direct application to local government.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 28 October 1988]:* A considerable number of public general Acts, not all of them the responsibility of the Department of the Environment, have a direct application to local government. A list of the major Acts since 1979 is as set out:

1979
- Education Act (c. 49)
- Weights and Measures Act (c. 45)

1980
- Education Act (c. 20)
- Highways Act (c. 66)
- Housing Act (c. 51)
- Local Government Planning and Land Act (c. 65)

1981
- Disabled Persons Act (c. 43)
- Education Act (c. 60)
- Local Government and Planning (Amendment) Act (c. 41)
- Town and Country Planning (Minerals) Act (c. 36)
- Wildlife and Countryside Act (c. 69)
- Zoo Licensing Act (c. 37)

1982
- Children's Homes Act (c. 20)
- Derelict Land Act (c. 42)
- Local Government Finance Act (c. 32)
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (c. 30)
- Social Security and Housing Benefits Act (c. 24)

1983
- Local Authority (Expenditure Powers) Act (c. 52)
- Water Act (c. 23)

1984
- Cycle Tracks Act (c. 38)
- Education (Grants and Awards) Act (c. 11)
- Housing and Building Control Act (c. 29)
- Housing Defects Act (c. 50)
- Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act (c. 53)
- London Regional Transport Act (c. 32)
- Rates Act (c. 33)

1985
- Further Education Act (c. 47)
- Local Government (Access to Information) Act (c. 43)
- Local Government Act (c. 51)
- Mineral Workings Act (c. 12)
- Social Security Act (c. 53)
- Transport Act (c. 67)

1986
- Airports Act (c.31)
- Education Act (c.40)
- Education (Amendment) Act (c.1)
- Housing and Planning Act (c.63)
- Local Government Act (c.10)
- Rate Support Grant Act (c.54)
- Road Traffic Regulation (Parking) Act (c.27)

1987
- Access to Personal Files Act (c.37)
- Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act (c.27)
- Local Government Act (c.44)
- Local Government Finance Act (c.6)
- Rate Support Grants Act (c.5)
- Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act (c.1)

1988
- Education Reforms Act (c.40)
- Local Government Act (c.9)
- Local Government Finance Act (c.41)

Note: Consolidation Acts and Scottish Acts are not included in the above list.

Land Registry

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make the contents of the Land Registry available for inspection by members of the public.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

The Land Registration Act 1988 gives the public the right to inspect the register. The Act is likely to come into force in 1990 when the necessary preparations have been made.

DEFENCE

HMS Penelope and Southampton

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects that the frigate Penelope and the destroyer Southampton will be ready for service at sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: HMS Penelope is currently being repaired in Southampton by Thew Engineering Ltd. which won the contract after competition, and is expected to return to active service in the early part of 1989. HMS Southampton is due to return from the Gulf shortly. No decisions have yet been taken on her repair, but the work

may be combined with a scheduled refit. It is not therefore possible at this stage to forecast when she will be ready for sea.

Norton Manor Camp, Taunton

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to modernise the barracks of Norton Manor camp, Taunton.

Mr. Freeman: A redevelopment study of Norton Manor camp is currently in progress and is expected to be completed in mid-1989. This study will produce a development plan for the establishment which will include proposals to modernise its facilities where necessary.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the capital expenditure at Norton Manor camp, Taunton, and the purposes for which it was spent in the last five years for which information is available.

Mr. Freeman: Capital expenditure on works services at Norton Manor camp approved over the last five years has been as follows:

Financial year	*Expenditure* £
1983-84	238,010
1984-85	58,600
1985-86	147,866
1986-87	374,483
1987-88	60,487

The main purposes for this expenditure has been to maintain and improve the living/recreational accommodation and working areas within the camp, which is of world war II vintage, to meet the needs of an operational Commando unit.

Departmental Services

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was earned by his Department during the last financial year from services provided to the private sector.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I regret that the information is not held in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. For accounting purposes, receipts from the private sector are not necessarily distinguished from receipts from other sources, but in 1987-88 receipts received centrally from United Kingdom non-Exchequer bodies amounted to some £280 million, covering both sales and services.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what Departmental facilities have been made available for private hire during the past 12 months.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I regret the information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost since business is conducted and charges are raised locally, and there is no central collection of detailed data.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how charges are calculated for the use of military personnel or equipment by private commercial hirers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In accordance with Treasury guidelines, charges are normally set to recover the full cost of any assistance provided. Charges may only be reduced or waived in certain well-defined circumstances, such as search and rescue and certain assistance to other Government Departments or the police.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of the occasions during the past 12 months when serving military personnel were hired by individuals and companies in connection with private and commercial activities.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I regret that the information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost since business is conducted and charges are raised locally, and there is no central collection of detailed data.

Departmental Property

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total value of property disposed of by his Department in the financial year 1987-88; and what is the current estimate of likely disposals in the financial year 1988-89.

Mr. Freeman: Receipts from property sales in the financial year 1987-88 totalled £77 million. The current estimate for receipts in 1988-89 is £148 million.

Private Security Companies

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was spent by his Department on services provided by private security companies in the last financial year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend, the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement on 13 January at column 327. No further information is currently available.

Conservative Party Conference

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for how long HMS Nurton was stationed off Brighton in connection with the 1988 Conservative party conference; and what were her duties.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: HMS Nurton was stationed off Brighton from 1600 hours on 10 October until 1500 hours on 14 October. Her task was to provide a visable offshore presence and to co-ordinate the activities of other maritime forces if required.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Marines were involved in duties in each of the three rigid inflatable boats assisting the police in patrolling inshore waters at Brighton in connection with the 1988 Conservative party conference.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Of the three boats originally provided, two were in fact used and each of these was manned by two Royal Marines. Two Royal Marines were also provided as reliefs.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at which Conservative party conferences since 1980 members of the armed services have been involved in security work.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Members of the armed forces have responded to police requests for assistance with security duties connected with Conservative party conferences in each year since 1980.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any members of the armed forces were involved in duties associated with the 1988 conferences of any political parties other than the Conservative party.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes. Following requests from the Lancashire constabulary, some military personnel assisted the police with security duties in connection with the 1988 Labour party conference.

HMS Nurton

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what duties have been undertaken by HMS Nurton in the past 12 months and where.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the past 12 months HMS Nurton has spent 29 weeks on exercises, training and operational tasks, 12 weeks undergoing maintenance, and 11 weeks either on visits or at her base port. Apart from two short visits to Scandinavia, HMS Nurton spent the period in home waters.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the operational cost of HMS Nurton in each year for which records are available.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: With the exception of financial year 1983-84, when the ship was in refit, operating costs for HMS Nurton have averaged £2 million per annum over financial years 1982-83 to 1987-88.

Mr. Topy Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the normal operating complement of HMS Nurton.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Thirty-nine officers and ratings.

RAF Exercise (Cost)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost involved in the circumnavigation of the world by the Royal Air Force TriStar tanker of 216 Squadron and the four Tornado F3 aircraft of 29 Squadron; and what was the purpose of the exercise.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I believe that the hon. Member is referring to a sequential series of deployments earlier this year which included:

(a) UK (RAF and RN) participation in the integrated air defence system air defence Exercise Lima Bersatu, centred on Malaysia, with other members of the five power defence arrangements;

(b) the first demonstration tour by Tornado F3 aircraft in the far east, visiting Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia;

(c) Joint training with the Royal Thai Air Force at Korat in Thailand;

(d) Tri-service UK participation in the Australian bicentennial celebrations; and

(e) Participation in air shows on the west and east coast of the USA.

In the course of these deployments, two RAF TriStar tankers from RAF Brize Norton and four Tornado F3 aircraft from RAF Coningsby circumnavigated the world.

The deployments were planned on the basis that costs would be found from within existing RAF allocations, except that additional funds of £945,000 were identified as necessary for the charter of extra support aircraft to enable the RAF transport force to meet other tri-service commitments during the period. A precise total cost for this series of deployments is not available and could not be provided without disproportionate effort.

Radiation Alert, Aldermaston

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on an incident which occurred at the Aldermaston weapons research establishment on Friday 28 October involving a radiation alert, showing in which building the alarm occurred, if it was triggered automatically or through human error and which outside emergency services were notified.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: An automatic alarm system triggered falsely at the atomic weapons establishment at Aldermaston on Friday 28 October. Personnel were evacuated from the building as a sensible precautionary measure, but it was quickly established to be a false alarm and there was no need to notify the emergency services.

We are still investigating the cause of the false alarm, but for reasons of security it is not our practice to disclose the specific identity of buildings at tha atomic weapons establishment.

Gibraltar (Incident)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will place in the Library copies of all press statements relating to the Gibraltar incident issued by his Department on 6, 7 and 8 March;

(2) what was the basis for statements by his Department at 9 pm on 6 March and on the morning of 7 March that military personnel dealt with a suspect bomb;

(3) when, following the Gibraltar shootings, he first became aware that no bomb had been found in Gibraltar;

(4) on what basis his Department issued a statement at 4.45 pm on 6 March that a suspected bomb had been found in Gibraltar.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence press office issued no written statements on 6, 7 or 8 March and responded orally to press enquiries, from the evening of 6 March onwards. Early responses were based on information from Gibraltar that a suspect car had been dealt with by a military explosive ordnance disposal team, and it only became clear during the course of the morning of 7 March that the car had not contained a bomb. This was explained in my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's statement to the House at 3.30 pm on 7 March.

Atlantic Salmon Conservation Trust (Scotland)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the sum of £135,000 spent by his Department to enable the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Trust (Scotland) to acquire the Loch and Dornock salmon fishery on the Solway.

Mr. Freeman: The Loch and Dornock salmon fishery, which was immediately adjacent to the Army storage depot at Eastriggs, comprised three main elements: the netting rights, working and living accommodation on the shore and associated rights of access through the depot, 24 hours per day. Because of the close proximity of fishery personnel, it was necessary, for safety reasons, to place a ceiling on the explosive material stored and this was well

below the capacity of the depot. In order to allow the exercise of the rights of access, Ministry of Defence staff had to be available at all times specifically to provide escorts through this sensitive depot area. The effect was to inhibit the fully effective operation of the depot and incur significant extra costs. The opportunity to change this situation arose when the fishery was offered for sale and it became apparent that the Atlantic salmon conservation trust was interested in acquiring the netting rights alone. Following negotiation, it was agreed that, once ASCT had acquired the whole interest in the fishery, the Ministry of Defence would purchase the accommodation and associated rights of access. In this way the Ministry of Defence achieved the required improvements in cost-effectiveness without the need to purchase netting rights.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pesticides

Mr. Hood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will name those pesticides approved by the Government in each year since 1979.

Mr. MacGregor: My Department has regularly published lists of approved pesticides products. The most recent is HMSO reference book RB500, "Pesticides 1988". This and previous publications are lodged in the House of Commons Library. I regret that it is not possible to break those lists down by year of approval without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of the cost to his Department of monitoring the levels of harmful residues from the use of pesticides; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McGregor: For 1988 my Department is expected to spend £900,000 on monitoring for pesticide residues.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what method of monitoring the excess use of nitrate in soil is applied by his Department.

Mr. Ryder: My Department monitors nitrate levels at various sites in order to provide the basis for guidance to farmers on optimum fertiliser use.

This work indicates that the majority of farmers apply fertilisers within recommended levels. ADAS advisory efforts have led to significant reductions in autumn nitrogen applications, but we are impressing upon farmers at every opportunity the importance of further reductions.

Chernobyl (Restrictions)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further plans he has for those farmers who are still suffering disruption to their businesses from the restrictions which remain in force after the Chernobyl disaster; what is his latest estimate of the number of farmers involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Approximately 150 holdings in Cumbria continue to be affected by our post-Chernobyl restrictions on the movement and slaughter of sheep. These restrictions are required in order to maintain public confidence in the safety of the food chain. However, the Government is continuing to operate "mark and release" arrangements to ensure the minimum disruption to normal farming practices in the restricted areas and to compensate farmers affected by the restrictions.

The Government are also continuing their research efforts in and around the restricted areas with a view to lifting restrictions at the earliest opportunity commensurate with the need to ensure the safety of the food chain. Results of this research will continue to be published as they become available. In the meantime, we shall continue to maintain close contacts with individual farmers who are affected, and their representative organisations, in order to keep them fully informed of developments.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) when the first case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy was identified during the current outbreak;

(2) when his Department first recognised bovine spongiform encephalopathy as a disease affecting cattle.

Mr. MacGregor: The first identified case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy occurred in November 1986.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state for each county in England and Wales the total number of identified cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy for each of the past 24 months.

Mr. MacGregor: The number of confirmed cases in each county in England and Wales is set out in the table by the month in which the onset of clinical symptoms began.

Month of clinical onset: 1986

County	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*
England						
Avon	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Berkshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Buckinghamshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cleveland	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cornwall	—	1	—	—	—	—
Cumbria	—	—	—	—	—	—
Derbyshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Devon	1	—	—	—	—	—
Dorset	—	—	—	—	—	—
Durham	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Sussex	—	—	—	—	—	—

County	July	August	September	October	November	December
Essex	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hampshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hereford and Worcester	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Humberside	—	—	—	—	—	—
Isle of Wight	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kent	—	—	—	3	—	1
Lancashire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Leicestershire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	—	—	—	—	—	—
Norfolk	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northumberland	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Oxfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shropshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Somerset	—	—	—	—	1	—
South Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Suffolk	—	—	—	—	—	—
Surrey	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tyne and Wear	—	—	—	—	—	—
Warwickshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Midlands	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Sussex	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wiltshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wales						
Clwyd	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dyfed	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gwent	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gwynedd	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mid Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—	—
Powys	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—	—

Month of clinical onset—1987

County	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
England												
Avon	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	1	2	1	1	1
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—
Berkshire	—	—	2	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
Buckinghamshire	1	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	—	1	1	—
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Cheshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	1	1
Cleveland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cornwall	1	—	—	3	—	4	2	7	7	10	1	6
Cumbria	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	1	2	2	1
Derbyshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	1
Devon	1	1	1	6	1	7	13	7	10	4	10	7
Dorset	—	1	—	—	1	1	2	3	3	6	2	3
Durham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
East Sussex	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	1
Essex	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Gloucestershire	—	—	1	—	1	2	—	2	4	2	3	2
Greater Manchester	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hampshire	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	2	2	3	2
Hereford and Worcester	—	1	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	2	1	—
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Humberside	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Isle of Wight	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Kent	—	1	—	1	—	3	1	1	1	7	3	—
Lancashire	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
Leicestershire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	2
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Merseyside	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Norfolk	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	—	—
Northamptonshire	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Northumberland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	2	1	2

County	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Nottinghamshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—
Oxfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	2
Shropshire	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	3	3	3	1
Somerset	1	—	1	—	4	1	2	2	5	4	2	4
South Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	1	1
Suffolk	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	3
Surrey	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
Tyne and Wear	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Warwickshire	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—
West Midlands	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Sussex	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—
West Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wiltshire	—	—	—	—	4	1	1	—	—	3	—	3
Wales												
Clwyd	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1
Dyfed	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	1	3	3	—	5
Gwent	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	2
Gwynedd	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	—
Mid Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Powys	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—

Month of clinical onset—1988

County	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
England										
Avon	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bedfordshire	2	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Berkshire	1	2	1	1	2	1	—	—	—	—
Buckinghamshire	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	2	1	1	4	3	7	5	—	—	—
Cleveland	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Cornwall	2	4	4	8	6	17	11	2	—	—
Cumbria	1	1	—	2	3	1	3	3	—	—
Derbyshire	1	—	2	—	3	3	3	—	—	—
Devon	12	7	9	11	12	9	13	3	—	—
Dorset	3	—	3	4	12	5	7	3	—	—
Durham	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
East Sussex	1	1	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—
Essex	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Gloucestershire	5	5	4	1	2	6	4	1	—	—
Greater Manchester	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hampshire	2	5	2	3	7	8	4	2	—	—
Hereford & Worcester	1	2	2	2	2	5	3	3	—	—
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	4	1	3	—	—
Humberside	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Isle of Wight	—	—	—	1	—	1	3	—	—	—
Kent	2	1	2	2	2	3	—	1	—	—
Lancashire	2	2	—	1	4	4	2	1	—	—
Leicestershire	—	1	2	2	2	3	—	4	—	—
Lincolnshire	1	1	3	1	3	4	1	—	—	—
Merseyside	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Norfolk	—	2	1	2	—	—	1	—	—	—
Northamptonshire	1	—	1	—	1	1	1	—	—	—
Northumberland	1	—	—	1	1	2	—	—	—	—
North Yorkshire	2	1	—	6	2	6	5	3	—	—
Nottinghamshire	—	2	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Oxfordshire	2	1	—	—	3	4	1	1	—	—
Shropshire	3	2	3	2	1	3	8	2	—	—
Somerset	5	2	3	7	8	15	11	5	—	—
South Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staffordshire	—	3	1	2	1	2	2	2	—	—
Suffolk	1	1	—	—	1	5	3	1	—	—
Surrey	2	2	—	2	—	3	1	1	—	—
Tyne and Wear	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Warwickshire	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—
West Midlands	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Sussex	1	1	1	2	7	3	6	3	—	—
West Yorkshire	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Wiltshire	—	—	5	3	11	9	2	3	—	—
Wales										
Clwyd	2	—	—	1	—	3	—	—	—	—

County	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
Dyfed	6	4	5	4	5	6	3	2	—	—
Gwent	1	—	—	1	3	2	1	—	—	—
Gwynedd	—	2	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Mid Glamorgan	—	1	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—
Powys	2	—	1	1	1	2	1	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of cattle compulsorily slaughtered as suspected cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy have been subsequently shown to be not infected, by county in cases.

Mr. MacGregor: A total of 363 cattle have been compulsorily slaughtered as suspected BSE cases. Of these, following examination of brain tissue, BSE has not subsequently been confirmed in 25 cases. these were in the following counties:

	Non-confirmed cases
Buckinghamshire	1
Cheshire	1
Clwyd	1
Cornwall	3
Cumbria	2
Devon	2
Dorset	1
Dumfries and Galloway	1
Gloucestershire	2
Hampshire	1
Kent	1
North Yorkshire	2
Oxfordshire	1
Shropshire	3
Strathclyde	1
West Sussex	1
Wiltshire	1

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) on what date compulsory slaughtering of suspected bovine spongiform encephalopathy-infected cattle was instituted; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps his Department has taken to ensure that products from bovine spongiform encephalopathy-infected cattle, or suspected infected cattle, are not entered for human consumption; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: From 8 August this year all cattle suspected, on clinical grounds, of being affected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy, have been compulsorily slaughtered and the carcases either incinerated or buried.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he first received representations calling for compensation schemes in respect of bovine spongiform encephalopathy or suspected bovine spongiform encephalopathy-infected cattle; if he will list all such representations; and if he will put copies of such representations in the Library.

Mr. MacGregor: Since bovine spongiform encephalopathy emerged as a new disease problem, a number of organisations and individuals have written to me expressing views about how to deal with it. It would be neither practical nor appropriate to place copies of the representations in the Library of the House.

The Government established an expert working party under the chairmanship of Sir Richard Southwood to advise on all aspects of BSE. That working party made an interim recommendation that affected carcases should be destroyed as a precautionary measure. The Government acted very quickly indeed in responding to this and introduced a policy of compulsory slaughter with compensation.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department can now positively identify bovine spongiform encephalopathy by means other than post mortem examination; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: There is no test available in the live animal. Cofirmation is possible only by post-mortem examination of brain tissue.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has made any estimate of the amounts of animal products entered for human consumption from bovine spongiform encephalopathy-infected cattle prior to the introduction of the present restrictions.

Mr. MacGregor: A precise estimate is not possible, but from the evidence obtained about the incidence of disease since it was first identified in November 1986, the number of affected cattle slaughtered for human consumption prior to the introduction of the present arrangements is likely to have been small.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his Department's assessment of the relationship between scrapie in sheep and bovine spongiform encephalopathy in cattle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Bovine spongiform encephalopathy has a number of features in common with scrapie in sheep. Research is being undertaken to establish the exact relationship between the two diseases.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the possible damage to human health from the consumption of products from bovine spongiform encephalopathy-infected cattle.

Mr. MacGregor: There is no evidence of any risk to humans. Nevertheless, the Government asked Sir Richard Southwood, professor of zoology at Oxford university, to chair an expert working party to examine all aspects of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, including any human health implications. The Government have acted on the working party's interim recommendation that as a

precautionary measure, until more is known about BSE, the carcases of affected animals should be destroyed. Meanwhile, research is being undertaken into the possible transmissibility of BSE.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those measures being taken by his Department to limit the incidence and spread of bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government have made the notification of suspected cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy compulsory. Cattle suspected of having the disease are compulsorily slaughtered and the carcases incinerated or buried. Compensation is paid at 50 per cent. of the market value of compulsorily slaughtered animals, valued as if healthy, up to a ceiling.

From 18 July the feeding to cattle of rations containing material from ruminants has been suspended since this is the most likely cause of the disease. Meanwhile a team of experts is conducting a thorough investigation into all rendering plants in Great Britain to determine whether it may be possible to produce animal feed derived from ruminants which can safely be included in cattle rations.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what research his Department is sponsoring into the causes, diagnostic testing, development of immunity, epidemiology and effects of bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and what his plans are for the long-term funding of such research;

(2) whether he has allocated funds for research into bovine spongiform encephalopathy on the basis that it is now market research.

Mr. MacGregor: Epidemiological studies are continuing, the purpose of which is partly to examine the role of meat and bonemeal as the possible source of bovine spongiform encephalopathy and to monitor te occurrence, if any, of any maternal or horizontal transmission. Research work is being carried out to determine the transmissibility of bovine spongiform encephalopathy to various host species, including calves, and studies are being undertaken to define the clinical disorder and to establish its relationship with scrapie. Government funds have been allocated to undertake this research.

CIVIL SERVICE

Crown Servants

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service on what date and for what reasons the following officials left the service of the Crown: Barry Russell-Jones, Anthony Brooks, Jeremy Wetherall, Mollie Sugden, Harry Wharton, Charles Elwell, Patrick Stewart, Frederick Beith and Alec McDonald.

Mr. Luce: Those for whom dates of leaving the Crown can be given are as follows:

	Date
Barry Russell-Jones	1981
Anthony Brooks	1978
Jeremy Wetherall	1978
Harry Wharton	1980
Charles Elwell	1979
Patrick Stewart	1972
Frederick Beith	1971
Alec McDonald	1971

NATIONAL FINANCE

National Savings

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many representations he has received concerning the failure to maintain a competitive interest rate on national savings income bonds; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will improve the interest rate available on national savings income bonds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I received a number of representations during the summer about the rate of interest on income bonds which, together with the terms and conditions of all national savings products, the Government keep under constant review. The rate, which is paid gross of income tax, was increased from 9 per cent. to 10·75 per cent. on 9 October.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to introduce a new national savings instrument to attract those with sums of over £5,000 to invest.

Mr. Lilley: Yes. A new national savings instrument is to be launched on 4 January. It will offer a guaranteed return, with interest rates set to increase each year of its five-year life. Interest will be paid gross, but subject to tax. The minimum investment will be £100; there will be no upper limit. The interest rates and other details will be announced shortly before it goes on sale.

Sub-Saharan Africa (Debt)

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will place in the *Official Report* or in the Library the details of the scheme to ease the official debt burden of the poorest and most heavily indebted countries in sub-Saharan Africa agreed in Berlin last month together with the details of the arrangements for implementing the scheme.

Mr. Lawson: The Paris Club of Government creditors has agreed that when rescheduling the official debt of the poorest and most heavily indebted countries they will, provided the country in question is following an approved adjustment programme, offer exceptional debt relief.

Some countries will reduce moratorium interest rates either by 3·5 percentage points, or by half, whichever is the less. Others will write off one third of the debt service being rescheduled. These countries will offer repayment terms over 14 years, with eight years' grace. Countries which cannot at present reduce interest rates or write off debt will reschedule over 25 years, with 14 years' grace.

Creditors may also choose to combine options. The United Kingdom will choose to lower interest rates.

The first concessional reschedulings, for Mali and Madagascar, were negotiated in Paris on 27 and 28 October. I expect a number of Commonwealth countries will be eligible to benefit from these terms when they come

to the club in due course, and I take great pleasure in this satisfactory conclusion to the initiative which I launched in April 1987.

Canadian Labatt Lager

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what terms the Canadian Labatt Lager has been granted a United Kingdom licence; and what information he has as to what reciprocal arrangements exist for United Kingdom brewers in Canada.

Mr. Ryder: I have been asked to reply.

Canadian Labatt lager is brewed in the United Kingdom by several United Kingdom brewers. Such licensing arrangements as exist are purely commercial between the companies concerned and the Canadian company and I am not aware of their terms. I understand that similar arrangements apply in Canada, although I am not aware of any specific cases involving a United Kingdom brewer.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Housing Benefit

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, following his uprating statement, he is in a position to announce how housing benefit transitional payments will be treated in April 1989.

Mr. Moore: We have made it clear from the beginning that housing benefit transitional payments will be reduced as increases in other benefits make them less necessary. I have decided on a flat rate reduction of £2 per week in these payments from next April. This will ensure that the vast majority of recipients will gain overall in cash terms from the uprating. There will be special arrangements to protect the small number of people dependent on social security benefits who would otherwise see a cash loss.

I can confirm that applications for transitional payments will continue to be accepted until 31 March 1989. Up to this date transitional payment awards will continue to be backdated to April 1988.

Income Support

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is *(a)* the number of new claims for income support nationally over the latest quarter for which figures are available and *(b)* the take-up of supplementary benefit for the corresponding quarter in 1987 for each of the following groups: (i) pensioners, (ii) single parents and (iii) those incapable of work through illness and disability.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not possible to give a breakdown by the precise groups that the hon. Member has requested. Supplementary benefit and income support are broken down into three categories—pensioners, the unemployed and others. The last category will be predominantly those incapable of work through illness and disability and lone parents. The number of claims for "pensioners and others" for the periods requested is:

Income support:
Claims for three calendar months ending 30 September 1988

	Number
Pensioners	79,193
Others	195,669

Supplementary benefit:
Claims for three four-weekly period sending 22 September 1987

	Number
Pensioners	84,241
Others	236,481

Note: From April this year the counting of statistics changed from a four-weekly to a monthly collection. The 1987 figures cover the period 1 July to 22 September 1987, whereas the 1988 figures cover the period 1 July to 30 September 1988.

Social Fund

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will announce the total sum available for payments from the social fund in 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The total sum available for payments from the social fund in 1989-90 will be the same as for 1988-89. The budget for community care grants will be £60 million and the gross budget for loans will be £143 million.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will lay the regulations needed to alter the rules for making cold weather payments this winter in line with his recent statement to the House.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to the Social Fund Cold Weather Payments (General) Amendments Regulations 1988 which I have laid before Parliament for this purpose today. These regulations bring forward two significant improvements to the scheme. First, they extend eligibility to families on income support with a child under age five rather than under age two. Secondly, they alter the rules for measuring periods of cold weather so that any spell of seven consecutive days when the temperature averages 0°C or below will trigger a payment.

These changes roughly double the potential for making cold weather payments and are in addition to the improvements announced on 7 October whereby for the first time eligibility was extended to income support pensioners aged 60 to 64 and non-householders receiving income support who fall into the eligible categories.

HEALTH

School Health Service

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action his Department is taking to ensure continued health care for school children within the Nottingham district health authority area, in the light of the authority's reduction of five whole-time nursing posts in the school health service.

Mrs. Currie: Health care for Nottingham school children is a matter for Nottingham district health authority. I understand that the health authority is undertaking a review of workloads and priorities to ensure that children in special schools and in areas of greater need

continue to get the necessary services. If there are any particular concerns over a child's health their own general practitioner can of course be consulted.

Erith and District Hospital

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received concerning the future of Erith and district hospital.

Mrs. Currie: Since my previous reply to my hon. Friend on 24 June at column *737* one letter has been received from him and five letters from members of the public.

Family Planning

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, in the latest year for which figures are available, how many women attended *(a)* their general practitioner and *(b)* a family planning clinic for family planning advice.

Mrs. Currie: In 1986 in England 1,406,200 women were seen at health authority family planning clinics and an estimated 2,571,000 women received contraceptive services from general medical practitioners. The latter figure includes women accepted for contraceptive services by a general practitioner other than their own.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will publish the district waiting list for 31 March; (2) if he will publish the district waiting list for June; (3) when he expects to publish the waiting list for September.

Mr. Mellor: We published the national and regional waiting list figures for March 1988 on 26 October in the Department of Health statistical bulletin 2/12/88, copies of which were placed in the Library. The district summaries will also be placed in the Library as soon as they are printed. We shall publish the September 1988 figures as soon as possible after they have been received and validated.

In the past we have published waiting list figures for March and September. We are now considering how the new Körner information—which covers far more than waiting lists—can best be made available.

Psychiatric Nurses

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, as part of the current regrading exercise, he will consider the introduction of an additional payment to psychiatric nurses in recognition of the extra clinical responsibility they bear.

Mr. Mellor: No. The new clinical grading structure is designed to recognise and reward extra clinical responsibility in all branches of nursing, including psychiatric nursing. In addition, nursing staff in psychiatric units receive an allowance, on top of basic pay, of £220 a year.

Cancers (Crop Spraying)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the incidence of cancers caused during the process of crop spraying with herbicides and aphicides.

Mrs. Currie: Studies have not demonstrated any effect on the incidence of cancers. There is a statutory duty for the Advisory Committee on Pesticides to advise Ministers on the safe control of pests and it assesses pesticides before recommending approval so as to exclude those which would be carcinogenic to people.

Dr. Higgs and Dr. Wyatt

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has received from the Northern health authority concerning the futures of Dr. Marietta Higgs and Dr. Geoffrey Wyatt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I am now considering a report received at the end of October from Northern regional health authority, describing the action it has taken following publication of the Butler-Sloss report.

Child Protection Services

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give an undertaking to check in 12 months on the well-being of the children noted in his inspectorate report, "Survey of Child Protection Services in London", to be on the at risk register of London boroughs and not currently attached to a social worker.

Mr. Mellor: It is for the local authorities concerned to ensure that this high priority service is properly and effectively carried out. The social services inspectorate is monitoring closely the situation with regard to child protection services in London and will continue to advise on remedial measures that may be necessary.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act

Mr. Holt: To ask the Attorney-General how many prosecutions have been brought during the past 10 years for offences under the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963.

Mr. John Patten: I have been asked to reply.

The readily available information relates to prosecutions for all offences against betting, gaming and lotteries legislation and is published annually in volume 1 of the supplementary tables to the "Criminal statistics, England and Wales", under offence classifications 75 and 106.

SCOTLAND

Rating

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he proposes any steps to harmonise the system of rating of sporting rights that applies in Scotland with the system of rating that currently applies in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Government have undertaken to consider whether changes are needed in the rating of sporting rights in England and Wales and in Scotland, but I cannot at this stage anticipate our conclusions.

River Tweed (Salmon Fishing)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* those salmon

fishing rights on the River Tweed that will be exempt under the provisions of section 22A(1)(b) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988; if he will estimate the rates loss to the local authorities involved; and what steps he proposes to make good the rating revenue lost.

Mr. Lang: Information on individual salmon fishings is not held centrally. The estimated reductions in local authority non-domestic rate income in Scotland resulting from derating of salmon fishings on the River Tweed is £86,000. The local authorities will be compensated under the revenue support grant system.

Housing Conditions

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many occupied dwellings in *(a)* Glasgow and *(b)* Scotland lacked one or more of the standard amenities at the most recent available date.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[pursuant to his reply, 1 November 1988]:* The available information is limited to the total number of occupied and vacant dwellings falling below the tolerable standard amenities included in the standard. At 31 March 1987 there was a total of 4,814 such dwellings in Glasgow, according to the return submitted by the district council. The comparable figure for Scotland is estimated at 35,000.

Scottish Special Housing Association

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the charges made for factoring Scottish Special Housing Association houses in the Borders region by *(a)* Waverley Housing, and *(b)* Roxburgh district council and Ettrick and Lauderdale district council.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The proposed arrangements for the management of its stock in the Borders are a matter for the Scottish Special Housing Association. The association has advised that the payments made to Roxburgh district council and Ettrick and Lauderdale district council are £22·30 per house and £2·90 per garage.

Although arrangements have been agreed in principle with Waverley housing trust to provide a full management service for the SSHA houses in Roxburgh district and Ettrick and Lauderdale district, no contract has yet been signed. The financial arrangements will depend on the total number of houses managed by Waverley housing trust at any time. The formula for this arrangement is still under discussion between the SSHA and the trust to ensure that it properly reflects the different nature of the service to be provided by Waverley housing trust compared with that provided by the district councils.

Newbattle Abbey

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has concerning proposals by Newbattle Abbey trustees to realise land assets in order to raise funds to continue the provision by the college of services to Scottish adults.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This is a matter for the board of governors and the trustees.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider extending the deadline for receipt of specific commitments to use Newbattle Abbey college in view of delays in establishing the Scottish wider access programme and other factors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. My right hon. and learned Friend believes that sufficient time was provided for this issue to be resolved, and he does not wish uncertainty about the future of Newbattle Abbey college to continue longer than is necessary.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the board members of the Scottish Development Agency and indicate their other business interests.

Mr. Lang: Members of the agency board are not required to provide information routinely to my right hon. and learned Friend about their financial or other personal interests, but are asked to declare to him any such interest if it is incompatible with membership of the agency. The current membership of the agency board, none of whom has declared such an interest, is as follows:—

Sir Robin G. Duthie CBE *(Chairman)*
Douglas F. Hardie Esq. CBE JP *(Deputy Chairman)*
Iain Robertson Esq. *(Chief Executive)*
James Anderson Esq. CBE
Robert Cowan Esq.
Sir Alex Fletcher
James S. Gordon Esq. CBE
Sir Graham Hills
Gavin H. Laird Esq. CBE
Sir Peter Main
Sir David Nickson
George F. Robertson Esq
Ian C. Wood Esq. CBE

Under Paragraph 13 of schedule 1 to the Scottish Development Agency Act 1975, members must declare an interest in any of the matters arising on the agenda, but such declarations are not notifiable to my right hon. and learned Friend.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Burglary

1. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress his Department is making in reducing burglary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: There were 60,000 fewer burglaries in England and Wales in the 12 months ending June 1988, compared with the corresponding period to June 1987, a decrease of 6 per cent. This is very encouraging and great credit is due to the police and to the general public, who, with the Home Department's support are becoming increasingly aware of the important role that we can all play in reducing crime.

Violent Criminals (Prison Sentences)

17. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the recent trend in prison sentences for violent criminals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Since 1984, average Crown court prison sentences for men over 21 have increased by 31 per cent. for sexual offences, 21 per cent. for robbery and 13 per cent. for violence against the person.

Terrorism

18. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent steps his Department has taken to develop European co-operation against terrorism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Co-operation against terrorism takes place in multilateral bodies such as Trevi, in bilateral links with individual countries and in the regular ongoing liaison between officials, the police and security agencies. I attended a meeting of the Trevi Ministers in June and will be attending the meeting under the Greek presidency in Athens in December. In addition, I have had recent bilateral talks on terrorism and other matters with my French, Swiss and Italian counterparts and later today I shall be travelling to Madrid for discussions with the Spanish Minister of the Interior.

Electronic Tagging

19. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's estimate of the cost of electronic tagging per offender involved in the proposed alternative to prison.

Mr. John Patten: I cannot give a firm estimate until tenders are received, but I am sure that the cost, including equipment and monitoring, will be less than that of keeping the offender in prison.

Autocrime

20. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made by his Department against car crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Last November, the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention set up a working group to consider the prevention of car crime. Rover Group, which is represented on the working group, is producing a security concept car, incorporating a range of the latest technology in car security, for display at this year's standing conference in December.

Five parts of a British standard on vehicle security (mechanical locking systems, security of in-car entertainment equipment, window etching, central power locking and deadlocking) have now been published. Steps are being taken to have the British standard adopted as an EC directive.

Our crime prevention publicity campaign, the second phase of which will be launched shortly, includes information on car crime and the scope for preventing it.

In 1987 the number of offences of theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle recorded by the police in England and Wales fell by 5·2 per cent. compared with 1986. In the 12 months ending June 1988, the number of recorded offences of theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle fell by 6·2 per cent. compared with the previous 12-month period. It is encouraging that these reductions coincided with measures taken by the Home Office and by police forces throughout the country with the specific aim of reducing car crime.

"Spycatcher"

23. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the implications of the Law Lords' decision on the book "Spycatcher" by Peter Wright for Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the accountability of the security service.

Mr. Hurd: I have nothing to add to the written statement I issued on 13 October, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Video Recordings Act 1984

24. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to secure full enforcement of the Video Recordings Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler).

Safer Cities Initiative

25. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in developing his Department's safer cities project in Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Bradford was the second area to be announced as a safer cities project. Since the announcement on 2 June 1988, discussions have been taking place to establish a steering committee which will include representatives of the council, police, probation and voluntary sector. A project co-ordinator, assistance co-ordinator and personal assistant have been recruited and will shortly be in post.

A crime profile based on an analysis of local crime problems is being prepared. This will be supplemented by surveys of local people and the information gained will be used to develop an action plan to tackle crime in Bradford.

Firearms Amnesty

26. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many weapons have been recovered under the recent firearms amnesty; and if he will make a statement.

29. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the number of categories of firearms which have been handed in under the terms of the recent amnesty.

41. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of weapons surrendered during the recent firearms amnesty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer hon. Members to the reply I gave to the questions by my hon. Friends the Members for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) and Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) earlier today.

Rape (Sentences)

27. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the change over the past year in the average sentence for rape; and if he will make a statement.

39. **Mrs Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the rise over the most recent convenient period in the average sentence for rape; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The average length of sentence for men over 21 sentenced at the Crown court for offences of rape increased by 16 per cent. between 1986 and 1987. The average sentence is now over six years.

Alcohol Abuse

28. **Mr. Wolfson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to deter excessive drinking; and if he will make a statement.

46. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to deter stupid and excessive drinking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have strengthened the law on sales to under-age drinkers and increased the penalties, strengthened the power of licensing justices by giving them a new discretion to decide whether or not to grant late-night drinks extensions, and to revoke when justified current licences for licensed premises. We have issued crime prevention advice and guidance to the police and courts on the powers available to deal with outbreaks of disorder and infringements of the licensing laws. We have approved the pilot project in Coventry and six other towns to test the effectiveness of a byelaw making it an offence to drink alcohol in designated streets and other public places. Action on the wider aspects of alcohol misuse is being taken forward by the ministerial group on alcohol misuse.

Remand and Trial Prisoners

30. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the current situation relating to remand and trial prisoners in the Manchester catchment area.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Industrial action at HMP Manchester has caused over 500 prisoners, who would otherwise have been held in the prison, to be held in police cells in the north. I am pleased to say that industrial action at Manchester, and also at HMP Liverpool, was suspended on 21 October and prisoners are being transferred from police cells to prison. It will take a little time until the situation in the Manchester area is restored to normal.

Active Citizenship

31. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to ensure that the policies of all public bodies and agencies support and encourage the rôle of the active citizen.

Mr. Hurd: The encouragement of neighbourhood watch schemes and victim support schemes are just two examples of action within my own responsibilities, and the policies of the Government as a whole show that my colleagues share the priority which I have consistently attached to this issue.

Crime (Metropolitan Areas)

32. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new steps his Department is taking against crime in the metropolitan areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) and for Stafford (Mr. Cash) earlier today.

Robbery (Sentences)

33. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the rise over the most recent convenient period in the average sentence for robbery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier to the question by my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett).

Police Constables

34. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to check on the number of constables who are on the beat throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend is responsible only for police forces in England and Wales.

He receives, through Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, information on the deployment of police officers on patrol[1] in provincial forces as at 31 December each year. On 31 December 1987, 43,347 constables were shown to be on patrol duties—60·5 per cent. of available strength. All ranks on patrol were 52,470—55·2 per cent. of strength, an increase on the previous year of 2·9 per cent.

My right hon. Friend also receives regular information about the deployment of Metropolitan police officers on street duties. On 23 October there were some 15,900 uniformed PCs on divisional duties, 660 more than a year earlier: about 30 per cent. of their time was spent on street duty.

[1] Covers foot and car patrol, home-residential beat, detached beat, support groups, dog sections, mounted branch and marine section.

Young People and Alcohol

35. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the working group on young people and alcohol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hogg: The group completed its work when it presented its report to the standing conference on crime prevention in November last year. We have kept former members in touch with policy developments.

Passports

36. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contribution the introduction of the common format computerised passport is making to the Passport Office's ability to deliver an improved service to its customers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: As my right hon. Friend indicated in his reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) on 27 October, at columns *324-25*, all six United Kingdom passport offices, including the recently computerised Glasgow office, are processing straightforward non-urgent applications well within the minimum period of notice specified on passport application forms. The aim of computerisation is to provide a more efficient and improved service. When fully operational the computerised system should avoid the lengthy delays passport applicants have suffered recently with the outmoded manual issuing process.

Prison Building and Refurbishment

37. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new prison buildings and refurbishment initiatives are planned during the current year; and if he will make a statement.

58. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new prison buildings and refurbishment initiatives are planned during the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following new prisons are currently under construction or at various stages of planning:

Under construction
Brinsford, Staffordshire
Bullingdon, Oxon
Whitemoor, Cambridgeshire
Woolwich, London
Lindholme, Yorkshire
Lancaster Farms, Lancashire
Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire

Planning clearance obtained
Swaleside, Kent
Banstead, Surrey
Ashford, Kent
Doncaster, Yorkshire

Planning clearance being sought
Hewell Grange, Worcestershire
Tees-side, Cleveland
Kirkham, Lancashire
Rochdale, Lancashire

Financial provision has also been made for five additional training or local prisons to be opened by 1995. Some purpose-built remand centres may be provided if tenders invited from the private sector prove to be cost-effective and ensure fast delivery of places.

Refurbishment schemes are under way or planned to start before the end of 1988-89 at the following establishments:

Bedford
Birmingham
Dartmoor
Erlestoke
Guys Marsh
Huntingdon
Leeds
Leyhill
Lincoln
Liverpool
Pentonville
Ranby
Stafford
Usk
Wormwood Scrubs

The expansion of the prison building programme described at the time of my right hon. Friend's Autumn Statement on the Government's expenditure plans will bring the total number of prison places provided since

Television Services

38. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects to publish a White Paper on the future of television services in the United Kingdom.

57. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to publish his White Paper on broadcasting.

Mr. Renton: Within the next few days.

Neighbourhood Watch

40. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many households in England and Wales are now members of a neighbourhood watch scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: There are now almost 60,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales, covering some 3·25 million households. The total number of schemes is over 16,000 more than 12 months ago and four times the total of two years ago. I welcome this evidence of the public's growing support for crime prevention in general, and the concept of neighbourhood watch in particular.

54. **Mr. Neale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many homes in the Metropolitan police area are now covered by a neighbourhood watch scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that 833,392 households, or around 2 million people, are members of neighbourhood watch schemes in the Metropolitan police district. They will all be encouraged by the fact that, last year, the number of burglaries in London fell by 4 per cent.

Custodial Remands

42. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were held in custody on remand on 30 September.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 30 September 1988 there were about 9,900 untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners in prison service establishments in England and Wales. A further 1,792 prisoners, most of whom would have been on remand, were held in police cells.

Violent Crime

43. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take further steps to prevent and reduce the number of violent attacks upon young children.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps he is taking to eradicate muggings, rapes and other crimes of violence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Attacks on young children are particularly abhorrent. It is important that parents and

others with responsibility for the welfare of young children know how best to advise them on reducing the risks of being attacked or molested. Such advice, which deals with the threat from people known to the potential victim as well as from strangers, is contained in the crime prevention handbook, "Practical Ways to Crack Crime". Since its launch in March this year more than 1·5 million copies of the handbook have been distributed. A revised edition will be published shortly.

Electronic Monitoring

44. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the proposed pilot projects to use electronic monitoring for people on bail will commence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier today to the question by my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs).

Guildford and Woolwich Bombings

45. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects to make a statement on the case of the four persons convicted of the Guildford and Woolwich bombings.

Mr. Hurd: As soon as I have completed my consideration of further representations recently submitted to me.

Identity Cards (Public Houses)

47. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning voluntary schemes for the carrying of identity cards by customers of public houses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have recently received a number of representations from licensed victuallers and members of the public in support of local and national identity card schemes for young people. I am aware of a number of such voluntary schemes for young people around the country which are led and financed by local licensees or by the Licensed Victuallers Association. I am pleased to see licensees taking the lead in initiatives of this kind.

Hampshire Constabulary

48. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received for a further increase in the establishment of the Hampshire constabulary.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received an application from the Hampshire police authority for an increase in the establishment of the force of 47 police posts. This is being considered along with applications from other police authorities for increases in 1989-90. There are 800 posts available for provincial forces and my right hon. Friend will look to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for advice on how they should be allocated.

Charity Law

49. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration is being given to a review of charity law.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend announced on 21 January, at column 1089, in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) that the Government intend to bring forward legislation to implement the recommendations of Sir Philip Woodfield's efficiency scrutiny of the supervision of charities. We plan to publish a White Paper early next year setting out our proposals for legislation.

Dorset Constabulary

50. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the chief constable of Dorset about manning levels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received no recent representations from the chief constable of Dorset about police manpower. We have an application from the Dorset police authority for an increase of 40 posts in the force establishment. This is being considered along with applications from other police authorities for increases in 1989-90. There are 800 posts available for provincial forces and my right hon. Friend will look to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for advice on how they should be allocated.

Immigration

51. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to reduce delays in the immigration service interviewing sponsors in the United Kingdom at the request of British overseas posts.

Mr. Renton: Arrangements have been made to divert immigration service resources to the interviewing of sponsors in entry clearance cases now that the seasonal peaks of arriving passenger traffic have passed and staff are available for other tasks.

Additional staff have been provided at Manchester, Luton and East Midlands airports and at Harmondsworth to supplement the units already operating at Felixstowe and Sheerness.

Extra staff will also be provided at Birmingham airport after Christmas when building work is completed.

Violence and Vandalism

52. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce further effective deterrent penalties for crimes of violence and vandalism.

Mr. John Patten: The courts already have powers to impose heavy sentences for vandalism and violence. For offences of criminal damage not endangering life, the maximum penalty is 10 years' imprisonment. For the most serious crimes of violence against the person—including murder, manslaughter, rape and robbery—the maximum sentence is imprisonment for life. Between 1984 and 1987, the average length of sentence imposed by the Crown court on men aged 21 or over for violence against the person increased by 13 per cent.; for robbery by 21 per cent.; and for sexual offences by 31 per cent.

Computer Hacking

53. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the

extent of hacking into computers in *(a)* Government Departments holding confidential information and *(b)* private sector institutions; if he has considered the possibility of introducing legislation to make hacking a criminal offence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The Home Office does not collect information about the extent of computer hacking. The Law Commission last month published a working paper on computer misuse. This considers whether hacking should become an offence. The commission has asked for comments by the end of February and will take these into account before publishing its final report and recommendations. In the light of its final report, we shall consider whether legislation is needed.

Remand Prisoners (Wales)

55. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to end the calls made on Welsh police forces to house remand prisoners, from outside Wales, in Welsh police stations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A number of prisoners are currently held in police cells in Wales under arrangements made by the police to accommodate the overspill or to industrial action. We have tackled the problem on two fronts. We have introduced a package of measures to produce more prison places in the short term additional to the delivery of new prisons under the existing building programme. A total of 2,600 new places have been delivered since March this year and a further 1,400 places will be delivered by the end of the financial year. Secondly, we have worked to bring about an end to the damaging local industrial action at the prisons which were locking prisoners out. Local industrial action has now been suspended and the prisons involved are returning to normal working.

56. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received during the last six months with regard to the provision of remand facilities in north Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have recently received two letters from the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) about the provision of remand facilities in north Wales. I have also written to him in response to a question which he put to me in the House on 21 July. In my letter dated 21 September I informed the hon. Gentleman that we had given careful consideration to the question whether we could justify building a remand centre in north Wales. I concluded that we could not, at present.

Gaelic Language

Mr. MacDonald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on the performance of the broadcasting companies in fulfilling their commitments to the Gaelic language; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: It is for the broadcasting authorities—the BBC and the IBA—to determine the quantity and quality of programes to be broadcast in the Gaelic language. They are responsible for the scheduling of programmes and for their content.

In its recent report on the future of broadcasting, the Home Affairs Select Committee recommended that the needs of minority interests should continue to be met by the established channels. The Government will take this recommendation, and the views expressed by Comunn na Gaidhlig in its discussion document "Towards a Gaelic Television Service", into account in preparing the forthcoming White Paper on broadcasting.

Detention Centres (Group 4)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement about the competitive tendering which has resulted in Group 4 obtaining the contract to staff and manage detention centres;

(2) what safeguards he has obtained from Group 4, following his awarding that company a contract for administering detention centres, relating the training and experience of the staff they intend to employ; if the numbers of staff, their pay and conditions of employment will be comparable to those applied by Securicor which has held the contract previously; for how long the Group 4 contract will run; and on what financial terms terms the Group 4 contract was agreed.

Mr. Renton: The contract for the provision of orderly and escort services for persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971 will be placed with Group 4 Total Security Ltd. from 1 January 1989 for a period of three years. The contract was awarded following competitive tenders invited in accordance with standard procurement practice in the Home Office. The decision to award the contract took account of a number of factors in addition to cost, including a detailed evaluation of the ability of the company to provide the high quality of service specified in the contract. Group 4 staff will undergo a programme of training under the supervision of the immigration service. No change in staffing levels or in the immigration service's responsibility for management of the dentention centres will occur as a consequence of the change of contractor. The cost of the service and details of the pay and conditions of service of the contractors' employees are matters of commercial confidentiality which it would not be right to disclose.

Security Services

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which cases have yet to be considered by the European Court of Human Rights where citizens of the United Kingdom allege that the security services acted improperly towards them; what are the allegations made and the response of Her Majesty's Government; and if it is the intention of the Government to seek to rebut the allegations made.

Mr. Hurd: No such cases are before the European Court of Human Rights. Three cases pending before the European Commission of Human Rights which concern complaints about the Security Service have been communicated to the Government. Proceedings before the commission are confidential and the Government are not at liberty to disclose its pleadings.

Viraj Mendis

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of continued concern that Viraj Mendis is in danger of detention without trial,

he will make it his policy not to deport him before full review of the evidence produced by Amnesty International and others.

Mr. Hurd: Mr. Mendis has lodged a petition for leave to appeal to the House of Lords. I have made it clear that I will accept the decision of the courts, and I expect him and his supporters to do the same.

TRANSPORT

A1 (Doncaster-Durham)

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* deaths, *(b)* serious accidents and *(c)* minor accidents have been registered on the A1 between Doncaster and Durham in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The table shows accidents by severity on the section of A1 and A1(M) that passes through south Yorkshire, west Yorkshire, north Yorkshire and Durham for the years 1979-1987.

Since 1979, the basis on which the data was held has changed. While it is possible to obtain the information for 1978, it would involve disproportionate cost.

Accidents on the A1 and A1(M): south Yorkshire-Durham: by severity: 1979-87

Severity	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Motorway									
Fatal	6	1	4	4	1	1	5	6	5
Serious	15	25	7	15	9	18	11	21	22
Slight	55	47	45	37	34	38	57	42	56
Total	76	73	56	56	44	57	73	69	83
A road									
Fatal	17	12	13	9	9	11	8	24	14
Serious	77	68	76	71	74	70	86	75	57
Slight	89	123	105	131	113	127	139	136	133
Total	183	203	194	211	196	208	233	235	204
Total									
Fatal	23	13	17	13	10	12	13	30	19
Serious	92	93	83	86	83	88	97	96	79
Slight	144	170	150	168	147	165	196	178	189
Total	259	276	250	267	240	265	306	304	287

Traffic Predictions

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions high and low predictions of traffic density prepared by his Department have been *(a)* 5 per cent., *(b)* 10 per cent., *(c)* 11 to 20 per cent., *(d)* 21 to 30 per cent., *(e)* 31 to 40 per cent. and *(f)* 41 per cent., and above out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The traffic flow on 37 road schemes opened since 1981 has been monitored one year after opening and compared with the traffic predicted at the planning stage for the same date. The comparison is with the average of the high and low forecasts. The results are:

Per cent.	*Number of schemes for which traffic was:* *Over predicted*	*Under predicted*
0-10	8	3
10-20	4	6
20-30	3	4
30-40	1	3
over 40	5	0

Overall, traffic on these schemes was overpredicted by 7 per cent.

Traffic Forecasts

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how often he receives traffic forecasts for different modes of transport; over what period of years the forecasts are made; what evidence he has to indicate their reliability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State receives traffic forecasts on road, rail and air transport. Data are collected on shipping. No forecasts are made of future shipping levels.

Long-term forecasts of passengers using United Kingdom airports are produced at about two-yearly intervals, looking some 15 to 20 years into the future. Low and high growth forecasts are produced. Outcomes have generally been within the forecast range. Successive planning inspectors have drawn on these forecasts as important sources on future needs for airport capacity.

British Rail produces various forecasts of traffic as part of their own investment and planning process. Corporate plan forecasts cover a five-year period; forecasts in support of investment cases generally cover the period of the life of the assets concerned. In the 1970s and early 1980s traffic regularly fell short of forecast levels; in recent years traffic has tended to exceed forecasts.

Six national road traffic forecasts have been made since 1968. Some were interim forecasts for use until a firm forecasting basis was established. The forecasts are made for 35 years ahead, to cover the 30 years over which road investment is appraised. The first of these forecasts considerably overestimated traffic. Except for short periods, actual traffic has been between the high and low levels of the remaining forecasts. Traffic growth has exceeded the high rate of the current forecasts for the last

three years. This is mostly the result of the level of economic activity considerably exceeding that assumed when these forecasts were made.

Heavy Lorries (Speeding)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent studies have been commissioned by his Department, or are available to his Department, concerning the incidence of motorway speeding by heavy goods vehicles; what representations he has received from haulage operators seeking the mandatory fitting of speed limiters in all commercial vehicles; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department conducted a national speed survey in 1987. Of 2,002 heavy goods vehicles observed on motorways 22 per cent. were exceeding 60 mph. The comparable figure in the previous such survey in 1983 was 39 per cent. We have received no representations from operators seeking the mandatory fitment of speed limiters to commercial vehicles. We deplore all motorway speeding, whether by heavy lorries or other vehicles.

Birmingham Northern Relief Road

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive his inspector's report on the public inquiry held in Lichfield, Staffordshire, from 24 May onwards on his Department's proposals for the Birmingham northern relief road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The inquiry ended on 23 September. The inspector has indicated that he hopes to submit his report by March next year.

One-person Operated Buses

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations London Regional Transport has received from the Walthamstow and Southwark coroners about the safety of automatic doors on one-person operated buses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: This is a matter for London Regional Transport and its subsidiary London Buses Ltd.

A19

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progess of his Department's review of standards on the A19 as it affects the Easington constituency; if he will indicate the terms of reference given to the consultants who were commissioned by his Department to carry out this study; and if he will give an indication of the total cost of the study.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The fieldwork for the study of the A19 has been completed. The consultants report is being prepared and should be with the Department before the end of the year. The terms of reference for the study were:

1. to investigate the present and likely future problems caused by any inadequacy of the existing layout and standards of the road and its junction, to cater for present and predicted traffic flows;
2. to identify any environmental problems on the existing road; and
3. to identify improvements to alleviate these problems, either individually or conjointly that provide solutions with the best value for money.

The estimated cost of the study is £70,000.

Road Accidents (Statistics)

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department publishes any statistics relating to the road accident rates of drivers who have reached pensionable age.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Casualty rates per 100,000 population by age, road user type and severity are published annually in table 30 of "Road Accidents Great Britain", which is available in the House of Commons Library. Casualty rates per distance driven by age of driver are estimated periodically. The most recent publication containing such estimates is TRRL research report 135 "The variation of car drivers' accident risk with age", which is also available in the House of Commons Library. Updated figures, based on this report, will be given in "Road Accidents Great Britain 1987", which is expected to be published at the end of November.

Part-time Traffic Lights

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies he has made or is making on the increased use of part-time traffic lights.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department has not undertaken and is not undertaking any studies of this kind. Departmental guidance to highway authorities on criteria for the use of part-time signals has been available for some years. If my hon. Friend has a particular problem in mind perhaps he would write to me.

Motorway Construction

Mr. Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the planned construction dates of all sections of motorway in England that are in his Department's forward programme where construction has not yet commenced.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Motorway schemes which have yet to start construction are as follows:

Planned start of construction in 1988-89

M20 Maidstone-Ashford (It is hoped to let the first contract by the end of 1988).

Planned Start of Construction in 1989-90

M3 Compton-Basset widening
M40 Waterstock-Wendlebury
M40 Widening between junctions 4 and 5
M1 Widening between junctions 23a and 24 (part of Castle Donington North scheme)

Planned start of construction in 1990-91

M1 Climbing lane at junction 9
M5 Widening between junctions 6 and 8
M62 Widening between junctions 12 and 18

Planned start of construction from 1991 onwards

M1 Junction 34 Meadowhall/Tinsley roundabout improvement[1]
M2 Widening between junctions 1 and 3
M3 Bar End-Compton widening
M3 Widening eastbound carriageway between junctions 2 and 3
M4 Junction 4 improvement
M4 Widening between M25 interchange and junction 8/9
M4 Free flow link at junction 8/9
M6 Widening between junctions 20 and 21a
M6 Widening between junctions 30 and 31
M6 Improvements between junctions 31 and 32
M11 North facing slip roads at junction 5
M18 Junction with B6094 Cockhill Lane
M20 Widening between junctions 5 and 8 (Maidstone bypass)

M66 Denton-Middleton
M1 Junction 1 improvement
A6(M) Stockport North-South bypass
A74 Carlisle-Scottish border
A446(M) Birmingham Northern relief road
A449 Kidderminster, Stourbridge and Wolverhampton bypass (Western Orbital Route)—standard not yet decided but may be built as motorway
M65-M6 Blackburn Southern bypass

Scheme timings are based on latest planning information and may be subject to change. They are also subject to the outcome of statutory procedures.

[1] Privately funded.

Residents' Parking Permits

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has of local authorities issuing residents' parking permits greatly in excess of the number of parking places available; and whether he proposes to take steps to prevent such action.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A permit allows legal parking in designated areas.

This is a matter for individual highway authorities. In some London boroughs the number of residents' permits issued exceeds the supply of residents' parking places. A permit does not guarantee a place to holders.

A27 (Worthing)

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Howard Humphreys' investigation into possible routes for the A27 in the Worthing area included consideration of the level of the water table at the lower points of the recommended route and the implications of this for storm water and foul sewer drainage under normal conditions and those experienced during flooding in recent years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Howard Humphreys considers that the geological condition and topographical position of its recommended route do not suggest that any exceptional drainage problems are likely. Detailed design which would be needed for any scheme would include drainage.

London Assessment Studies

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department will exercise its discretionary powers of purchase, under the provisions of paragraph 26 of Circular 15/69, in instances of demonstrable blight as a result of the publication of the London assessment studies.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. Land acquisition powers do not extend to the options published by the assessment study consultants.

M1 (Traffic Flow)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport at what times of the day for each day of the week each direction of the M1 is free flowing without delays caused by traffic volumes between junctions 4 and 16.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department does not collect the information requested for every section of the M1 between junctions 4 and 16. The traffic flow information we have does indicate that there are likely to be problems with congestion for northbound traffic during Friday afternoon and evening and for the southbound traffic on Sunday evening and Monday morning. Delays are also experienced when incidents such as vehicle breakdowns and accidents occur.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cause of the delays on the M1 in the vicinity of junction 15 southbound at 1600 hours on Sunday 30 October.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A road traffic accident occurred at about 15·20 hours in which a single vehicle struck the central reserve safety fencing before coming to a halt in the offside lane of the southbound carriageway of M1 6km to the south of junction 15. Police officers attending the scene of the accident closed the offside lane for a period of approximately 20 minutes.

Level Crossings

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take action to improve safety on miniature warning light level crossings as a result of the recommendations made by the sheriff following the fatal accident inquiry into a death at North Belton, Dunbar.

Mr. Portillo: The installation of miniature warning light level crossings is governed by strict criteria issued by the Department in the published "Railway Construction and Operation Requirements—Level Crossings". These requirements are under constant review in the light of experience and the development of safety practices. We see no need to amend the current provisions in the light of the sheriff's recommendations.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what funds he will make available under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974 for the development of private railway sidings in the Merseyside area to enable adaptions to take place in time for the opening of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: That would depend on the merits of any case put to me. I would need to have firm forecasts of the traffic expected, and a clear statement and quantification of the environmental benefits.

EMPLOYMENT

Construction Industry

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what monitoring of the construction industry training boards' equal opportunities policy is undertaken; and whether it is his policy to refer discriminatory practices to the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Nicholls: The construction industry training board is periodically reviewed in accordance with the Government's established procedures on the control and accountability of non-departmental public bodies. In addition the board's corporate plan and other policy statements are discussed fully with my Department, and the day-to-day activities of the board as an approved

training organisation for YTS are monitored and subject to review. Action would be taken if discriminatory practices were discovered, and individual complaints would be taken up with the board with reference to the Equal Opportunities Commission if appropriate.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether discriminatory employment practices are considered grounds for withdrawing Government support from the construction industry training boards.

Mr. Nicholls: The construction industry training board funds most of its activities from a levy on the industry. In cases where the CITB receives funds from my Department (for example, as an approved training organisation for YTS) the board must abide by the terms and conditions of its contract with the Department, including our equal opportunities requirements, as well as the provisions of the relevant legislation. Failure to do so could result in termination of the contract.

YTS

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the latest YTS accident figures, covering the period since March, distinguishing between fatalaties and major and minor injuries; and if he will publish the number of YTS placements closed and not accepted on health and safety grounds since the beginning of 1988.

Mr. Cope: Table A provides YTS accident figures by quarter for fatal, major and minor injuries for the period 1 April to 30 September 1988.

Table B provides the number of YTS placements closed and not accepted on health and safety grounds by quarter for the period 1 January to 20 June 1988. Figures for the quarter 1 July to 30 September are not yet available.

Table A
YTS accidents 1 April-30 September 1988

	Accidents[1]		
	fatalities	*major*[2]	*minor*
1 April 1988 to 30 June 1988	Nil	129	553
1 July 1988 to 30 September 1988	[3]4	130	663

Table B
Closure and non-acceptance of YTS placements 1 January-30 June 1988

	Placements closed	*Placements not accepted*
1 January 1988 to 31 March 1988	20	13
1 April 1988 to 30 June 1988	15	12

[1] Training Agency figures have been compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive on employed persons. However, the Training Agency's figures will include a number of accidents to trainees in educational establishments and road traffic accidents which may not have been reportable to the Health and Safety Executive had the individuals been employed.

[2] Major injuries are classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Reporting of Injuries, Disease and Dangerous Occurences Regulations 1985. These regulations which came into force on 1 April 1986 reclassified fractured wrists and ankles as major injuries which were not considered to be major under the previous regulations, the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980 (NADOR).

[3] This figure includes one road traffic accident.

Bridging Allowance

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 and 17-year-olds are in receipt of bridging allowance, by geographical area.

Mr. Cope: The number of young people receiving YTS bridging allowance on 20 October, the latest available date, by region is:

	Number
London and South East	4,051
South West	1,430
West Midlands	3,794
East Midlands	2,682
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,012
North West	6,139
Northern	2,568
Wales	2,088
Scotland	7,043
Great Britain	33,807

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps will be taken to protect people of 16 and 17 years, to whom no jobs or YTS places can be offered, when bridging allowance expires.

Mr. Cope: Enough YTS places are available in all parts of the country for all 16 and 17-year-olds not in a job or full-time education, who are able and willing to take up YTS training, to be offered a place on the programme. Special groups of young people not able to take a YTS place, for example lone parents looking after their children, the severely disabled or those in long-term sickness, are eligible for income support and should apply to their local social security office.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has to explain the statistics collected by his Department showing an apparent sharp drop in unemployment in Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale between March and April, followed by an apparent sharp rise between June and July.

Mr. Lee: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 24 October 1988, *Official Report*, column *49*.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of registered unemployed in the Greater London travel-to-work area for *(a)* the month of February and *(b)* July in each of the years 1982 to 1987.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* Direct comparisons of unemployment since 1982 are not possible because of changes in the coverage of the count and the revision of travel-to-work areas in 1984. Following is the information available which is also in the Library. The table shows the number of registered unemployed in the Greater London travel-to-work area since July 1983.

Unemployment in Greater London travel-to-work area

	February	*July*
1983	n/a	326,020
1984	345,051	348,419
1985	370,377	371,910

	February	July
1986	381,035	379,855
1987	361,848	335,655

n/a—not available.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of registered unemployed in the Basildon travel-to-work area for *(a)* the month of February and *(b)* July in each of the years 1982 to 1987.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* Direct comparisons of unemployment since 1982 are not possible for the area requested because of changes in the coverage of the count. Following is the available information, which is also in the Library, for the Basildon local authority area.

Number of unemployed claimants in the Basildon local authority area

Year	February	July
1983		8,113
1984	8,975	8,953
1985	9,515	8,920
1986	8,876	8,492
1987	8,406	7,080

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the total number of *(a)* persons in full-time employment, and *(b)* persons unemployed in (i) England and Wales, and (ii) the Basildon area for each of the years 1982 to 1987.

Mr. Lea *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* The available information on employment is shown in the table:

Employees in employment[1] [2] in England and Wales

Thousands

	Males		Females
	All	Full-time	Full-time
September 1981[1]	11,111	10,453	4,769
June 1982	10,839	..	4,679
June 1983	10,609	..	4,623
June 1984	10,575	..	4,721
September 1984[1]	10,646	9,935	4,784
June 1985	10,657	..	4,806
June 1986	10,607	..	4,816
June 1987	10,618	..	4,924

.. Not available.

[1] Separate figures for full-time male employees are only available for regions for census of employment dates.

[2] Estimates of full-time self-employment are not available below national level.

The latest available employee figures for the Basildon local authority district are from the September 1984 census of employment. There were then 49,600 employees in employment in the area, of which 37,500 were working fulltime. This compares with a total of 53,100 at September 1981 when the previous census of employment was taken of which 41,600 were in full-time employment. These figures exclude the self-employed and Her Majesty's forces.

Direct comparisons of unemployment since 1982 are not possible because of changes in the coverage in the count. Following is the available information, which is also in the Library.

Annual average number of unemployed claimants

Year	England and Wales	Basildon local authority
[1]1983	2,612,493	8,368
1984	2,696,804	8,995
1985	2,796,466	8,993
1986	2,804,709	8,599
1987	2,481,146	7,233

[1] Average of the seven months June to December 1983.

Employment Training

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment training scheme places originally allocated to London have yet to be allocated to training agents.

Mr. Nicholls: All training agent provision in London has been allocated.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* London-based training agents for the employment training scheme and *(b)* how many places are involved for each.

Mr. Nicholls: The table gives a list of training agents and their contracted throughput in London.

Training Agents	Places
Haringey Skills Training Agency	1,302
London Borough of Enfield	980
North London Employment Training Agency	960
London Borough of Brent	1,600
London Borough of Harrow	600
London Boroughs of Barking, Dagenham and Havering	1,700
Learn a Living	4,000
Newstart	10,290
Southern Training Services	5,000
Personnel Consultancy Service	2,004
London Borough of Hillingdon	460
London Borough of Kingston	230
London Chamber of Commerce & Industry	6,170
London Borough of Richmond/Hounslow	690
Camden Training Agency	1,000
Personnel Employment Guide	2,500
London West Training Services	3,000
Vocational Guidance Association	5,500
Training Options	4,509
Brook Street Bureau	2,020
Total	54,515

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many voluntary organisations based in London, involved with MSC-Training Commission schemes prior to the introduction of ET, have indicated that they will not participate in ET; and how many places are involved.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many voluntary organisations based in London are training agents for the employment training scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: There is one voluntary organisation acting as a training agent in London.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment training scheme places have been allocated to voluntary organisations based in Greater London.

Mr. Nicholls: A total of 6,800 employment training places have been allocated to voluntary organisations acting as training managers in London.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the latest figures available stating how many of the employment training programme's filled places are extended placements from the community programme, new public authority placements, new placements in the voluntary sector and new placements in the private sector both nationally and in north Staffordshire.

Mr. Nicholls: This information is not collected in the format required.

The total number of people in training on employment training at 21 October 1988 was just over 62,000 for Great Britain and 1,201 for the county of Staffordshire. It is not possible to provide separate figures for north Staffordshire.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of filled places on the employment training programme (i) nationally and (ii) in north Staffordshire.

Mr. Nicholls: At 21 October 1988 there were 62,000 people in training on employment training in Great Britain. Figures are not available for north Staffordshire, but in Staffordshire as a whole there were 1,201 filled places at the same date.

Blandford Fly

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether approval has now been given for an experiment to be made in early 1989 to control the Blandford Fly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Ministers responsible for the approval of pesticides have received advice from the independent advisory committee on pesticides. Before Ministers can approve the trial it is necessary to check that it would not contravene the Control of Pollution Act 1974 or the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975. This is even now being considered by the Departments concerned.

Training Commission

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps are being taken to transfer the resources of the Training Commission to his Department following his announcement to take back the functions which the Training Commission had been exercising on his behalf.

Mr. Fowler: Parliamentary approval to transfer the resources to the Department of Employment to run the training programmes formerly under the control of the Training Commission will be sought in a winter Supplementary Estimate for the new Class VII, Vote 7.

The financial liabilities of the Training Commission arising as a result of contracts and commitments entered into before 15 September have remained with the commission, but financial liabilities after 15 September arising as a result of contracts entered into in the name of the Secretary of State fall to be met by him.

Pending approval of the winter Supplementary Estimate, urgent expenditure incurred by the Secretary of State after 15 September 1988, estimated at £215 million will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund. The first of these advances, for £35 million has already been made. A statutory instrument formally transferring all relevant rights and liabilities, other than those arising out of possession of land and those relating to industrial training boards, to the Secretary of State will take effect on 1 December 1988.

Trade Unions (Ballots)

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State of for Employment what steps he has taken to issue a statutory code of practice to promote desirable practices in relation to the conduct by trade unions of ballots about industrial actions.

Mr. Fowler: I have today published, for consultation, a draft statutory code of practice entitled "Trade Union Ballots on Industrial Action", and have placed a copy in the Library. Representations to me on the draft code should be sent to arrive no later than 31 January 1989.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 4 November 1988

WALES

Rating Reform

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what decisions have been taken in Wales in relation to the base population assumptions for poll tax purposes with regard to allowances which will be made in that figure for the population *(a)* living in holiday homes for part of the year; and *(b)* staying in Wales on holiday; and whether these increases in base population will affect the distribution of grant or the distribution of centrally collected non-domestic rating revenue.

Mr. Grist: No final decisions have yet been taken on the definitions of population in the context of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. This subject is still being discussed with the local authority associations.

Improvement Grants

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for every housing authority in Wales *(a)* the latest estimated cost of housing improvement grants applications which were received prior to 31 March 1984, *(b)* the sums spent by each authority during 1987-88 on such improvement grants and *(c)* the estimated date, on current seasonal availability, by which each district will have cleared the backlog of pre-31 March 1984 improvement grant applications.

Mr. Grist: The value of renovation grant applications made before 31 March 1984 which were outstanding at the end of June 1988 are given in columns 1 to 3 of the table. Columns 3 to 6 give expenditure on all grants in 1987-88. The statistical returns made by local authorities to the Department do not relate the sums paid to the year in which applications were made. It must be for individual local authorities to determine the priority they wish to afford such applications within the total of resources available to them.

	Estimated cost of grant applications outstanding at 30 June 1988 from 31 March 1984 or earlier			*Amount spent on completed grants 1987/1988*			
Welsh districts	*Improvement £ millions*	*Repair £ millions*	*Total £ millions*	*Improvements £'000*	*Repair £'000*	*Intermediate special £'000*	*Total*
Aberconwy				303	53	33	389
Alyn and Deeside		0·2	0·2	582	151	93	826
Arfon				697	864	36	1,597
Baaenau Gwent	3·7	9·0	12·7	637	2,114	492	3,243
Brecknock	0·1		0·1	30	351	141	522
Cardiff				2,938	5,675	1,064	9,677
Carmarthen				1,068	781	40	1,889
Ceredigion	0·2		0·2	235	243	256	734
Colwyn				748	99	3	850
Cynon Valley				755	2,315	548	3,618
Delyn				59	419	86	565
Dinefwr		0·6	0·6	51	142	223	416
Dwyfor				90	296	140	526
Glyndwr				189	264	96	549
Islwyn				1,094	1,477	300	2,871
Llanelli				156	800	274	1,230
Lliw Valley				397	581	412	1,390
Meirionnydd				42	142	74	258
Merthyr Tydfil		1·1	1·1	130	820	571	1,521
Monmouth				56	609	104	768
Montgomeryshire		1·5	1·5	49	316	205	570
Neath				75	73	264	412
Newport				277	1,149	75	1,502
Ogwr				1,849	667	116	2,632
Port Talbot/Afan				118	1,343	119	1,580
Preseli				693	476	277	1,446
Radnor	0·2	0·3	0·5	93	192	65	350
Rhondda	1·4	1·0	2·4	838	2,874	1,975	5,687
Rhuddlan				58	17	12	87
Rhymney Valley				622	1,834	578	3,034
South Pembrokeshire				1,081	657	18	1,756
Swansea				2,394	1,327	267	3,988
Taff-Ely				301	377	298	975
Torfaen	0·4		0·4	478	730	66	1,273
Vale of Glamorgan		0·5	0·5	292	798	181	1,272
Wrexham Maelor				28	110	101	239
Ynys Môn		0·8	0·8	245	314	189	749

Note: There are no intermediate and special grants outstanding from 31 March 1984 or earlier.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many Welsh language units are currently operational in Wales, as part of English language primary schools; and how many pupils attend such units in each county.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what safeguards he has set up in order to ensure that the governing bodies of primary schools in Wales take adequate note of the needs of children receiving part or all of their education through the medium of the Welsh language.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Section 17 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 requires local education authorities to prepare and keep under review a statement of their policy on the school curriculum. In Welsh Office circular 12/87, LEAs were advised that this should be sufficiently detailed to include their policy on teaching through the medium of Welsh. Under section 18 of the Act, governing bodies are required to consider the LEA's statement, their own aims for the school curriculum and any modifications they consider necessary to the LEA's policy as it applies to their school. They must do so in consultation with the headteacher and the LEA, and having regard to any representations made to them from the local community. They must incorporate their conclusions in a written statement and keep them up to date.

Seal Virus

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what evidence he has of porpoises, dolphins and other cetaceans being infected by the North Sea seal virus or related viruses in United Kingdom coastal waters.

Mr. Grist: At the present time we have no evidence linking porpoises, dolphins or other cetaceans found in the waters off the Welsh coastline to either the North sea seal virus or related viruses.

Nurses (Grading)

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is now in a position to provide details of the additional funding for clinical nurse regrading in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I can now announce the additional financial allocations to health authorities in Wales which will meet in full the estimated final costs of the nurses' clinical regrading exercise. A further £10·1 million is to be provided of which £9·6 million will be allocated to district health authorities in accordance with the estimated additional costs of their respective new grading structures. The additional sums to be allocated to each authority in Wales are shown in the table; the total allocation takes into account the funds that have already been provided this year.

	Additional allocation £ million	*Total allocation £ million*
Clwyd	1·5	6·6
East Dyfed	0·4	3·5
Pembrokeshire	0·2	1·2
Gwent	1·8	7·9
Gwynedd	0·7	3·6
Mid Glamorgan	2·0	9·5
Powys	0·1	1·7
South Glamorgan	1·4	7·7
West Glamorgan	1·5	6·3

The remaining £0·5 million will be allocated to authorities in due course to meet consequential changes arising from the review body awards.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Meals

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state the cost of free school meals for 1970, 1979, 1984 and 1988.

Mr. Butcher: Information is not available centrally in the form requested. The table provides estimates calculated on the basis of data collected about the school meals service on one day in each of the relevant years. More detailed statistics are included in the report on school meals statistics at October 1987, published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, and available in the Library. Information for 1988 is not yet available.

Estimated Cost of Providing Free School Meals to Pupils

	Cash £ million	*1984-85 Real terms £ million*
1970-71	18	86
1979-80	114	174
1984-85	215	215

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has issued, or intends to issue, guidelines concerning the manner and extent of price rises for school meals by local education authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has no plans to issue guidance to local education authorities on the pricing of school meals. This is a matter for decision by each authority in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Docklands

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what new educational facilities his Department is helping to create to cope with the extra population expected in the docklands area of the London borough of Newham.

Mr. Butcher: It is for the local education authority concerned to initiate action to provide new educational facilities it considers appropriate in order to cope with population changes in its area, taking into account local needs and circumstances.

GCSE

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the

GCSE examination results grades A to C as a percentage of those candidates who sat the examination, by local education authority; and if he will publish similar percentage figures for the GCE examination for 1987.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is not yet available centrally.

Higher Education

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report*, the number of children from blue collar worker families as a percentage of the whole, who gained entry to *(a)* universities and *(b)* polytechnics in each year from 1970 to date.

Mr. Jackson: It is estimated the number of university entrants from social classes IIIm, IV and V as a percentage of the relevant working class population was 3 per cent. in each of the years from 1970 to date.

Similar information is not collected by the polytechnic central admissions system, but a sample survey of young people attempting examinations qualifying them for higher education entry in 1985 indicated that about 7 per cent. of the relevant working-class population entered some form of higher education including sub-degree courses. A sample survey of 21-year-olds in 1962 indicated that the equivalent percentage then was 3 per cent.

Articles of Government

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to issue model articles of government for the polytechnics and colleges of higher education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have issued model articles of government for the polytechnics and colleges which will be run by higher education corporations (HECs) from 1 April 1989. The HECs are asked to submit draft articles, based on the model, by 31 December 1988, so that the articles can be approved before 1 April 1989. I shall expect the other institutions coming into the PCFC funding sector to align their articles of government with this model on broadly the same timetable. The Department consulted the institutions concerned and a number of interested bodies and I have taken account of their comments in drawing up the model.

These newly incorporated institutions have an important part to play in the delivery of higher education. Their effective management and government is vital; their articles of government will underpin this.

National Curriculum

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received the initial advice of the national curriculum and the School Examinations and Assessment Council on the training needed to support the introduction of the national curriculum and related assessment arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The chairmen of the National Curriculum Council (NCC) and the School Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC) have sent me initial advice, agreed between their councils, about the arrangements needed to develop a long-term strategy for training to support our national curriculum and assessment policies. I have placed copies in the Libraries of both Houses. I welcome the councils' suggestion that such a strategy should be developed through joint arrangements involving my Department, the NCC, SEAC, the Curriculum Council for Wales and Her Majestys' inspectors. An early task will be to consider further the shape and design of future in-service education and training (INSET) provision as suggested by the councils.

The NCC has in addition offered me advice on the early training needed to support the introduction of the national curriculum from September 1989. The council has recommended an outline programme of training for LEA officers, inspectors and advisors and teachers during this and the next academic year, which offers a good basis for further work both nationally and in local authorities. Copies of that advice have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses, and I am also arranging for copies to be sent to all local authorities, who I know are already planning detailed provision for the coming year.

The major objective of training before the start of the autumn term 1989 should be to increase general awareness of the new arrangements, including the broad shape of the assessment arrangements which will be required. It should enable schools and teachers to start planning for their implementation in the classroom. Soon after that date more specific training in the requirements for particular subjects and in assessment procedures will be required.

I accept the council's conclusion, endorsed by SEAC, that exceptionally for this first year of implementation schools should be allowed to close for two additional days to offer their whole staff training specifically directed to the new national curriculum requirements. These additional days may be used for the general awareness training which all teachers will need before they begin to work within the new framework in September 1989, or for supplementary training in the autumn term. I shall bring forward regulations shortly to allow for additional closures in the calendar year 1989, in order to give schools the necessary flexibility to fit this training into their plans.

These exceptional arrangements are needed because authorities' plans for in-service training in 1989 are already well advanced. In future years, as new national curriculum requirements are introduced, authorities will be expected to make the necessary arrangements for training using the £53 million made available through in-service training grants to support implementation in 1989-90, and the further sums to be made available as appropriate in later years. They will need to plan to use these resources within the normal school year, which includes five days which may be devoted to the in-service training of teachers.

The NCC is working on the preparation of materials to underpin the programme of INSET, and will be making these available in good time for each stage of the training effort it has recommended. The SEAC will be contributing appropriate material on assessment as the programme of INSET progresses. In addition, my Department will continue to make available information about the nature and implications of the new provisions to help LEAs and schools plan for their effective introduction.

Student Grants

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what will be the level of student grants in 1989-90.

Mr. Jackson: Subject to parliamentary approval, mandatory awards will be increased by 5 per cent. in the 1989-90 academic year. The increase applies both to the standard tuition fee and to maintenance grants. Details of grant rates and contribution scales will be published later.

ENVIRONMENT

North Sea (Research)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much of the Government's recently announced £7 million a year expenditure on research in the North sea represents new money; by whom this money is to be spent; and on what form of research programme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Following the second international conference on the protection of the North sea, which was held in London last November, a number of Departments and agencies, including MAFF, DAFS, DOE and NERC have reviewed their funding for North sea research. The main result in the current year has been a revision and refocusing of existing programmes. In the case of the Department of the Environment, the funding for North sea research has increased in the current year from £0·7 million to £1·2 million. Following the statement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 1 November 1988, we hope to increase this amount by a further £0·5 million in 1989-90.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what factors govern the amount of money being spent on *(a)* investigation reactions to toxic chemicals in marine mamals, with particular reference to those in the North sea; and *(b)* researching the behaviour of viruses in the sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The overall objective of the Department's marine research programme is to establish with greater accuracy the relationships between inputs to the sea, the concentration of substances in the environment and their effect on marine life. Marine mammals are high in the food chain and are therefore valuable indicators of pollutants which accumulate in animal tissues. Studies of seals are an important part of the research programmes of my Department and of the Natural Environmental Research Council. Preliminary work suggests that further research would be worthwhile to clarify whether or not such pollutants can effect the immune system in seals. Research on the behaviour of viruses in the marine environment is currently being considered.

Water Metering

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he established Chorleywood, Hertfordshire, as a water metering trial area.

Mr. Moynihan: The metering trial in Chorleywood was approved by my right hon. Friend on 15 August 1988.

Water Authorities (Land)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of land are held by each water authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department does not, at present, have this information.

Sewage Treatment

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each of the 10 water authorities in England and Wales the location of all sewage treatment plans which have failed consent conditions specified by the water authorities on one or more parameters as at the most recent available date.

Mr. Moynihan: Copies of the returns submitted by the 10 water authorities in England and Wales for sewage treatment works which failed to comply with their consent conditions in 1987 were placed in the Libraries of both Houses at the beginning of June this year. Information on the exact location of each works is not held centrally; the works are identified by name only.

Palace of Westminster (Waste Glass)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether waste glass is sent from the Palace of Westminster for recycling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 3 November 1988]:* Waste glass is collected under a contract arranged by the Property Services Agency. I understand the contractor sends the glass for recycling.

Palace of Westminster (Waste Paper)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now make it policy to ensure that all waste paper removed from the Palace of Westminster is used for recycling purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 3 November 1988]:* Waste paper is collected from the Palace of Westminster under a contract arranged by the Property Services Agency. Although the contract does not specify that the paper should be recycled, I understand that the contractor disposes of it in that way.

Football Matches

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which Football League matches have been attended by the Minister for sport this season; and when he last visited The Den, Millwall.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 3 November 1988]:* I attended the Charlton Athletic *v.* Tottenham Hotspur match on 8 October. I have not yet visited Millwall football club but have accepted the club's invitation to do so on 19 November. In addition, I have attended a number of non-league football matches and training sessions.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

International Investments Ltd.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what investigations into the collapse of International Investments Limited, Gibraltar, have been carried out by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: None. International Investments Ltd., Gibraltar is not registered in the United Kingdom, nor does it have a place of businesss here. The Royal Ulster Constabulary are conducting a thorough investigation and the Bank of England and the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association are aware of the case.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to how many Northern Ireland investors have suffered as a result of the collapse of *(a)* International Investments Limited, Gibraltar, and *(b)* Barlow Clowes.

Mr. Maude: I understand that some 850 of the depositors with International Investments Ltd., Gibraltar are resident in Northern Ireland. Comprehensive information about Northern Ireland investors in Barlow Clowes is not available, but my Department has received four letters from investors in Northern Ireland.

Inner-city Task Forces

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many inner city jobs have been created as a direct result of the activities of task forces which report directly to him; and what is the total cost of the launching and running of these task forces since they were initiated.

Mr. Newton: Securing more jobs for local people is but one of the objectives for the Government's inner city task forces; other key objectives are to stimulate enterprise and to improve skills and training. The task forces have supported more than 900 projects since their inception in February 1986 and it is estimated that these have led to the creation or safeguarding of approximately 3,700 jobs in the task force areas. Up to the end of September 1988, the cost of launching and running the task forces was around £3·4 million.

Iraq

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether, when deciding on any increase in the export credit granted to Iraq, he will make it his policy to take into account recent human rights violations there, including the use of chemical weapons by Government forces.

Mr. Clark: The Government are concerned by the denial of human rights wherever this occurs, and have consistently made our views clear to the Iraqi Government on this subject. We have also made clear to the Iraqi Government our condemnation of the use of chemical weapons. We will continue to do so. At the same time, we should not lose sight of the importance of developing political and economic relations with Iraq, and the provision of export credit is a major contribution to this.

Water Company Shares

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will provide details of the Office of Fair Trading investigation involving Lee Valley and North Surrey Statutory Water Company shares owned by the French company Saur being sold to the French company Generale Des Eaux.

Mr. Maude: The Office of Fair Trading is at an early stage of its consideration of possible merger situations involving Lee Valley water company and the North Surrey water company and of whether such situations may qualify for investigation under the Fair Trading Act.

Girobank

Mr. Stott: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the future Giro bank privatisation.

Mr. Forth: The Post Office, which is conducting the sale, and its advisers are continuing to hold confidential discussions. I will make a further statement as soon as I am able to do so.

Lloyd's

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what advice he has given to the chairman of Lloyd's on the revised proposals made following consultations with members of Lloyd's and the Lloyd's community on the working group report on underwriting agency agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The council of Lloyd's has recently announced its decisions on the subjects considered in the working group report on underwriting agency agreements. These implement a further 11 recommendations of the Neill report, and I welcome this further progress. It is not the practice to make public correspondence between Lloyd's and the Department.

Alligator Meat

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has regarding the amounts of alligator meat imported into the United Kingdom for human consumption during each of the past three years.

Mr. Clark *[holding answer 3 November 1988]:* United Kingdom imports of alligator meat, for all purposes which may include for human consumption, in 1987 were 1·7 tonnes. No imports were recorded for 1985 and 1986.

Ex-gratia Payments

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will detail in the *Official Report* all cases over the past 10 years when his Department has been required by the courts, or in consequence of legal pressure, to pay compensation or make an ex-gratia payment to individuals or companies in consequence of negligence or error by his Department.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 3 November 1988]:* Details of special payments are published each year in the relevant appropriation accounts, summaries of which for my

Department and its predecessors are as follows. The circumstances of such payments vary widely, and it is not possible to classify them in the way requested. Most cases involving substantial amounts arise from discretionary payments relating to the Department's various programmes of industrial support.

	£	(Cases)
1978-79	123,000	(29)
1979-80	359,000	(26)
1980-81	4,426,000	(184)
1981-82	4,387,000	(94)
1982-83	1,953,000	(162)
1983-84	338,000	(59)
1984-85	1,096,000	(9)
1985-86	312,000	(34)
1986-87	290,000	(147)
1987-88	1,749,000	(145)

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Official Solicitor

Mr. Battle: To ask the Attorney-General what is the number of staff employed by the Official Solicitor's children's division; and how many of those staff have legal qualifications and how many have qualifications in child care or related subjects.

The Attorney-General: The number of staff presently employed in the Official Solicitor's children's division is 42. Two of the staff are legally qualified, and the Official Solicitor and the Deputy Official Solicitory also take a close interest in the work of the division. None of the staff have formal qualifications in child care or related subjects, but most have extensive experience in this field.

Land Certificates

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Attorney-General what is the average time taken for the issue of a land certificate by the Croydon district land registry; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The average time taken to issue a land or charge certificate by the Croydon district land registry is 22 weeks compared with the departmental average of 16 weeks.

In all district land registries new systems of work are being introduced to increase productivity. At Croydon further steps to improve the service include the transfer of work to other offices and the recruitment of additional staff.

EMPLOYMENT

Restart Interviews

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, for each employment service region, how many restart interviews were conducted each month between May and September.

Mr. Lee: The number of restart interviews conducted in each employment service region between May and September 1988 are shown in the table.

Restart programme: Number of interviews May to September 1988

	May	June	July	August	September
Northern	12,350	12,180	17,520	12,900	14,790
Yorkshire and Humberside	16,410	15,620	22,610	17,280	19,530
East Midlands and Eastern	15,300	14,550	19,170	15,510	16,550
London and South East	37,540	37,170	50,020	39,510	39,700
South West	8,620	8,270	10,000	7,030	8,360
Wales	10,080	9,880	14,900	10,250	10,010
West Midlands	16,720	16,440	22,560	19,510	19,210
North West	28,480	27,770	38,350	28,960	28,450
Scotland	21,600	22,220	23,440	19,290	22,440

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the most up-to-date figures for both the Birmingham and Solihull and Coventry and Warwickshire areas showing how many people have been referred to the following options as a result of their restart interviews and how many agreed to follow these options up *(a)* referred to a job, *(b)* referred to community programme, *(c)* allocated to restart courses, *(d)* referred to NJTS, *(e)* referred to ET, *(f)* referred to other training, *(g)* referred to job clubs, *(h)* referred to EAS, *(i)* referred to VPP and voluntary work and *(j)* referred to ERC.

Mr. Lee: The numbers of people referred to various menu items during the restart programmme from 28 March to 30 September 1988 are shown in the table. We do not know how many of those interviewed ultimately end up in a job or other opportunity as a result of the restart interview.

	Birmingham and Solihull	Coventry and Warwickshire
Job	2,720	1,440
Community programme	680	430
Restart course	1,440	430
New job training scheme	4,160	1,830
Employment training[1]	1,150	760
Other training	1,630	1,070
Jobclubs	2,430	1,480
Enterprise allowance scheme	1,530	470
VPP and voluntary work	240	240
ERC	50	50

[1] From the introduction of employment training or 5 September 1988 only.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the most up-to-date figures for both the Birmingham and Solihull and Coventry and Warwickshire areas showing how many unemployed people have, since the introduction of the restart initiative *(a)* been called for a restart interview, *(b)* attended a restart interview, *(c)* had their benefit disallowed for

failing to attend a restart interview, *(d)* been referred to a claimant adviser as a result of a restart interview and *(e)* been referred to DRO.

Mr. Lee: The figures requested are given in the table. We do not know how many of those interviewed ultimately end up in a job or other opportunity as a result of the interview.

Restart interviews

	1 July 1986 to 30 September 1988
Birmingham and Solihull	
a. Called for restart interview	212,050
b. Attended a restart interview	157,490
c. Had their benefit disallowed for failing to attend interview	790
d. Referred to claimant adviser	8,050
e. Referred to DRO	4,240
Coventry and Warwickshire	
a. Called for restart interview	92,130
b. Attended a restart interview	69,400
c. Had their benefit disallowed for failing to attend interview	260
d. Referred to claimant adviser	3,010
e. Referred to DRO	1,530

Job Training Scheme

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the figures showing how many people joined the new job training scheme, and left it, in each month since April; and if he will give these figures for each of the Great Britain regions.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is shown in the table:

New job training scheme—entrants and leavers April to September 1988

Region	*Entrants in month*					*Leavers in month*				
	April	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*
South East	1,066	886	812	880	651	1,045	843	1,113	893	868
London	959	580	718	848	898	906	785	756	862	640
South West	721	542	612	702	766	645	572	557	640	742
West Midlands	959	817	676	935	1,032	911	735	637	909	1,005
East Midlands and Eastern	1,059	962	902	1,194	1,139	979	914	822	1,138	1,096
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,362	1,219	1,210	1,416	1,579	1,488	1,083	975	1,358	1,339
North West	1,715	1,449	1,457	1,765	1,880	1,574	1,287	1,318	1,714	1,847
Northern	1,133	1,079	994	1,433	1,062	838	874	823	1,339	1,346
Wales	460	642	533	645	245	394	504	651	536	346
Scotland	1,491	1,282	1,094	1,094	1,188	1,461	1,338	1,469	1,112	1,398
GREAT BRITAIN	10,925	9,458	9,008	10,912	10,440	10,241	8,935	9,121	10,501	10,627

Williams Dye Factory, Hanworth

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what investigations have been made by the Health and Safety Executive into the explosion on 13 October at Williams dye factory, Hanworth road, Hounslow; and what action is being taken to protect from further hazard residents and others working nearby.

Mr. Nicholls: Inspectors and a scientist from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have visited Williams of Hounslow to investigate the cause of the incident which occurred on 13 October 1988. They have taken enforcement action to stop production in the building in which the incident occurred until the plant has been modified and will be looking at the safety of other processes carried out on the site. The HSE does not consider that the process giving rise to the incident presented a risk to the health or safety of persons living and working in the neighbourhood of the site.

SCOTLAND

Free School Transport

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to take to harmonise statutory provision for free school transport in Scotland with the position in England and Wales consequent upon the decision of the Court of Appeal in respect of Devon county council.

Mr. Rifkind: I have no plans to amend the current provisions for school transport which give education authorities considerable discretion to provide assistance beyond the statutory requirements if they consider it necessary.

Scottish Council for Single Parents

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on continued funding of the Scottish Council for Single Parents training unit by the social work services group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have received a number of representations on behalf of the Scottish Council for Single Parents, which has formally applied for renewal of funding for its training unit under section 9 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1988.

The council's application is being carefully considered, along with applications from a number of other voluntary social work agencies, in the light of funding priorities and the resources available for section 9 grants in 1989-90. I cannot anticipate the outcome.

Job Creation

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the level of job creation in Scotland since 1983.

Mr. Lang: The latest figures show that between June 1983 and June 1988 the civilian work force in employment in Scotland is provisionally estimated to have increased by some 53,000.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each of the last 10 years *(a)* the total cost of the Scottish ambulance service and *(b)* the cost of its emergency service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Expenditure by the Scottish ambulance service over the last 10 years is as follows:

Year ending 31 March	*Expenditure £*
1979	11,507,707
1980	14,056,172
1981	17,474,992
1982	19,571,446
1983	20,997,971
1984	22,611,523
1985	23,501,862
1986	24,837,525
1987	28,011,143
1988	31,671,000

The expenditure on the accident and emergency element of the service is included, but is not separately identifiable.

Drink and Drug Offences

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give for each of the last five years the number of people charged for selling alcohol to those under age;

(2) if he will give for each of the last five years the number of people charged with being drunk and disorderly;

(3) if he will give for each of the last five years the number of people charged with drink or drug offences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Statistics on persons charged are not available. The table shows, for relevant offences, the number of cases cleared up by the police in Scotland in the years 1983 to 1987. (In most cases where an offence is cleared up a person is charged, though one person may be charged with several offences.)

Offences cleared up by the police, Scotland, 1983-87

Offence	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Sale of drink to person under 18	303	295	362	376	415
Other offences by licensed persons	150	148	146	119	134
Other offences against liquor licensing laws	884	934	956	734	911
Drunk and incapable and habitual drunkenness	14,344	12,986	11,698	11,396	11,397
Other drunkenness offences	702	764	874	1,010	993
Drugs offences	3,204	4,379	5,074	5,294	4,700

Nurses (Pay)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the cost of nurses' salaries following their initial regrading and how much each one had been allocated.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave today to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker).

Information on such costs will not be available until all boards have adjusted their payrolls to take account of the grading changes and have made payment of the revised salaries.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of Scottish nurses who earn *(a)* net gross and *(b)* gross under £100 per week.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally and could be gathered only at disproportionate cost. However no qualified nurse after regrading should earn less than the minimum of scale C, which is £6,975 per annum or £134 per week in terms of basic gross pay. For nursing auxiliaries the scale minimum for an 18-year-old is now £5,000 per annum or £96·15 per week but only about 10 per cent. of auxiliaries are estimated to be at this point: the majority of auxiliaries will be on scale points ranging from £100 to £121 per week. These figures relate to full-time staff and do not take account of overtime, special duty payments and other allowances which may be payable over and above basic pay.

Heart and Lung Transplants

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the facilities for heart and lung transplants in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no facilities for such transplants in Scotland.

Fish Counting

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress his Department has made with the installation of fish-counting equipment on rivers in Scotland, and the north Esk in particular; and what steps he has taken to make information on such equipment available to those responsible for salmon stocks in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The installation of fish counters and associated civil engineering works in Scottish rivers is a matter for district salmon fishery boards and salmon fishery proprietors.

With the agreement of the appropriate boards and proprietors, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland has installed fish counters for research purposes in the River North Esk at Logie and, more recently, in the Girnock Burn, Aberdeenshire. Tests of the "Logie" design of fish counter, developed with the assistance of the Department, show a high level of accuracy with regard to both upstream and downstream movements of fish.

The results of observations made on counter performance have been widely reported in scientific papers and in the published proceedings of symposia organised by

the Institute of Fishery Management and the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology and in reports by the Department's freshwater fisheries laboratory at Pitlochry.

The Department has advised a number of district salmon fishery boards and interested parties about suitable locations and in-river works for fish counters on the rivers Aray, Berriedale, Dee (Aberdeenshire), Spey, Tay and Thurso. Advice has also been given to a number of water authorities in England and Wales. I understand that the "Logie" counter has been demonstrated, for example, at the game fair at Kelso in July 1988 and that a number of counters have been sold by its manufacturers.

School Meals

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of children in each regional educational authority who were in receipt of free school meals in each academic year since 1977-78.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of children who were receiving free school meals on the date of the annual school meal census, conducted in January, is as follows, from 1978—

Region division or Island authority	*Number of pupils receiving free school meals*										
	1978	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Border	1,769	1,572	1,365	773	966	1,097	1,113	1,136	1,065	1,203	1,184
Central	6,496	5,594	4,708	5,084	5,853	6,584	6,443	7,311	6,975	8,046	7,740
Dumfries and Galloway	3,959	3,581	2,851	2,017	2,265	2,705	2,718	2,765	2,950	2,826	2,994
Fife	8,424	7,632	6,443	6,146	6,935	7,263	6,719	8,639	8,172	9,025	8,927
Grampian	6,342	6,564	5,935	3,225	3,709	4,117	4,318	4,704	4,800	5,593	5,967
Highland	4,299	4,272	3,674	2,339	2,813	3,415	3,438	4,312	4,355	4,643	4,960
Lothian	17,568	17,141	14,655	13,162	14,145	12,854	12,413	14,201	13,711	14,689	15,773
Strathclyde	94,357	84,999	72,881	74,565	79,406	85,426	82,348	84,096	84,659	87,362	87,147
Argyll and Bute	1,861	1,709	1,497	1,336	1,443	1,563	1,525	1,469	1,510	1,560	1,555
Ayr	12,601	11,329	10,592	10,579	10,801	12,295	12,690	13,202	12,540	13,266	12,899
Dumbarton	8,255	7,204	5,734	5,823	6,838	7,972	7,385	8,103	8,622	9,340	9,027
Glasgow	39,239	37,234	31,743	32,913	34,156	36,045	33,791	33,947	34,059	34,671	35,337
Lanark	21,558	17,827	15,135	15,885	16,631	17,172	17,316	16,959	16,759	16,823	16,585
Renfrew	10,843	9,696	8,180	8,029	9,537	10,379	9,641	10,416	11,169	11,702	11,744
Tayside	10,020	9,234	8,208	5,610	6,597	7,380	7,702	7,854	8,154	7,921	8,720
Orkney	393	393	385	412	389	520	512	477	429	438	432
Shetland	244	223	155	163	189	183	236	246	232	270	263
Western Isles	1,840	1,781	1,358	1,215	1,280	1,409	1,375	928	1,125	1,178	1,112
Scotland	155,711	142,986	122,618	114,711	124,547	132,953	129,335	136,669	136,627	143,194	145,219

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the current charge levied for a school meal in each regional and divisional education authority.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Region Division or Island Authority	*Charge for a Fixed Price School Meal (pence)*
Borders	50
Central	60
Dumfries and Galloway	60
Fife	50
Grampian	[1]63
	[2]73
Highland	70
Lothian	[1]55
	[2]60
Strathclyde	64
Argyll and Bute	64
Ayr	64
Dumbarton	64
Glasgow (City)	64
Lanark	64
Renfrew	64
Tayside	[1]65
	[2]70
Orkney	60
Shetland	60
Western Isles	70

[1] Primary
[2] Secondary

Teachers (Ill Health)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of school teachers in each regional and divisional education authority who, in 1987, retired early due to ill health; if he will list these figures showing a breakdown per age and per sex; and if he will list comparable figures for 1982 and 1977.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not available centrally in the form requested. The table sets out the figures by age and sex, of members of the Scottish teachers' superannuation scheme aged under 60 who retired on grounds of ill health for the years ending on 31 March 1978 and 1983 as well as the provisional figures for the year ending on 31 March 1987, the last year for which figures are available.

Age	*1978*		*1983*		*1987*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Under 40	—	4	6	7	3	12
40 to 45	5	3	3	10	9	13
46 to 50	6	11	7	9	15	22

Age	1978 Male	1978 Female	1983 Male	1983 Female	1987 Male	1987 Female
51 to 55	16	13	17	43	24	43
56 to 59	16	26	23	32	31	44
TOTAL	43	57	56	101	82	134

Council Rents

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide figures showing the current average council rent in Scotland, the amount by which this lies below estimated market rent and the percentage increase in council house rents since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The average local authority rent in Scotland for 1988-89 is £16·23 per dwelling per week. This is 231 per cent. higher than the equivalent average in 1979. There are no available estimates of average market rents.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give figures showing the gross collectable council rent and gross rent arrears for Scotland for the years ending 31 March 1980 to 1988 inclusive.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table.

Gross collectable rent		Rent arrears as at 30 September	
Financial year	Rent £ million	Year	Rent arrears £ million
1979-80	228·4	1979	[1]24·4
1980-81	273·3	1980	[1]4·7
1981-82	356·9	1981	[1]37·0
1982-83	414·7	1982	[1]9·9
1983-84	448·2	1983	[4]16·0
1984-85	469·1	1984	16·7
1985-86	512·0	1985	[5]17·7
1986-87	569·3	1986	22·0
1987-88	629·9	1987	24·4

Notes:

1. Rent arrears information was not provided by [1]Glasgow, [2]Perth and Kinross, [3]Annandale and Eskdale, [4]Roxburgh and [5]Western Isles for these years.

2. Information on rent arrears at 30 September 1988 is not yet available.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give figures showing housing investment programme allocations for Scotland for each year between 1978-79 to 1987-88 at both outturn and 1986-87 prices.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The aggregate gross housing capital allocations covering local authority housing activity on both the housing revenue account and non-housing revenue account have been as follows:—

Scotland: Gross housing capital allocations

Year	Cash terms (£ million)	Real terms[1] (£ million)
1978-79	232·779	454·833
1979-80	279·300	466·948
1980-81	291·220	410·637
1981-82	326·878	419·408
1982-83	386·227	462·614
1983-84	408·625	467·465
1984-85	417·882	457·817
1985-86	415·344	429·389
1986-87	457·557	457·557
1987-88	568·231	540·997

[1] 1986-87 prices.

Council House Sales

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give figures showing the average discount on sales of local authority and new town dwellings in Scotland for all years since 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table.

Sales of dwellings

Year	Average discount: Local authority amount £	Local authority percentage	New towns amount £	New towns percentage
1980	5,817	45·0	5,776	41·3
1981	6,248	45·3	6,110	40·1
1982	6,825	45·0	6,183	39·6
1983	7,225	44·3	6,299	38·0
1984	7,994	44·9	7,268	40·5
1985	9,278	48·2	8,182	41·8
1986	9,957	48·7	9,416	44·7
1987	11,224	52·5	10,436	48·5

Fish Farming

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, in the light of his Department's review of the Crown Estate Commissioners' consultative procedures, he will extend planning controls to cover the fish farming industry; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend's review of the Crown Estate Commissioners' consultative procedures is not yet complete. A statement will be made in due course.

PMT Audiology

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the number of *(a)* basic posts and *(b)* senior posts in PMT audiology which in the last two years have been filled by lower grades;

(2) what is the average time between the notification of a vacant post in PMT audiology and the filling of that post.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of PMT audiology staff employed by each health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested.

Scottish Law Commission (Report)

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what decisions he has reached on the recommendations of the Scottish Law Commission in their reports on Scottish term and quarter days (Scot Law Com No. 108) and on the legal capacity and responsibility of minors and pupils (Scot Law Com No. 110).

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government accept the recommendations of the Scottish Law Commission for reform in these two areas of the law.

NHS (Pay Awards)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is now in a position to announce the allocations to health boards of the additional amount to cover the cost of the review body pay awards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Health boards have been given an additional £93·433 million over and above their initial allocations for 1988-89 to allow them to meet the cost of the review body pay awards. The additional allocations relate to nurses and other staff covered by the review bodies and are as follows:

Board	*Additional allocation*
	(£ million)
Argyll and Clyde	6·699
Ayrshire and Arran	5·040
Borders	1·466
Dumfries and Galloway	2·418
Fife	4·711
Forth Valley	4·415
Grampian	8·624
Greater Glasgow	24·177
Highland	3·526
Lanarkshire	7·755
Lothian	14·936
Orkney	0·266
Shetland	0·326
Tayside	8·589
Western Isles	0·485

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Diplomatic Missions (Parking Regulations)

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last sent reminders to diplomatic missions in the United Kingdom that Her Majesty's Government expect them to conform to parking regulations, and to request their heads of mission to issue instructions to their staff to pay any penalties or fines incurred; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: On arrival in London all diplomats are sent a memorandum by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office explaining that they are required to comply with local parking regulations and to pay any fines, and describing the problems caused by illegal parking. In addition, these points are set out in a longer memorandum on diplomatic privileges and immunities which is issued to all diplomatic missions and which was most recently revised and reisssued in March 1987.

We are confident that all diplomatic missions in London are fully aware of their obligations in this respect.

PRIME MINISTER

Bridlington

Mr. John Townend: To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Bridlington.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so.

TRANSPORT

PSV Licences

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why he has recently raised the fee for a public service vehicle driving licence by 125 per cent.; why the increase over the last five years has amounted to 350 per cent.; and if he will make a statement concerning the calculation of the fees now charged.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The PSV licence fee is now £22·50 for a five-year licence.

It is Government policy that the vocational driver licensing system should be financially self-supporting. The PSV drivers' licence fees have never covered the cost of providing the service. The previous fees, which were set in 1985, were not designed to recover the costs in full. It was recognised at the time that further substantial increases would be needed in order to achieve full recovery. The new fee levels should put these services onto a sound financial footing in the coming years.

British Rail (Investment)

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much British Rail invested each year since 1970 on both a railways and a corporate basis; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The British Railways Board has invested the following amounts:

	Railway Investment		*Corporate Investment*	
	Cash	*1988-89 Prices*	*Cash*	*1988-89 Prices*
	£ million	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*
1970	50	292	79	462
1971	62	331	93	497
1972	73	360	109	539
1973	81	374	123	568
1974	110	443	124	498
1975	150	474	171	541
1976	161	443	200	551
1977	182	440	214	517
1978	194	421	245	532
1979	229	433	300	568
1980	284	449	337	534
1981	263	373	310	440
1982	236	311	269	355
1983	241	302	277	348
[1]1984-85	377(302)	448(358)[1]	404(323)[1]	481(384)[1]
1985-86	381	427	412	462
1986-87	380	414	411	447
1987-88	495	517	543	567
Its planned investment is:				
1988-89	—	560[2]	—	624[2]
1989-90	—	755[3]	—	812[3]
1990-91	—	755[3]	—	812[3]
1991-92	—	755[3]	—	812[3]
1992-93	—	755[3]	—	812[3]

[1] 15 months accounting period. 12 month equivalent shown in brackets.
[2] Budget.
[3] Average annual total for remainder of Plan period.

All investment in track, signalling, locomotives, rolling stock, stations and railway facilities is included in railway investment. Corporate investment also includes investment in subsidiaries. With the sale of subsidiaries, including the shipping, hovercraft and hotels businesses, and the impending sale of BREL and Travellers Fare, the need for non-railway corporate investment is steadily decreasing.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Apperknowle Airstrip

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of Customs and Excise checks and investigations over the past five years at the airstrip at Apperknowle in Derbyshire.

Mr. Lilley: It is not usual to disclose information of this kind. To do so could prejudice the operational effectiveness of Customs and Excise.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the amounts of official debt to the United Kingdom country by country that will fall within the ambit of the scheme to ease the official debt burden of the poorest and most heavily indebted countries in sub-Saharan Africa agreed in Berlin last month.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 3 November 1988]:* Official debt comprises debt owed to the ODA and to ECGD. The old aid loans made by the ODA to countries which are now eligible to benefit from the special Paris Club reschedulings for the poorest most heavily indebted countries which are following approved adjustment programmes, have already been converted to grants. For reasons of commercial confidentiality, ECGD does not reveal its exposure country by country. ECGD's total exposure to the countries now thought to be eligible is estimated at around £1 billion.

Palace of Westminster (Paper)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the estimated value of paper supplied to the Palace of Westminster in the complete financial year 1987-88.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 3 November 1988]:* The value of paper supplied to the Palace of Westminster for the financial year 1987-88 is assessed at £790,000.

THE ARTS

British Library

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is his latest estimate of *(a)* the date of completion of the current phase of construction of the new British Library and *(b)* the final cost of construction.

Mr. Luce: Work on the current phase of construction, 1A, which began in 1982 is on schedule to be completed in 1993. The British Library will commence occupation of the building from 1991. A cash target for the construction of 1A has been established at £300 million. This is equivalent to the £242·5 million at second quarter 1987 prices which I reported to the House last December.

As I announced on 3 November, the Government have decided that the project will be completed by 1996 at a cost of £90 million at current prices. This will be converted into a cash target when detailed design work for the completion phase is finalised.

HEALTH

Bed Occupancy and Waiting Lists

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will state the average daily number of beds occupied in the National Health Service in the United Kingdom in 1960, 1970, 1979, 1984 and 1988;

(2) if he will state the number of people on hospital waiting lists in England and the United Kingdom and the number of unoccupied beds for 1960, 1970, 1979, 1984 and 1988.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table for regional health authorities in England. Beds may be unoccupied for a variety of reasons, for example, because they are being held for emergency or maternity admissions or because of unexpectedly early discharges.

The steering group on Health Service information (Körner) recommended that bed occupancy statistics should not be used as indicators of efficient bed use. A more useful measure is throughput per available bed. In 1986 20·3 cases were treated per available bed compared with 15 in 1979 and only 8·8 in 1960.

Questions about the rest of the United Kingdom are for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Northern Ireland.

Average daily occupied beds, unoccupied beds and in-patient waiting list, National Health Service hospitals England

Year	Average daily number of occupied beds[4]	Average daily number of available beds[4] not occupied	In-patient waiting list[1 2]
1960	388,007	60,336	442,995
[3]1970	351,251	72,370	525,926
1979	293,272	68,398	752,422
1984	269,324	65,189	692,945
1986	254,597	61,117	673,107
1988	—	—	678,777

[1] As at 31 December for 1960 and 1970, as at 31 March for 1979 to 1988.
[2] Figures for 1988 are on a comparable basis with previous statistics.
[3] The count of occupied beds excluded beds reserved for psychiatric patients on short leave.
[4] Bed occupancy figures are based on a midnight count and do not reflect the use of beds by patients who do not stay overnight.

Mr. Paul Cleeland

Mr. John Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what treatment has been given to Mr. Paul Cleeland at Moss Side special hospital by the responsible medical officer.

Mrs. Currie: Since his admission to Moss Side hospital Mr. Cleeland has had a high level of support and has been extensively assessed. There is, however, a difference of opinion between the responsible medical officer and the patient over the treatment that he should be given and Mr. Cleeland's case remains under review. If the hon. Member requires further details he may care to contact the medical director of Moss Side hospital.

Mr. John Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set up an independent inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the detention and treatment of Mr. Paul Cleeland.

Mrs. Currie: No. Mr. Cleeland was transferred to Moss Side hospital from Parkhurst prison on 18 March 1987 under section 47 of the Mental Health Act 1983 on the basis of reports from two registered medical practitioners that he was suffering from mental illness of a nature or degree which made it appropriate for him to be detained in hospital for treatment. Mr. Cleeland's case was considered by an independent mental health review tribunal from 22 to 26 February 1988 which concluded that he was properly detained in hospital.

Medical Officers (Special Hospitals)

Mr. John Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances a responsible medical officer in a special hospital is *(a)* required or *(b)* advised to seek a second opinion before treating a patient.

Mrs. Currie : The responsible medical officer is required to obtain both the consent of the patient and a second opinion if he wishes to treat the patient with psychosurgery or by surgical implantation of hormones for the purpose of reducing male sex drive. The consent of the patient or a second opinion is required for drug treatment, of three months or more have elapsed since drugs were first given during a period of detention, or for electroconvulsive therapy at any time during a period of detention.

Other forms of medical treatment for mental disorder from which the patient is suffering may be given without his consent being required. It is accepted good practice within the special hospital service however to seek the patient's consent and where that is not or cannot be given to seek the independent advice of a suitably qualified person who is not a member of the clinical team responsible for the patient.

Moss Side Hospital

Mr. John Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for health, what effect industrial action at Moss Side on 18 November 1987 and thereafter had on *(a)* patients in general and *(b)* Mr. Paul Cleeland.

Mrs. Currie: From 18 to 28 November 1987 members of the Prison Officers Association locked patients into their side rooms for prolonged periods of each day. Consequently normal off-ward activites, for example, occupational work, rehabilitation, education and recreation were disrupted. Management limited the effects of this by organising as much on-ward activity as possible including patient education. Some visits were also curtailed. The basic elements of patient care, medication, food and hygiene, were provided without interference and there was a continued high level of presence on the wards by doctors, senior nurses and other professionals. Neither the safety nor security of the public or patients was in jeopardy at any time.

As a result of the industrial action some patients have begun legal proceeedings against the POA and, as part of that, independent medical experts are presently assessing the effect of the action on the medical condition of individual patients. We deplore all industrial action in our hospitals.

Junior Doctors

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he has any plans to introduce regulations to limit the number of hours worked by a junior hospital doctor in a working week; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the latest figure for the average number of hours worked by junior hospital doctors in a working week; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No. We have no plans to introduce regulations. Junior hospital doctors' average hours of work in a working week have been reduced from 58·3 in 1981 to 57 in 1985. Hours of duty, as distinct from hours actually worked, fell from an average of 91·3 a week in 1976 to 85·7 in 1986. In June 1988, and with the agreement of the profession, the Government announced a new scheme to reduce further the hours of work. Local professional working parties are being set up in every district to advise on the elimination, wherever possible, of regular rota commitments which require a junior to be on duty, on average, more than one night and weekend in three.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Vehicle Clamps

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to what information he has of private sector firms offering to assist owners of clamped vehicles improperly removing warning labels and other notices from cars clamped by the Metropolitan police and substituting advertising matter; and what action is being taken against such firms.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that the commissioner is aware of at least one company offering a facility by which the statutory fee for the removal of wheelclamps is paid at one of the central London payment centres on behalf of the drivers. The driver is required to provide the money for the fee in addition to an annual subscription charge.

The commissioner is also aware of isolated incidents involving the unlawful removal of warning notices from clamped vehicles. Appropriate action will be taken where sufficient evidence is available.

Mr. Pak Hin Yau

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Easington requesting a meeting to discuss the case of Mr. Pak Hin Yau's application for British citizenship.

Mr. Renton: The hon. Member is due to meet me to discuss the case of Mr. Pak Hin Yau on Tuesday 15 November.

Women's Issues

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the ministerial group on women's issues will be discussing the recommendaions of the EOC report: "Caring for Children—Services and Policies for Childcare and Equal Opportunities: 1988".

Mr. John Patten: I assume that the hon. Member has in mind the recommendations in the report for the European Commission's childcare network. They are among the matters which are being discussed by the ministerial group on women's issues as part of its consideration of women's employment and childcare services.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how good equal opportunities practice was followed in the nomination of the membership of the ministerial group on women's issues.

Mr. John Patten: Ministers attend the ministerial group on women's issues on the basis of their departmental responsibilities for matters within the remit of the group.

Jurors

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce legislation to vary the age limit for jurors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Section 119 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 increases from 65 to 70 the maximum age at which a person may qualify for jury service. I do not rule out a further increase in due course. I have no present plans to increase the minimum age from 18.

Remands in Custody

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in reducing the time spent in custody on remand awaiting trial.

Mr. John Patten: In the last two years, there has been a reduction in waiting times between committal and start of trial in the Crown court for defendants committed in custody. In 1986 the average waiting time was 10·4 weeks; this has fallen to 9·8 weeks in 1987 despite an increase of 17 per cent. in the number of cases received.

Even so, waiting times for defendants held in custody awaiting trial at both the magistrates courts and the Crown court remain longer than we would wish and we continue to press for improvements.

Violent Criminals

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to assess whether violent criminals receive prison sentences which are both exemplary and a deterrent to others; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Sentencing in individual cases is a matter for the courts. The Home Department collects sentencing statistics and keeps in touch with trends so that, for example we can recommend to Parliament an increase in maximum penalties which are too low for deterrence.

There have been significant increases in Crown court sentences for serious offences of violence in the past three years. For armed robbery, the average sentence imposed on men aged 21 or over (this being the average generally quoted for purposes of comparison) is now seven years.

Prisoners (Condoms)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has yet come to a decision about the supply of condoms to prisoners.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 26 July to his question on this subject at columns *197-98*.

Police Forces (Establishment)

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects police forces in England and Wales to achieve their authorised establishment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Police forces by and large are at their authorised establishment though numbers will rise and fall reflecting recruitment and wastage patterns.

Mr. Paul Cleeland

Mr. John Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when, and for what reason, Mr. Paul Cleeland was transferred from prison to Moss Side hospital.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Mr. Cleeland was transferred to Moss Side hospital under section 47 of the Mental Health Act 1983 on 18 March 1987. This followed the receipt of reports from two qualified medical practitioners that he was suffering from mental illness of a nature and degree which made it appropriate for him to be detained in a hospital for treatment.

Mr. John Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider using his powers under section 50(1) of the Mental Health Act 1983 to recall Mr. Paul Cleeland from Moss Side on the grounds that no effective treatment for his disorder can be given in that hospital.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend can consider remitting Mr. Cleeland to prison under these powers only if the responsible medical officer notifies him either that Mr. Cleeland no longer requires treatment in hospital for mental disorder or that no effective treatment for his disorder can be given at Moss Side hospital.

Prisons

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cells there are in *(a)* Her Majesty's prison Liverpool, Hornby road and *(b)* Risley remand centre.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of cells is as follows:

Prison	*Cells*
Liverpool	840
Risley	542

These cells are certified to accommodate either one or two inmates. Both establishments also have non-cellular accommodation in hospital wards and other rooms.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are currently in *(a)* Her Majesty's prison Liverpool, Hornby road and *(b)* Risley remand centre.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On Wednesday 2 November 1988, 1,386 prisoners were held in Her Majesty's prison Liverpool and 723 prisoners were held in Her Majesty's remand centre, Risley.

Dogs

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is prepared to confirm local authority byelaws which will make it an offence for a person in charge of a dog in an urban area to fail to remove any faeces it might deposit on pavement or grass verges.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Following an approach from Westminster city council I have agreed to the establishment of a pilot project to test the effectiveness of this approach to the dog-fouling problem. Subject to considering any objections I propose shortly to confirm a byelaw which will apply to footways, footpaths and grass verges throughout the city. The experimental byelaw will run for two years and its operation will be carefully monitored by the Home Office and the city council. If at the end of that period the byelaw has proved an effective remedy to the problem I shall consider whether to offer it as a model for adoption by other local authorities.

Begging

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been charged with begging in London in each of the past five years.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 27 October 1988]:* The readily available information, which relates to prosecutions for begging in the Metropolitan police district, is given in the following table:

Metropolitan Police District

Year	*Total proceeded against*
1983	916
1984	498
1985	289
1986	333
1987	416

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Act

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek to extend the provisions of the Food Act to apply to the whole of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I are in the process of carrying out a review of the Food Act 1984 and the Food and Drugs (Scotland) Act 1956. We expect to reach a conclusion shortly. It will be for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to decide subsequently, and separately, what action he may wish to take in respect of food legislation applicable in Northern Ireland.

Agricultural Support

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the total amount of support for agriculture by the Government, expressed both as a percentage of gross domestic product and as a percentage of public expenditure for 1960, 1970, 1979, 1984, and 1988.

Mr. MacGregor: Expenditure by calendar year is not readily available. Figures for financial years are set out below.

The forecast of spending on agriculture in 1988-89 was revised for the autumn statement.

Expenditure on agricultural support in the United Kingdom

	£ million	*Per cent. GDP*	*Per cent. Public expenditure*
1960-61	263	1·01	2·77
1970-71	257	0·49	1·19
1979-80	677	0·33	0·75
1984-85	1,706	0·53	1·12
[1]1988-89	1,500	0·33	0·8

[1] Forecast.

Expenditure relates to payments made direct to farmers or traders; it does not include related expenditure such as disease prevention, advice, research and development, land drainage and administration.

Fish Stocks

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking in advance of any schemes to construct a barrage on the estuaries of the Severn and Wye, and of the Usk, to establish the state of migratory fish stocks in these rivers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The proposal for a tidal barrage on the Severn is being studied under a programme funded by the Department of Energy, the CEGB and the Severn tidal power group. A series of environmental assessments —including, I understand, one of the impact on migratory fish stocks—has been commissioned as part of the study. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I will need to be consulted in due course about any firm plans to take these proposals forward in view of our responsibilities for fisheries. We shall also wish to discuss any proposals with the relevant water authorities in view of their responsibilities for assessing the status of migratory fish stocks as part of their statutory duties under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975.

Salmon

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress his Department is making towards the establishment of salmon dealer licensing scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Proposals for salmon dealer licensing schemes in England, Wales and Scotland were circulated earlier this year. Work is in hand in drawing up schemes in the light of comments. We hope to obtain parliamentary approval of the necessary orders as quickly as possible.

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reports have so far been completed by the Dunnett committee on salmon stocks; and when these reports will all be published.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Fisheries Ministers recently received the salmon advisory committee's first report entitled "Information on the status of salmon stocks". It was decided that this report should be published. It was released on 23 September and copies have been placed in the Library of the House. The salmon advisory committee continues to examine a range of factors affecting salmon stocks in Great Britain. Decisions on publication of any future reports to Ministers will be taken at the time.

Radioactivity

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the results of his Department's terrestrial radioactivity monitoring programme.

Mr. Ryder: Since the beginning of 1986, the Ministry's routine programme of analysis of samples collected from agricultural areas around the major nuclear sites in England and Wales has been expanded. The results are to be published annually. The "Terrestrial Radioactivity Monitoring Programme: Report for 1986", which includes the results obtained from samples collected during the first year of the expanded programme, was published on 8 August and a copy placed in the Library of the House.

The 1987 annual report of the Ministry's routine programme for monitoring radioactivity in the aquatic environment, "Radioactivity in Surface and Coastal Waters of the British Isles", was published on 21 October and is also available in the Library.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has plans to add vinyl chloride disease to the list of diseases qualifying for disablement benefit under category C24 of his Department's leaflet N12.

Mr. Scott: In considering additions to the list of prescribed industrial diseases, we are advised by an independent body, the industrial injuries advisory council. The council has made no recommendations concerning vinyl chloride disease, though a number of conditions arising from work with vinyl chloride monomer have been recognised and are already prescribed. I understand the council is keeping other effects of vinyl chloride monomer under review.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons have been affected by tax changes to the reduced earnings allowance of the industrial injury and disablement benefit which were implemented on 10 April; and what is the Government's latest estimate of the savings made by these changes.

Mr. Scott: I assume the changes to which the hon. Member refers are those whereby entitlement to reduced earnings allowance will cease when a beneficiary reaches pensionable age and retires from regular employment and a new benefit, retirement allowance, may be payable in its place. These changes make no difference to the treatment of reduced earnings allowance for income tax purposes, and it remains non-taxable. Retirement allowance will also be non-taxable. The estimated benefit savings arising from these changes are £2 million in 1989-90, rising to £10 million in 1991-92.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what new measures he intends to take to increase the take-up of means-tested benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On family credit, a special major exercise will start at the end of this month to issue a leaflet about family credit to people when they collect their child benefit from the post office. This new leaflet gives more information about family credit, particularly on points where there is evidence of misunderstanding, and encourages people to claim. We shall also improve the information about family credit in the child benefit order book itself, and in the whole range of departmental leaflets, as these come up for renewal. We are looking at ways to improve the claim form, following experience of the form in use.

For the future, we plan to have a further major advertising campaign, including television, and we shall continue other ways of publicising family credit, especially to make clear the levels of income at which it can be paid.

Income support and housing benefit will continue to have a wide distribution of leaflets, claim forms and information sheets. Many of these have been translated for use by claimants from ethnic minority groups. Advice is also readily available through regional and local information services and through the Freeline telephone service.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take steps to simplify and shorten the number of questions asked on application forms for family credit and other social benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department employs professional information designers to produce major claim forms. They take care to ask only those questions that are essential to give the information required to arrive at correct decisions on entitlement, without the need for follow-up inquiries which might delay payment of benefit.

No one has to answer every question on a particular form. Only parts that are applicable to the individual have to be filled in, and these parts are clearly signalled. This means that the form may look rather long, but is easier to fill in than a first impression might suggest.

Income Support

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if claimants recovering from ill-health and in receipt of an income support disability premium lose their disability premium if they take up a place in the employment training scheme.

Mr. Scott: It is our intention that the disability premium remains in payment during employment training. The Income Support (General) Regulations do not quite achieve that intention for all claimants. Those who are not blind or do not have a qualifying benefit or an invalid carriage do not at present retain the premium. The regulations will therefore be amended shortly so that no one loses the disability premium during employment training.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, in light of the recent regulations abolishing the £250 limit on charitable gifts received by income support claimants, the limit on the amount that can be paid to employment training scheme trainees as a terminal bonus is to be abolished.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Regulations abolishing the £250 limit on charitable or voluntary payments which are not paid or which are not due to be paid, regularly have yet to be laid before Parliament. The first £200 of any terminal bonus paid to someone participating in employment training is disregarded under a separate provision and we have no plans to alter that amount. Any additional bonus, which is not paid in respect of any specified period, at present counts towards the £250 limit mentioned; we propose that in future it will be treated as capital.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims have been made to his Department by 16 and 17-year-olds for payment of income support under the severe hardship regulations since September; how many have been accepted and rejected; and if he will make a statement on the grounds on which he has granted those claims for income support which have been successful.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In the seven weeks since the withdrawal of general entitlement to income support from 16 and 17-year-olds on 12 September 1988, 835 applications for a direction by the Secretary of State to award benefit under the "severe hardship" provision were received. Of these 545 (65 per cent.) resulted in a direction being given and 290 (35 per cent.) resulted in a direction being refused. Most directions were in respect of young people living in commercial board and lodging establishmets or in hostels who faced eviction if the accommodation charge was not paid in full when it fell due.

Each application is dealt with on its merits having regard to such factors as the young person's health and vulnerability, the availability of any income or savings, the prospects of speedy entry into the youth training scheme, the availability of casual work, the possibility of help from friends or relatives and the extent and pressing nature of any financial commitments.

Claims (Processing Costs)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest figure available for the cost per claimant of processing a claim for *(a)* child benefit and *(b)* family credit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not readily available. The latest available administrative figures for child benefit are for 1986-87. These suggest that the administrative costs of child benefit and one-parent benefit represent about 2·2 per cent. of benefit expenditure. The average weekly administrative cost per beneficiary was about 20 pence. For family income supplement the corresponding figures are 5·4 per cent. and 80p respectively.

Payments

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received on his latest review of social security payments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We receive a variety of representations on many issues concerning social security payments.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will give figures showing the proportion of council tenants in England and Wales which receive housing benefit, and the proportion of these which are in receipt of supplementary benefit and have their rents paid in full;

(2) if he will give figures showing the proportion of council tenants in Scotland which receive housing benefit, and the proportion of these which are in receipt of supplementary benefit and have their rents paid in full.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information available is given in the table.

Council house tenants receiving assistance through the housing benefit scheme: 1987

	England and Wales *Per cent.*	*Scotland* *Per cent.*
A. Proportion of Council tenants receiving housing benefit	64	62
B. Proportion in A above receiving supplementary benefit	57	48

Note: Though supplementary benefit provided a passport to housing benefit some tenants would not receive full rent rebates because of deductions where non dependants were present in the household.

Source: The information for England and Wales is derived from the publication "Housing Rent Statistics at April 1987" produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and for Scotland from the "Scottish Development Department Statistical Bulletin" (HSU No. 1) and local authority housing benefit subsidy estimates for 1987-88.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average waiting time for the determination of an appeal to a medical board against the disallowance of a claim for mobility allowance.

Mr. Scott: It is estimated that the average time taken, between receipt of an appeal to a medical board and the issue of the notification of the outcome, is currently about 13½ weeks.

Dependants (Additions)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the expenditure on additions for dependants in 1978-79 and 1987-88 at 1987-88 prices to recipients of *(a)* invalidity benefit, *(b)* NCIP/severe disablement allowance and *(c)* invalid care allowance.

Mr. Scott: The requested information is as follows:

	1978-79 (expressed in 1987-88 prices) *£ million*	*1987-88* *£ million*
(a) Invalidity benefit	470	538
(b) NCIP/severe disablement allowance	4	6
(c) Invalid care allowance	1	3

Benefit Upratings

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the rise in *(a)* the retail price index and *(b)* the index of motoring costs between the November 1978 and April 1988 benefit upratings.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: *(a)* 106·1 per cent.
(b) 99·6 per cent.

Community Care

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in view of the low take-up of community care grants from the social fund, if he will consider altering the conditions under which community care grants can be awarded, in order that more payments of this sort can be made.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans to alter the conditions under which community care grants can be awarded. We are, however, considering what might need to be done further to improve take-up which has steadily increased in recent months.

NI Contributions (Eligibility)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state the number of workers earning less than makes them eligible for national insurance contributions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In 1987-88 it is estimated that on average 2·7 million people received weekly earnings less than the lower earnings limit for class 1 contributions.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he has taken to ensure that the severe disablement allowance complies with the European Community directive on sex discrimination; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The eligibility criteria for severe disablement allowance were devised in accordance with legal advice to ensure that they complied with EC directive 79/7 on equal treatment in social security.

A judgment by the European Court of Justice in 1987 showed however that there had been an unsuspected infringement of the directive affecting a limited group of married women who claimed severe disablement allowance during the transitional period, on the basis of entitlement to the former benefit, non-contributory invalidity pension. From central records we have been able to identify the women who might have been affected and the vast majority of them have now been told whether they are able to benefit from the judgment.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many men, single women and married women have undergone medical assessment of their disability when seeking severe disablement allowance; how many men, single women and married women have applied for the allowance; if he will give totals for each group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: At April 1987, the last date for which figures are available 22,185 people—5,095 men, 3,102 single or divorced women and widows, and 13,988 married women —had been medically examined in order to assess the extent of their disablement.

Since April 1987 statistics for severe disablement allowance have been collected on the same basis as those for sickness and invalidity benefit and updated information in the form requested is not available. As at 30 September 1988 some 121,000 claims for severe disablement allowance had been received. I regret a breakdown by sex and marital status is not available.

Disabled People

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to publish the Government-sponsored nationwide study of disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The results of the surveys of disability conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys will be issued in a series of reports. The first report on the prevalence of disability among adults was published on 28 September 1988. The second report covering the financial circumstances of disabled adults living in private households will be published later this month.

A further four reports will be published over the next eight months. These will cover disabled adults' use of services (including those in communal establishments) and also providing the same general range of information about children.

Pensions

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will make it his policy to bring the British state pension into line with that paid by other EEC countries, with the advent of the single European market in 1992.

Mr. Scott: The single European market in 1992 does not require the harmonisation of state pension schemes between member states.

It is impossible to make simple comparisons between very different social security systems. For example only three countries—the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland and Denmark—pay flat rate retirement pensions. However, European Statistical Bureau figures show the United Kingdom spends the third highest share of gross domestic product on the elderly.

Rating Reform

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will show the effects of the proposed community charge benefit taper of 15 per cent., with tapers of *(a)* 20 per cent., *(b)* 12½ per cent., *(c)* 10 per cent. and *(d)* 7½ per cent., by showing for each of these tapers the cost at 1988-89 prices of paying community charge benefit to each of the following categories of income units, showing for each category how many income units he estimates would actually receive community charge benefit and how many would be entitled to community charge benefit: (i) all income units, (ii) income units consisting of a single person over pensionable age, (iii) income units consisting of a couple both of whom are over pensionable age, (iv) income units consisting of a single person with dependent children, (v) income units consisting of a single person of less than pensionable age without dependent

children, (vi) income units consisting of a married or cohabiting couple one or both of whom is of less than pensionable age, without dependent children, (vii) income units consisting of a married or cohabiting couple with dependent children and (viii) any income units not included in the categories above;

(2) what he now estimates will be *(a)* the total cost of community charge benefits in 1990-91 at 1988-89 prices, *(b)* the total number of income units in receipt of community charge benefits in 1990-91, *(c)* the total number of income units entitled to community charge benefits, whether or not they claim and receive benefit, *(d)* the total cost in 1988-89 of rate rebates, *(e)* the total number of income units in households which are in receipt of rate rebates in 1988-89, *(f)* the total number of income units in households which are entitled to rate rebates on 1988-89, whether or not rebate is actually claimed and received and *(g)* the cost of administering rate rebates in 1988-89 and the cost of administering community charge benefits in 1990-91, at 1988-89 prices; and if he will attribute any additional cost of community charge benefit compared to rate rebates to (i) payment of benefit to non-householders, (ii) the reduction in the taper from 20 per cent. to 15 per cent., (iii) increased administrative costs and (iv) other reasons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to the reply, 28 July 1988, c. 522]:* The available information is set out in the tables. I refer the hon. Member also to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) on 19 October at columns *897-98*. The models used by this Department for housing benefit produce forecasts of case load rather than numbers entitled. Local authorities' estimated costs in administering rate rebates in 1988-89 are an integral part of their costs in administering the housing benefit scheme generally and are not identified separately. The Price Waterhouse study of community charge costs, commissioned by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment estimated that the additional cost of administering community charge benefits in 1990-91 would be £16·75 million (in 1988-89 prices). I understand, however, that Price Waterhouse believed that the information on which this figure was based was less reliable than the information used for its other estimates. The estimates of the additional non-administrative costs (in 1988-89 prices) of the community charge benefit scheme are as follows:

a. through payment to non-householders: £235 million.

b. through lowering taper from 20 to 15 per cent. (for householders only): £100 million.

Case load and costs of the community charge benefit scheme by family type—the effects of changes in the taper

Community charge benefit case load *(thousands)*

Family type	*Taper* 20 per cent.	15 per cent.	12·5 per cent.	10 per cent.	7·5 per cent.
Pensioners					
Single	2,590	2,730	2,800	2,870	2,970
Couple	1,050	1,190	1,260	1,340	1,460
Non-pensioners					
Lone parent	670	680	680	710	750
Single no child	1,660	1,740	1,810	1,930	2,220
Couple no child	480	550	610	730	930
Couple with child	1,000	1,200	1,370	1,660	2,150
Total	7,450	8,080	8,520	9,230	10,470

Community charge benefit costs *(£ million)*

Family type	*Taper* 20 per cent.	15 per cent.	12·5 per cent.	10 per cent.	7·5 per cent.
Pensioners					
Single	435	455	470	485	505
Couple	285	325	350	380	415
Non-pensioners					
Lone parent	125	130	130	130	135
Single no child	295	305	315	330	355
Couple no child	155	170	180	200	235
Couple with child	340	365	395	440	525
Total	1,635	1,750	1,835	1,960	2,175

Notes:
1. The tables refer to Great Britain.
2. Costs are expressed in terms of 1988-89 prices.
3. Component figures may not sum to totals owing to rounding.
4. Case load estimates are for tax-units rather than individuals.
5. Pensioner couples are defined here as those in which both partners are aged 60 or over.

National Insurance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for those below and those above pensionable age the estimated number of earned incomes subject to employers' national insurance contributions in steps of £1,000 between £15,000 and £25,000 and in £5,000 steps thereafter, showing single persons and one-earner and two-earner married couples together with the amount collected.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to the reply, 27 July 1988, c. 362]:* The information is as follows:

Estimated number of earned incomes subject to employers' national insurance contributions by range of income earned
Persons under pensionable age
1988-89
United Kingdom

Range of income lower limit £ pa	Single persons	Married couples 1-earner	Married couples 2-earner Husbands	Married couples 2-earner Wives
	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands
15,000	72	122	159	16
16,000	68	164	206	23
17,000	61	124	167	14
18,000	54	106	101	9
19,000	40	103	111	5
20,000	37	74	90	8
21,000	28	59	73	2
22,000	20	41	59	1
23,000	14	37	53	7
24,000	13	23	35	2
25,000	37	94	131	7
30,000	18	58	67	2
35,000	7	34	24	1
40,000	4	18	13	1
45,000	2	13	8	1
50,000	12	39	19	1
TOTAL	486	1,108	1,316	100

Similar information in respect of persons over pensionable age is not available. It is not possible to break down the amount collected by way of NIC into the ranges of earned income, but the following information is available:

Estimated gross employers' National Insurance contributions in 1988-89 (full year basis) in respect of:

£ billion

	(i) All employees	(ii) Employees earning more than £15,000 per year
Single person	5·8	1·1
One earner couples	5·4	2·6
Two earner couples	8·2	3·2
Total	19·4	6·9

Gross contributions are notional contributions prior to deduction of contracted-out rebates (£3·15 billion for all employees and £1·25 billion for employees earning more than £15,000 per year).

These contributions include an estimated £100 million paid in respect of employees over pensionable age.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he wil bring up to date for the current financial year the information given in his answer of 10 December 1986, *Official Report*, column *204*, to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby concerning the distribution of incomes and national insurance contributions, adding *(a)* the saving on the abolition of the reduced rate contribution and *(b)* the numbers contracted-in and contracted-out together with their contributions.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to the reply, 27 July 1988, c. 362]:* The information is as follows:

Estimated number of total earned incomes by persons aged less than 65 by range of income: 1988-89 (thousands)
United Kingdom

Range of total earned income lower limit £ pa	Single persons	Married 1-earner	Couples 2-earner
3,.000	664	182	35
4,000	710	217	44
5,000	872	139	33
6,000	908	256	49
7,000	740	211	75
8,000	594	349	94
9,000	585	362	129
10,000	826	793	417
12,000	710	740	919
15,000	296	618	1,414
20,000	112	235	838
25,000	79	255	744
Total	7,094	4,355	4,792

For the remaining information requested, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 21 October, at columns *1028-29*.

Income Support

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if employment training scheme trainees who do not receive an income support element in their training allowance are entitled to free prescriptions and dental treatment.

Mrs. Currie: I have been asked to reply.

People on employment training schemes who are not automatically entitled to free prescriptions or free dental treatment can make a claim under the scheme which helps people on a low income with the cost of National Health services. Depending on their financial circumstances they may get free prescriptions and free dental treatment or help with dental charges.

ENERGY

Gas Meters

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the trend in the number of coin prepayment gas meters installed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: This is a matter for British Gas plc, but I understand that the numbers are falling.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the present inventory of plutonium under safeguards currently credited to the European community under Euratom treaty article 88, in the special fissile materials financial accounts.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 2 November 1988 at column *679*.

Alternative Energy

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the alternative energy projects for which the Government have provided financial assistance

over the past 12 months; whether this is intended as short, medium or long-term assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Since the inception of the Department's renewable energy research and development programme, over £132 million has been invested and a further £50 million is likely to be spent in this important area over the next three years. Over 250 separate projects are currently under way or planned and the work on each of these varies in time scale according to the work programme set out in the respective contracts.

The Department attaches great importance to the renewable technologies. Our aim is to stimulate their development to the fullest practical extent where they have prospects of being economically attractive and environmentally acceptable. Energy Paper 55 "Renewable Energy in the UK: The Way Forward" published in June and available in the Library of the House sets out our view of the development strategy for renewable energy to the year 2000, together with an estimate of the support to be shared between Government and industry on an increasing level of collaboration.

Renewable energy projects for which the Department has provided financial assistance over the past 12 months are listed in the table.

RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS WHICH HAVE RECEIVED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY DURING THE PERIOD NOVEMBER 1987 TO OCTOBER 1988

1. *Biofuel projects*
   - BR5/2—Coppiced trees as energy crops
   - BR5/3—Single stem trees as energy crops
   - C4/1 Straw combustion trials
   - Integ of forestry for energy with agriculture
   - Assessment of basic landfill microbio pt. II
   - C4/1—Support to straw combustion trials
   - Coppice weed control
   - BR5/4 Large scale trials of short rotation coppice
   - BR4/3 Eqp trials—harvesting processing and storing
   - C5/2—Wood combustion trials
   - Model for refuse processing
   - C5/2—Support to wood combustion trials
   - National assessment of LF gas production—ph. 1
   - C5/03 Monitoring of project 1557 (fibroheat)
   - Support services in forestry and energy
   - C4/6 Consultancy in farm wastes as fuel area
   - Development of a mobile straw wafering machine
   - Development of a mobile straw wafering machine
   - Thermochemical conversion of wastes and biomass
   - RDF combustion trials
   - Peat as fuel
   - Fouling and corrosion studies
   - Cyclone combustor with integrated ash removal
   - Modified chain grate stoker shell boiler
   - Waste processing and emissions monitoring
   - Shredded waste derived fuel storage bunker trials
   - Hydrogeological assessment
   - Review of market for industrial waste combustors
   - Pre treated refuse
   - RDF combustion programme consultancy services
   - RDF combustion
   - Methane recovery from anaerobic digestion of MSW
   - Access agreement 2 on project 1668
   - Review of private waste disposal contracting ind

2. *Geothermal energy projects*
   - Consultancy studies
   - Marchwood access licence
   - Southampton district heating monitoring
   - Geothermal project at Rosemanowes: phase 2B
   - Seismic monitoring in South West England: 1987 to 1989
   - Cost modelling of HDR systems
   - Geothermal project at Rosemanowes: phase 2C
   - Project management study at Rosemanowes quarry
   - Development of geothermal power plant TWVC
   - Commercialisation studies at Rosemanowes quarry
   - Consultancy services for prog
   - Radon gas measurement in CSM reservoir
   - Hydro thermal alteration of granite to 250 celcius
   - Infra-structure study—Weardale and Cumbria
   - Environmental study at Weardale and Cumbria
   - Geochemical studies of HDR reservoirs

3. *Hydro projects*
   - Feasibility of pneumatic hydro-electric systems
   - Performance and economics of pneumatic water engine
   - Pneumatic low head hydro systems (monitoring)
   - Wells turbine pneumatic power conversion
   - Potential resource in United Kingdom and Northern Ireland

4. *Solar projects*
   - Operating agent for IEA task III
   - Bebington Trombe Wall house trial
   - Seri-res refinement
   - Housing layout design guide
   - Performance analysis service II
   - House design guide
   - Non domestic design studies I
   - Field trials team 2
   - Linford/Pennylands book
   - Field trials team 1 phase II (project 1169)
   - Field trials team 1 phase III (project 1169 1571)
   - Test cells 2 (EEC)
   - IEA task XI
   - Criterion values I
   - Cost analysis service II
   - Preformance analysis review I part I
   - Heat transfer coefficient review phase I
   - Performance analysis review III
   - User interface development I
   - Performance analysis review IV
   - Test cells 3
   - Code development II
   - Applicability study I
   - IEA task VIII sub task C
   - United Kingdom/United States test rooms
   - Liaison with institutions
   - Programme consultancy 2 (AB)
   - Fenestration 2000—market context study
   - Atrium/cons review
   - Non domestic building design studies 2
   - Non domestic design studies phase 2 (ATRIA)
   - House design studies II (Midlands)
   - House design studies II (South)
   - Performance analysis service
   - Assistance to the passive solar programme
   - Airflow modelling review project

5. *Wind projects*
   - Base consultancy to wind energy programme
   - Prediction of fatigue damage in wind turbines
   - Finite element modelling of wind turbines
   - Near wake wind tunnel studies
   - Monitoring equipment for 60m HAWTG LS-1 phase II and III
   - Consultancy to project 1361
   - Fatigue evaluation of wood laminates
   - Wind energy cost modelling
   - Synchronous/induction generator testing
   - Fatigue strength of weld details
   - Modal survey of prototype 25m VGVAWTG
   - Assessment of wind potential at WEC sites
   - Analysis of flexible WTGS
   - Development of turbine for Richborough site
   - Turbulence spectra for rotating VAWTG
   - Test of a WTG with stall regulated blades
   - Relocation of the 28m mast Orkney
   - Prediction of community noise levels due to WT OP
   - Fatigue tests of wood blade/stud interfaces
   - Wind tunnel evaluation of thick aerofoil sections
   - Design of support structure mech and elec systems
   - Use of wood for large WTG rotors
   - Survey of control methods for VAWTS
   - Flow visualisation in United States of America

Wind measurement at west sole

Review of GRP WTG blades and design codes
Outline design of LS-2 MW-Scale HAWTG
Benchmark exercise on load prediction
Validation of unsteady flow study
Effect of turbine rotation on maximum lift coefficient
Stall control on WTGS
Performance prediction for stalling HAWTGS
Direct coupled generators for large WTGS
Weight/cost projections for MW VAWTGS
Parametric cost study of large HAWTGS
Fatigue of welded joints in WTGS
VAWTG aerodynamics in the environment + w/tunnels
Full scale flow visualisation of WTG
Long term fatigue measurements on MS-1
Long term wind + performance data for MS1
Options for variable speed operation of HAWTGS
Base consultancy continuation
Sensitivity of design of Howden 1 MW WTG
Investigation of the onset of stall on WTG blades
Characterisation of wake turbulence
Detail design of 1·2 MW Vawtg
Design of aerofoils specifically for Vawtgs
Extension of adaptive control techniques
Noise + visuals characteristics of WTG in Milton Keynes
60 M WTG performance monitoring phase 4

Design of aerofoil sections for HAWTGS
Wind turbine control systems modelling + design
Design construction + demo of MS3 WTG
Study of an all wood composite rotor
TWT investigations of wake structure in wind farms
Environmental constraints on United Kingdom wind resource
Further development of finite element dynamic code
Future development or the Howden 750Kw/1mw WTS
Control system simulation package WTS executive group
Performance monitoring of Orkney Hants
Further studies of the vertical axis wind turbine
Construction of Carmarthen bay 25mv Vavgwtg
Performance monitoring of 25M Vavgwtg.

6. *Tidal energy projects*
Further consideration of Caisson design
Air turbines for the tidal barrages
Hydraulic effects of a tidal barrage
Mersey barrage feasibility study stage I
Tidal barrage construction
Consultancy in tidal power
Post-barrage densities of birds: wader study
Migratory fish—passage through low head turbines
Wader migration
Ecology of sub estuaries of the Severn
Post barrage densities of birds: inverterbrates
Post barrage densities of birds: sediments
Severn barrage preparation of work programme public con
Generic steel designs (SCI)
Severn barrage development project
Predicting marginal veg post barrage environment

7. *Wave energy projects*
Operation and maintenance of Cadham wave tank
Wave energy studies
Work on Wells turbine
Development of small scale sea clam
Small scale low cost wave energy devices (phase 1)
Wave tank facility University of Edinburgh
Small scale low cost wave power devices (phase II
Further work on PS Frog

8. *General studies projects*
Common costing methodology for renewables
Res and energy efficiency in Cornwall
Impact of IC N N energy R & D
CCC energy study support (project 1595)
Simple costing methodology for RE programme
Watt Committee Renewable Energy Resources Project

Note: The work on some of these projects may have been completed prior to November 1987, and financial assistance represents final pricing with respect to individual contracts.

Grimethorpe

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the financing of Grimethorpe experimental coal use station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The future financing of the Grimethorpe experimental facility is a matter for British Coal. I have nothing to add to the statement I made in the House on 2 November 1988 at columns 1162-63.

Fuel Disconnections

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has plans to recommend alterations to the guidelines governing fuel disconnections.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No. We very much value the code of practice operated by the gas and electricity industries. It has done much to help consumers by providing information on arrangements to avoid disconnection.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Glencregagh Green Wedge (Report)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the report of the Belfast urban plan public inquiry, relating to residential development in the area known as Glencregagh Green Wedge, will be published.

Mr. Needham: The report of the public inquiry is at present being prepared by the planning appeals commission. The time scale for submission of the report and the form of its presentation to the DOE (NI) are matters for the commission to decide after consultation with the Department. It is unlikely, however, that separate reports will be published for specific areas.

Organisations (Proscription)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy on harmonisation in line with the Irish Republic on proscription of membership of certain organisations.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is Government policy in Northern Ireland to proscribe those organisations which are actively and primarily engaged in the commission of criminal terrorist acts in the Province. The question of proscribing terrorist organisations in the Republic is a matter for the Irish Government.

Divis Flats

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the plans for the rehousing of the tenants of Divis flats, including the proposed provision for accommodating existing community projects.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive who has advised me that outline proposals for the redevelopment of Divis flats

have been the subject of extensive consultation with tenants and interested parties. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member to explain the Housing Executive's plans which include the identification of sites to cater for community use.

Civil Servants (Department of the Environment)

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of people employed by the Northern Ireland Civil Service who work in the professional and technical sectors of the Department of the Environment; and how many of these are Catholics.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* A total of 2,633. Disclosure of information on the religious affiliation of Northern Ireland Civil Service staff is governed by a code of practice which stipulates that no statistical summaries will be produced which fall outside the categories of analyses agreed with the equal opportunities Whitley committee. The most recent agreed analyses were published in December 1987 in the second report of the Northern Ireland Civil Service equal opportunities unit; a copy of that report was placed in the Library.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of people employed by the Northern Ireland Civil Service who work in the general administrative sector of the Department of the Environment; and how many of these are Catholics.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* A total of 2,535. Disclosure of information on the religious affiliation of Northern Ireland Civil Service staff is governed by a code of practice which stipulates that no statistical summaries will be produced which fall outside the categories of analyses agreed with the equal opportunities Whitley committee. The most recent agreed analyses were published in December 1987 in the second report of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Equal opportunities unit; a copy of that report was placed in the Library.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of people who served on *(a)* the planning directorate, *(b)* the roads service directorate and *(c)* the water service directorate of the Department of the Environment; and how many are Catholics.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 October 1988]:* The total number of staff who serve on:

(a) the planning directorate is three.
(b) the roads service directorate is four.
(c) the water service directorate is four.

Disclosure of information on the religious affiliation of Northern Ireland Civil service staff is governed by a code of practice which stipulates that no statistical summaries will be produced which fall outside the categories of analyses agreed with the equal opportunities Whitley committee. The most recent agreed analyses were published in December 1987 in the second report of the Northern Ireland Civil Service equal opportunities unit; a copy of that report was placed in the Library.

Strip Searches

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many strip searches were made of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Maghaberry, in each months for June, July, August and September of the current year; what was the number of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched; whether any prison contraband, smuggled item or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, indicating which items; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted; and if he will indicate the reasons for the search, under making a remand appearance in court, attending trial, inter-prison visit or other reasons.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 1 November 1988]:* I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave on 29 July at columns *681-2* and on 19 October at column *954*.

Terrorism

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of persons proceeded against for scheduled offences in Northern Ireland in 1986, 1987 and in the first six months of 1988; how many persons pleaded guilty to the principal offence; and how many persons in such contested cases were found not guilty of the principal offence.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 1 November 1988]:* Statistics are not available in the precise form requested. The information in respect of persons tried in the Crown court is as follows:

Year	*Persons proceeded against*	*Pleaded guilty*	*Pleaded not guilty*	*Found guilty*	*Found not guilty*
1986	596	528	68	567	29
1987	713	634	79	680	33
1988 (to 30 June)	336	293	43	317	19

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average number of days that prisoners spent on custodial remand for (i) scheduled offences, (ii) non-scheduled offences and (iii) both together, in the first half of the current year.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 1 November 1988]:* The average length of time spent on custodial remand for prisoners who were tried in the period January to June 1988 and who were in custody at the time of their trial was (i) 164 days for those charged with scheduled offences, (ii) 44 days for those charged with non-scheduled offences and (iii) 110 days for both together.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners charged with scheduled offences in the first half of the current year were remanded in custody prior to trial for periods between *(a)* up to three months, *(b)* three to six months, *(c)* six to nine

months, *(d)* nine to 12 months, *(e)* 12 to 18 months and *(f)* over 18 months for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, respectively.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 1 November 1988]:* Persons charged with scheduled offences cannot be remanded in custody for non-scheduled offences.

The length of time spent on custodial remand for persons tried in the first six months of this year and who were in custody at the time of trial and charged with scheduled and non-scheduled offences respectively was as follows:

Time in custody	*Scheduled offences*	*Non-scheduled offences*
Less than 3 months	83	178
3 months up to 6 months	57	13
6 months up to 9 months	61	17
9 months up to 12 months	42	3
12 months up to 18 months	11	2
Over 18 months	7	0

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners were remanded in custody prior to trial for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, respectively, in the current year.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 1 November 1988]:* A total of 676 persons charged with scheduled offences and 534 persons charged with non-scheduled offences were remanded in custody prior to trial in the first nine months of this year.

Arms Finds

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will detail the number of arms found in the current year under the headings of *(a)* machine guns, *(b)* rifles, *(c)* shotguns, *(d)* pistols or revolvers and *(e)* others.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 1 November 1988]:* The information in respect of the period 1 January to 24 October 1988, is as follows:

	Number
Machine guns	17
Rifles	204
Shotguns	47
Pistols/revolvers	170
Others	68

Note: "Others" include: antique weapons, anti-tank weapons, blank firing pistols, replica pistols, replica revolvers, replica sub-machine guns, starting pistols and starting revolvers.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the latest available figures for unemployment in each parliamentary constituency and in each electoral ward in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 1 November 1988]:* The numbers of unemployed claimants in each parliamentary constituency in Northern Ireland at 8 September 1988 are set out in the table. Since there are 566 wards in Northern Ireland I shall write to the hon. Member giving September unemployment figures for each electoral ward.

Parliamentary constituency	*Total*
Belfast East	4,598
Belfast North	7,744
Belfast South	5,850
Belfast West	11,013
East Antrim	5,610
East Londonderry	8,417
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	7,807
Foyle	11,164
Lagan Valley	5,713
Mid-Ulster	8,074
Newry and Armagh	8,287
North Antrim	6,067
North Down	4,278
South Antrim	5,257
South Down	5,823
Strangford	3,952
Upper Bann	6,089
	115,743

Note: Figures for parliamentary constituencies are estimated from ward data.

Compensation

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table giving the amounts in the fiscal years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 of *(a)* payments made to civilians under the Criminal Injuries Compensation (Northern Ireland) Order 1977, *(b)* payments made to members of the security forces, including the Royal Ulster Constabulary, Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve, British Army and Ulster Defence Regiment, under the Criminal Injuries Compensation (Northern Ireland) Order 1977, *(c)* compensation payments made under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978, and *(d)* compensation payments under the Criminal Damage (Compensation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 and earlier legislation.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 1 November 1988]:* The information is as follows:

	1985-86 £	*1986-87* £	*1987-88* £
Compensation payments to civilians under the Criminal Injuries (Compensation) (NI) Order 1977	6,413,998	7,242,521	7,668,387
Compensation payments to members of the security forces under the Criminal Injuries (Compensation) (NI) Order 1977	6,110,287	2,485,927	3,299,794
Compensation payments under the NI (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978	378,569	318,137	686,242
Compensation payments under the Criminal Damage (Compensation) (NI) Order 1977 and earlier legislation	17,218,357	15,265,899	19,004,436

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1985 the amount of compensation payments made under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 1 November 1988]:* No payments under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973 have been made since 1978 because of the repeal of the compensation provisions of that Act by the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportions of the members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve are currently estimated to be Catholics; and what proportion of those recruited in each year since 1986 is estimated to be Catholics.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 1 November 1988]:* Although arrangements are currently being made to introduce monitoring of the religious denomination of members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its Reserve, the database has not yet been completed. However I understand that about 10 per cent. of the combined strength of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and full-time Reserve is believed to be Roman Catholic. It is estimated that the proportion of recruits to the force since 1986 who are Roman Catholic is as follows:

	RUC Percent	*RUC Full-time Reserve Percent*
1986	10	12
1987	9	7
1988 (to October)	10	9

The Royal Ulster Constabulary will continue its efforts to attract suitably qualified recruits from all sections of the community.

Firearm Certificates

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and its Reserve, currently hold private firearms certificates.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 1 November 1988]:* Information regarding the total number of private firearm certificates held by members of the Ulster Defence Regiment including part-time members is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. and Mrs. B. Fegan

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when Mr. and Mrs. B. Fegan of 3 Navan Tec, Armagh, will be notified by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive as to when work will commence on a specially designed dwelling to cater for their daughter's medical needs.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 1 November 1988]:* This is a matter for the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive who has advised me that the Housing Executive will write shortly to Mr. and Mrs. Fegan to let them know that a contractor will take possession of the site on 21 November 1988. Work is scheduled to be completed by late May 1989.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Burma

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British aid to Burma.

Mr. Chris Patten: The military regime is pledged to hold democratic multi-party elections. It is important that this pledge be honoured as soon as possible. Meanwhile, purges of those involved in the August and September demostrations continue. In the circumstances I have decided that our aid to Burma should be frozen, with the exeption of Burmese nationals already in the United Kingdom. This decision will be kept under review in the light of developments in Burma.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 139**

SESSION 1987–88

24th October–4th November 1988

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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